

CEO for a Day

Odgers Berndtson and Ontario Power Generation

By Mats van Kleef

As CEO for a Day, I was able to shadow Tom Mitchell, CEO of Ontario Power Generation, during the official opening of the new Niagara Tunnel Project. This project will provide Ontario with clean renewable, low-cost electricity for the next 100 years. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience so early in my career. The day involved several hours of one-on-one time with Tom Mitchell, a tour of the Sir Adam Beck Complex, and the opportunity to observe the press conference and a closed meeting of OPG executives.

It struck me how much effort goes into the people side of the business. Even at a company as technologically complex as OPG, upper management spends more time with the various stakeholders of generating power. This includes instilling a culture in all employees through leadership by example. It also requires speaking in a language familiar to the different external interests like consumers, politicians, workers, environmental groups and local communities. Tom Mitchell showed me the importance of being humble, open-minded and authentic. These are traits that will help young engineers succeed along their career paths as much as it helps CEOs effectively run their companies.

Odgers Berndtson, an executive search company, organized the CEO for a Day event. UOIT students submitted their resumes along with an online application form. Selected candidates completed a personality test and were further screened through phone interviews. Twelve semi-finalists attended a half-day long event in Toronto with icebreakers, speed interviews, a case study and an analysis of our personality profiles. Emma Donnelly and myself were selected from the Faculty of Business and IT and the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science respectively.

About Mats van Kleef

Mats van Kleef is a graduating student from Mechanical Engineering and Management (Energy) at UOIT. Through several internships during his studies, he has developed practical work experience to compliment his studies. Exposure to the Clean Energy Research Laboratory and the Alberta oil sands through work at Suncor Energy has expanded his views on energy and sustainability issues. He has developed his management skills through strong involvement in student governance, most notably as past-president of the UOIT Engineering Students Society and past-chair of the Student Association Board of Directors.