

# For the greater

Volunteers are the lifeblood of PEO. Without them, the profession would grind to a halt, or cost more to do.

## Responsibility calls

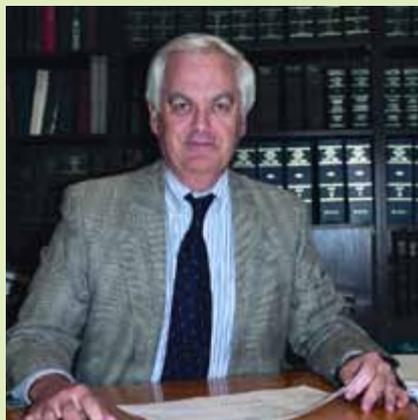
David Smith, P.Eng., independent consultant, Ottawa, ON

One thing David Smith, P.Eng., didn't expect after he graduated from civil engineering at the University of Toronto in 1973 was that one of the most satisfying parts of his career would be helping younger engineers find their footing.

He joined Gore & Storrie Limited (now CH2M Hill) and was resident engineer for an expansion of the Kingston sewage treatment plant from 1973 to 1974. He moved next to the company's Ottawa regional office to become project engineer and project manager for a host of infrastructure projects. In 1989, he became an officer of PEO's Order of Honour, for service to the engineering profession in Ontario.

What he recalls most about his career is putting people first, and mentoring his younger colleagues in a discipline he thought was going to be all about facts and problem solving.

"Engineering is not just numbers and figures, it's more of a responsibility," says Smith, who is now an independent consultant in Ottawa. "You can't just be a star all your life, no matter how talented you are. You have to work with people, and helping people do better is part of it."



David Smith, P.Eng., chairs PEO's Discipline Committee.

Smith says his profession has served him well, and he wants to give back as much as he can—not only through his work, but through his volunteering. He started attending PEO Ottawa Chapter meetings in the 1970s to get to know other engineers in the community and to support the organization. He became chair of the chapter in 1982, and from 1984 to 1988 served as Eastern Regional Councillor, representing the approximately 15,000 engineers in eastern Ontario on PEO Council.

PEO business has cut into his time with his wife, two sons and leisure pursuits at the Ottawa Hunt and Golf Club, where he's also volunteered on committees and the board of directors, including a term as president. But it's been well worth it, he says, prompting him to continue on as a mainstay of PEO's Discipline Committee, which he now chairs. In fact, he's served on discipline panels for 20 years.

"Every hearing has different subject matter, personalities, different lawyers," he says of the three or so hearings in which he participates each year, out of an average of 12 held annually. "I find them very intensive, but I really believe in the process, and they are very contained—I don't get calls during the middle of the night or day, so it's not an ongoing drain on my time.

"Peer review is an essential part of the profession and self-regulation. We are acting as engineers and judging our peers. If we don't do that well, how can we call ourselves a self-regulating profession?"

# good By Karen Hawthorne

them, many of the organization's key activities  
But why do they do it?

## Balancing act

Alourdes Sully, MEng, P.Eng., senior telecom engineer, Hydro One Networks Inc., Rexdale, ON

When Alourdes Sully, P.Eng., takes a vacation day from her high-level professional position with Hydro One Networks Inc., it's often for a PEO-related event—not for relaxing on her couch.

Sully takes her responsibilities as chair of PEO's North Toronto Chapter very seriously, devoting her time, energy and even vacation to moving the chapter forward.

"I don't get involved in anything that I'm not serious about, because even if it is voluntary, I take it very seriously," she says. "But I'm having fun, too. I want to make sure I'm attending all the meetings, making sure the budget meets the guidelines and all the procedural requirements are met."

Sully views the chapter's role as a liaison between PEO and its members: PEO is the umbrella with all the regulatory functions, whereas the chapter system is an informal way for PEO to access the membership, so that members can network, share their concerns, and learn about the organization.

Born in Haiti, Sully immigrated to Canada as a teenager, pursuing an engineering physics degree from Laval University and then a graduate degree in engineering management from Sherbrooke University. She launched a telecommunications career that brought her to Hydro One Networks Inc. in 1999, where she balances her job with various volunteer responsibilities, including area governor for Toastmasters International District 60, and mentoring and promoting women in engi-

neering. She also spends time with her 10-year-old son, and makes friends and workouts at the gym a priority.

"There must be a balance in my life," she says. "I am not a workaholic. I try to give my time and, at the same time, I appreciate what I have in return."

Sully started her participation with the chapter executive of the 1400-member North Toronto Chapter in 2002 as director, Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) liaison, moving to chair, past-chair and then vice-chair, before taking the reins again. Sometime in the future—when she has more time—she'd like to run for Council.

She says being involved in PEO "is an opportunity for me to apply my leadership and communication skills.

"I learn a lot. We all have different backgrounds; we all work in different fields. It brings out the multi-dimension of the profession, which is good when we're brainstorming about a particular issue, because we're not facing the same constraints in our everyday lives."



Alourdes Sully, P.Eng., is committed to PEO's chapter system.

