

When professional inspection goes virtual

By Jocelyne Hébert

We have had to make some big adjustments in the last few months, and professional inspection is no exception. Video conferences have now replaced meetings in person, which has been a very positive experience for engineers up until now.

A TIMELY PILOT PROJECT

More than 3,000 inspections were completed last year, and the OIQ wanted to continue this important activity with engineers despite the pandemic and the lockdown. However, we had to change the way we do them.

Up until recently, professional inspections were conducted in person and encouraged productive interactions; but due to the lockdown, the OIQ had to adapt its way of inspecting members. Fortunately, it had carried out a pilot project in 2019.

"Last year, we tested inspections by video conference on a small scale," explains Frédéric Prétot, Eng., Head of the Professional Inspection team. "Based on what we learned, we developed procedures and tools for carrying out discussions and screen sharing documents. In March, this process became operational for all members."

FEW DIFFERENCES, SEVERAL BENEFITS

For instance, since March, the OIQ's professional inspectors have been "visiting" members virtually. For inspector Jacques Patry, Eng., it has been a smooth transition. "It's strangely similar to in-person inspections, but obviously without the sensory experience of reactions and the working environment," he says.

The inspector describes the process: "First, I ask members if it is possible to do the inspection virtually, which is the case for most. Once the appointment is set, I invite members using an integrated video conferencing tool, and they simply have to click on the link to establish communication. Then, the inspection proceeds just like it would in person, except for that we screen share the documents and presentations."

For Jacques Patry, virtual inspections have major advantages. "Video conferencing makes professional inspections more accessible to members who live outside the major metropolitan areas," he explains. "This



morning, I did an inspection in Sept-Îles; yesterday, I did inspections in Montérégie and in Boucherville; and tomorrow, I 'will be' in Abitibi. Before, I used to plan my travel to make it as efficient as possible, but it wasn't always easy to arrange with members' different schedules."

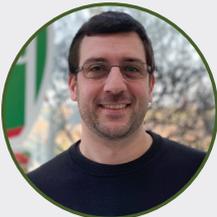
A POSITIVE RECEPTION AMONG INSPECTED ENGINEERS

To date, the majority of inspected members have very much welcomed the new process (see below). "We are

receiving positive comments," mentioned Frédéric Prétot. "Many engineers say that they are satisfied with the process and feel that video conferencing is working well and adding value."

As this article was written, Quebec was slowly ending its lockdown, and video conferences were still being used for all professional inspections. ■

"A NICE EXPERIENCE"



Due to COVID-19, strict new health measures were put into place at my organization. I work at an agri-food processing plant, where these measures absolutely have to be upheld. That's why the virtual inspection was a very good solution for me.

The professional inspection by video conference went smoothly. It had many benefits. I was worried about technical issues due to the distance between us, but the quality of the image and sound exceeded my expectations. In fact, I could present my documents just as well as if I had printed them. We were able to take a deeper look at things and discuss my projects in detail.

A year ago, I was given new responsibilities in my position. For that reason, the OIQ's inspection came at the right time. The inspector raised relevant points that have helped me improve my approach to my work. It was all very constructive.

— **Justin Leduc, Eng., Engineering Coordinator at Vergers Leahy**

"IT WAS VERY INTERACTIVE"



Habits are changing and we are realizing that virtual meetings can work. It is important to see each other, and not just hear each other. As far as I'm concerned, my video conference inspection went very well.

The inspector contacted me by Skype and I didn't need to have a subscription. He presented the OIQ, its Web site, and the documents that I can find on it. We looked at some of my projects together. We were able to show each other documents and browse the OIQ's site. It was very interactive. The sound and clarity of the image were good; I could enlarge what was shared on the screen. I didn't have any problems with it.

I also liked the inspector, his professionalism, his tone, and the way he presented and discussed things; I was his partner, even though I was far away. It takes 12 hours to reach Sept-Îles by car from Montreal, but after experiencing the virtual inspection, I really didn't feel it was necessary to meet in person.

— **Martin Tremblay, Eng., Superintendent at Aluminerie Alouett**