

Bridging Old Guard and New Talent

The CEA gives a nod to its CEO & Registrar for a long career in consulting engineering and mentoring

CEA LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S AWARD

► For Distinguished Service

KEN PILIP VIEWS HIS ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER AS COMPRISING

two halves, the first being his decades of engineering some of Canada's most notable structures, including two Edmonton icons: the Citadel Theatre, and a fun project the High Level Bridge Great Divide Waterfall that celebrated Alberta's 75th birthday. These together with industrial projects for Syncrude, Suncor and "state of the art coal handling facilities" in British Columbia owned and operated now by Teck Resources are still operating today after 40 years. He is never one to shy away from a challenge and he usually succeeds because of his dedication, persistence and creativity. Two outstanding examples are the creation of Westcan Malting Ltd. and Ceapro Inc. – both now major value added agricultural industries in Alberta.

The second part of his career, as an engineering consultant, is no less complex and includes his passionate commitment to raise the public's awareness of how engineers literally developed this country – or at least its buildings and infrastructure. Ken views the engineer as the "unseen hand." Few people realize that almost everything they use in their lives has been influenced in some way by an engineer, whether it is technological advances, the food that is processed every day; the transportation we use; or the infrastructure in our homes and communities.

"We have an amazing profession and it is getting better every day thanks to the new people entering the profession," exclaims Pilip. "Our province has a remarkable number of resident engineers and a stunning level of engineering expertise."

Therefore, being named the recipient of the Consulting Engineers of Alberta's 2018 Lieutenant Governor's Award is a special honour for Pilip, who is that organization's CEO and Registrar. "I've been actively involved with the CEA for a long time and seen many colleagues express eloquent thoughts upon receiving the award," he says. "It is a real privilege to be chosen to be in their company."

Accordingly, Pilip has been ruminating about a career that began upon his graduation from the University of Alberta in 1968, to summarize projects that have been dear to him and lessons he's learned from his profession.

For someone whose consulting firm, MB Engineering Ltd., helped design the 12.9-kilometre Confederation Bridge linking Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, as well as having presided over numerous projects in northern Alberta and in addition to urban projects, a summation doesn't come easy to Pilip. However, he is clear about one thing: "We're a knowledge based industry with a specific role in society: to protect the public's interest above all else. I've always appreciated that view, and it's guided my entire professional career."

Pilip is dismayed that rather than engineers being engaged on a qualifications basis, they are increasingly being selected according to price. "Engineering services are not a commodity – engineers should not be treated as if they were a piece of equipment." He asks, "If you were hiring a new employee would you hire someone who had the best qualifications and was capable of doing the work, or would you hire the person that would work for the least money? The increasing focus on price comes at the expense of the trusted advisory relationship that should exist between the client and the engineer," he says. "A team relationship results in lower costs, improved design, more innovation and a very large impact on a project's lifecycle costs which can be reduced by three to seven percent."

In collaboration with the CEA, ACEC Canada, the other provincial consulting engineering associations, and numerous professional and industry organizations, Pilip has spent the last eight years working to rectify the situation. "Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) is the answer," Pilip says. "We know it works, that it protects the public interest and leads to the best possible engineering solutions. I am confident that soon the federal, provincial and municipal government will know it as well."

In the meantime, Pilip, who was obsessed with building things even in his childhood, loves nothing better than "to be the biggest cheerleader of our young talent. I'm constantly amazed by their projects and innovative spirit, and their motivation is the same as that which compelled me to join the profession so many years ago. They will make their communities a better place. ■"