

Qualified persons need not apply

by BRIAN LOCKHART

Space ? the final frontier ? and it's not easy to get there.

In the current mode of space travel, escaping the bonds of Earth is a pretty difficult process.

First, you have to build a rocket, and a big one, with one tank of enriched kerosene and one tank of liquid oxygen as an oxidizer.

When the two liquids are introduced under high pressure, the result is a massive release of power capable of thrusting thousands of tons of payload into the atmosphere.

It has to be powerful enough and carry enough fuel to accelerate to over 17,000 mph to achieve an orbit around the planet.

All this, just to get a small capsule into space.

Then there is the complicated method of keeping your astronauts alive. Space travel isn't convenient if your life support systems fail and you kill everyone on board.

The Soviet Union had several fatalities during its space program, possibly even more than they officially recognized.

The US lost three Apollo astronauts to fire during a test run in 1967, and 14 more when two space shuttles were destroyed during missions.

All life support systems in a space capsule must operate perfectly at all times.

Sooner or later, you have to come home.

As of now, the only practical way to return to Earth is to use the friction created when entering the atmosphere at high speed and slowing the craft to a speed where parachutes can be deployed.

That means a highly dangerous procedure of screaming through the upper atmosphere at such a high speed that the temperature surrounding the capsule will reach several thousand degrees, creating the risk of the capsule being destroyed on the re-entry attempt.

Put this all together, and that's where you get the phrase ? 'it's not rocket science.'

Rocket science is a complicated affair.

Recently, the Canadian Space Agency published its Employment, Equity, and Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

The plan states: ?We are taking direct actions to further address issues of inequity and systemic bias.?

It goes on to say, ?Promotions within the agency will focus on designated groups.?

Recently, at a conference, an MP from Richmond Hill posed the question to a Space Agency representative, ?Can you point to this committee, the section that says that mission safety and technical competence come before identity representation targets??

The MP was asking if the Space Agency was about to hire and promote based on skin colour, sexual orientation, or disability, rather

than qualifications, and whether those hiring processes supersede qualifications and therefore jeopardize people's lives by hiring an unqualified person based on the mentioned criteria.

The Space Agency bureaucrat, of course, didn't answer the question. She danced around the answer in typical political fashion, throwing out buzzwords and other nonsense, instead of answering the question.

It is next to impossible to get anyone involved in federal politics or any agency to answer a question.

If you ask a federal agency employee or politician if it gets dark at 3 a.m., no one would ever answer, 'Yes, it's very dark at 3 a.m.'

Instead, you will get some kind of answer like, 'Studies have shown that there are differences in the amount of light during a 24-hour period, which do not necessarily reflect using such terms as light and dark when referring to any period during the day.'

I think an astronaut would be pretty angry to realize that the heat shield on his/her spacecraft was breaking apart during reentry because it was designed by someone who didn't have a proper engineering degree, but rather because that person had a 'handicapped' sticker in the windshield of their minivan.

I'm all for hiring people with disabilities or other minority groups providing they are qualified for the job just like everyone else.

The modern concept of getting the job done right dates back to the First World War. It was realized that people were getting killed due to malfunctioning or poorly designed and built equipment.

Standards were put in place so people didn't suffer the results of something that was poorly designed or engineered, or fell apart because the quality of steel used to build something wasn't up to par.

Hiring methods based on 'inclusion' criteria simply don't work.

Remember that the next time you are driving down the highway at 100 km/h, remain safe rather than feel one of your wheels is about to fall off because it was designed by someone whose past experience in automotive design included making donuts and selling designer jeans.