

A Warm Welcome to Windsor!

With close proximity to Detroit, IEEE members from the city of Windsor and surrounding area have historically crossed the Ambassador Bridge to attend meetings. Not any more.



By **Vawn Himmelsbach**

With the approval of IEEE's Member Geographic Activities (MGA) Board, Windsor is the newest Section to join IEEE Canada, bringing the total number of Sections to 21. Previously, IEEE members living in Windsor area were aligned with Region 4, comprising central U.S.A.

Just a year ago, IEEE Canada President/Region 7 Director Amir Aghdam started looking into how IEEE members in the Windsor area could be better served. So he initiated discussions with his Region 4 counterpart and Chair of Detroit Section — officially called South East Michigan (SEM) Section.

Historically, Windsor-area IEEE members have had to cross the U.S.-Canada border to attend meetings and events in Detroit.

“Many IEEE members in Windsor could not engage in Section activities, as the border crossing has become increasingly difficult in the past several years,” Aghdam says. “We discussed this issue with Region 4 Director Karen Pedersen, who was instrumental in assessing how to best serve the needs of those members.”

In many cases, students didn't have the means or resources to go to Detroit, says Esam Abdel-Raheem, Professor at the University of Windsor and Chair of the newly minted Windsor Section.

“Being affiliated with a U.S.-based Section was becoming an issue because we wanted to organize events in Windsor but we were not part of IEEE Canada,” he says. “That was the main driving force behind this move.”

It was also hard to convince members in south-east Michigan to travel to Windsor for an event, especially since so many were already being held at the University of Michigan. So Windsor-area members — especially students — were often missing out on opportunities. “We needed some alternative arrangement,” Abdel-Raheem says.

Windsor Members Bring Tradition of Excellence

WHILE WINDSOR is a newly created Section, IEEE members from that city and its surrounding area have already garnered recognition for their achievements in related fields of interest.

DISTINGUISHED IEEE member, Dr. Reuben Hackam from the University of Windsor, was the recipient of the IEEE Third Millennium Medal in 2000, the IEEE Eric O. Foster Award in 2000 and

the University of Windsor Alumni Award for Distinguished Contributions to University Teaching in 1992. His research areas include electromagnetics, polymer insulators for power devices, and gas insulating systems and devices. He has published more than 370 papers during his career.

WINDSOR area also boasts three IEEE Fellows, including Dr. Hackam (1988), “for

contributions to surface technology and electrical engineering education.” In 2002, Dr. Majid Ahmadi was elected IEEE Fellow “for contributions to the design of digital filters, and to pattern recognition and image restoration.” Dr. Roman Grigoryevich was elected IEEE Fellow in 2010 “for contributions to high-resolution imaging, acoustic microscopy and advanced material characterization.”

There was talk of becoming a subsection of London Section, but they came up against the same issues — though a border crossing wasn't involved, it was still a two-hour drive away.

“We also have our own community, with our own issues, and we would have had the same problem trying to bring our London colleagues to Windsor for events,” says Kemal Ertugrul Tepe, Associate Professor at the University of Windsor and Section Vice-Chair. “That’s when we realized it made the most sense to create our own Section.”

Many IEEE members in Windsor are interested in issues related to automotive electronics; a lab at the University of Windsor is entirely dedicated to electric vehicles, for example.

“The main purpose of our Section is to serve our own students and members in Windsor, to discuss their ideas and invite experts related to their areas of interest,” says Ertugrul Tepe. “Windsor is a manufacturing hub, so members want to learn about the latest trends and new technologies in manufacturing electrical devices or electronics. We want to organize sessions related to that.”

“We have the base to build a strong Section”

- Esrafil Jedari, Academic Mentor of the IEEE Student Branch of the University of Windsor

About 40 per cent of graduates from the University of Windsor end up working in Detroit. Ertugrul Tepe is hoping that by forming a stronger IEEE community in Windsor and providing networking opportunities with industry, this might help graduates find job opportunities in Canada.

“Our first priority is to form chapters and standing committees, and from there we will start having meetings and maybe bringing some conferences here,” says Esrafil Jedari, Academic Mentor of the IEEE Student Branch of the University of Windsor, who works as a Research Assistant at the university. He’s also taken on the role of Secretary and Treasurer of the new Windsor Section.

Jedari played a large role in reactivating the Student Branch at the University of Windsor in May 2013, and since that time he has helped to organize several successful events, including a seminar on Electromagnetic Compatibility, a hands-on workshop on automotive networks and a session on how to apply for graduate programs (see sidebar). Support has also come from IEEE Canada, (Region 7).

“Communications to Student Branches in Canadian universities have for many years included representatives from the University of Windsor and St.

Clair College,” says Maike Luiken, outgoing IEEE Canada Student Activities Committee Chair, and former chair of IEEE London Section. “Student member representatives have always been invited to the IEEE Canada Student Congress, with Region 7 providing the Branches with financial support as well.”

Past and future support for the Student Branch also comes from the IEEE Canadian Foundation. For example, in 2005, the Foundation awarded the University of Windsor Branch \$2,000 for hosting that year’s International Conference for Upcoming Engineers.

“The IEEE Canadian Foundation warmly welcomes Windsor to the IEEE Canada family,” says David Whyte, president of the IEEE Canadian Foundation. “We encourage its Student Branches to take full advantage of scholarship, grant and award opportunities offered by the ICF -- in particular to establish or upgrade our uniquely Canadian McNaughton Learning Resource Centres.” Whyte points out that Windsor-area members wishing to support ICF activities will receive receipts suitable for Canadian income tax purposes for their donations.

Windsor Section’s 150 members give it a critical mass to form Affinity Groups, says Jedari. He would like to see the formation of a Young Professionals Group and a Women in Engineering Group, since there are a number of female graduate students and faculty at the University of Windsor.

“We have the base to build a strong Section,” says Jedari. “Our focus now is to elevate our activities.” He hopes this will include joint events with other Sections.

Nearby London Section is more than ready to collaborate. “We were delighted last spring to welcome Windsor area members as a London Sub-Section,” says current Chair Murray MacDonald. “Now that Windsor Section has been established, we look forward to joint Section events and conference organizing.”

Windsor Section’s inaugural meeting was held on February 6, a very proud moment for Section Chair Abdel-Raheem and the rest of the Executive. Included in the official business was completion of petitions for an IEEE Communications Society chapter and a joint chapter involving the Circuits and Systems Society, Computer Society and Control Systems Society. Plans for the year ahead include bringing in two or three distinguished lecturers, as well as holding workshops and networking events for members. There’s also talk of getting involved with local high schools to mentor students taking part in robotic competitions. ■

University of Windsor Student Branch Roars Back



THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR Student Branch received a Certificate of Appreciation at the 2014 South East Michigan (SEM) Section (R4) Annual Spring Conference. Restarted in early 2013, it had been dormant since 2005.

Presented by SEM Section Chair Robert Neff, the award recognized contributions to the Section, and leadership in promoting science and technology at the University. The award was accepted by Branch Chair Hanan Mekawy on behalf of her team, including: Vice-Chair Wassim Ayache, Secretary Nyasha Kapfumvuti and Treasurer Senan Abdulghani.

Mekawy credits strong support from SEM volunteers Basil Sherlund, Kimball Williams and others in helping the Branch relaunch. University of Windsor Faculty Advisor Dr. M. Khalid and Academic Mentor Esrafil Jedari were also instrumental, she says.



The first event of the reactivated Branch was a seminar on Electromagnetic Compatibility, held in May 2013. Above, Branch Chair Hanan Mekawy is flanked by engineers Joanna Hill from Hella Electronics and Lin Li from Rohde Schwarz.

Five other successful events followed that year. Another three strongly attended events were held in 2014.