## Pride and passion

Stephen Tsui, P.Eng., managing principal, Stantec Consulting, Windsor, ON

“Look around you. Who’s building the world? Engineers. Young people still look up to medicine and law, and downplay engineering. It’s frustrating.”

Stephen Tsui, P.Eng., is passionate about his work and the future of the profession. He was trained in civil engineering in Hong Kong before immigrating to Canada in 1967. He completed a master’s degree, and joined LaFontaine, Cowie, Buratto & Associates Ltd. for the next 30 years.

“We don’t get our voice out there to recognize our contribution,” he says. “I’ve had a good career path and enjoyed it. I want to encourage other people to follow these particular footsteps of mine.”

He joined PEO’s Windsor-Essex Chapter 25 years ago to promote the profession in his own corner of the world, and later served as chair and past-chair. Tsui was inducted into PEO’s Order of Honour as a member in 2003, and was subsequently approached by a member of PEO’s Awards Committee to get involved. He did, and continues to appreciate the opportunity not only to honour accom-

plished engineers, but also to spotlight the profession.

“It gives you the chance to talk to other mature, successful engineers and get their views,” he says. “I work with some of the local engineers on the nominations and generate some interest within industry in our part of southern Ontario.”

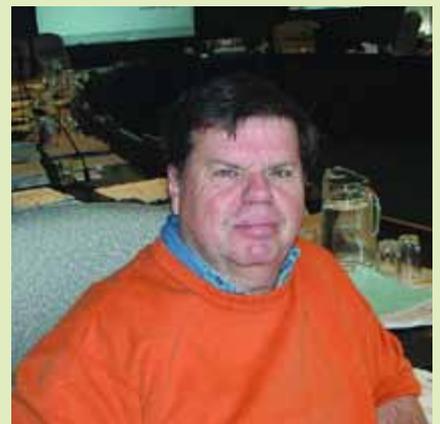
In an effort to lead students into engineering, Tsui became fundraising chair for the Windsor Regional Science, Technology and Engineering Fair, an annual competition for students from grades 7 to OAC that’s partly funded by the board of education. Over the past 19 years of his involvement, Tsui has brought professional engineers into the competition as planners and judges and kicked corporate donations into high gear.

As an immigrant from Hong Kong, Tsui says he identifies closely with international engineering graduates and others coming here to start a new life. Consequently, he joined the board of the Essex County Chinese Canadian Association in 2001 and served as president for three years, revitalized the association’s dwin-

dling membership, and introduced new programs, including culture and language for new Canadians, and dance for the many Chinese girls adopted by Canadian parents.

“I’m really proud of the last few years’ work and now it’s self-sufficient,” he says. “I can take some time off, which will be good news for my wife.”

Stephen Tsui, P.Eng., an Order of Honour recipient himself, enjoys the opportunity to honour other accomplished engineers.



Henry Hill is a recent Lieutenant Governor Appointee to PEO Council.

Free Consumer Advisory Committee for the Ann Johnston Health Station in Toronto.

Now, he’s enthusiastic about volunteering for PEO.

“I can contribute to the association from the point of view of a person with a disability, not that I’m the spokesperson for all people with disabilities. On the other hand, hopefully it will allow people [engineers] to see that such people are out there, and very much affected by the work that they do.”

## Speaking out

Henry Hill, customer service consultant, Grand & Toy, Toronto, ON

By day, Henry Hill is a mild-mannered service representative at Grand & Toy’s Toronto call-in centre. It’s a job, he says, that pays the bills.

But get him talking about his work outside the office, and a driven and outspoken advocate emerges. Hill has spent much of the last 15 years working toward a barrier-free Ontario for people with disabilities.

“We want people with disabilities to be visible and have a voice,” says Hill, a recent Lieutenant Governor Appointee to PEO Council.

He knows from personal experience, whether it’s facing the stairs to a building’s entrance or tiny washrooms, impossible to navigate. Hill was born with Spina Bifida, a condition of the spinal cord affecting mobility.

“Up to 1950, 90 per cent of people born with Spina Bifida died,” he explains. “Now it’s 90 per cent survival. Many of the people born during the ’50s and ’60s ended up in wheelchairs. I walk around. I’ve had surgeries to improve my walking.”

Hill says he was approached last February by the attorney general’s office to serve on Council because of his long-time service on several boards and his fight, as one of the founding members of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, to bring changes to the legislation. A new *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* finally became law in 2005, although Hill left the committee in 2000.

“Volunteering has brought satisfaction, frustration, anger and disappointment—a lot of things,” he says. “The number of people born with Spina Bifida is so small, and the Spina Bifida Association is very concerned with children but their focus needs to be broader. People with Spina Bifida have a great deal to offer, in spite of their disability. Opportunity is an important thing for people with disabilities.”

Hill has served on the boards of directors for the Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association of Canada and its provincial counterpart. He has also chaired the Barrier

## Fair game

David Kiguel, P.Eng., senior advisor, asset management group, Hydro One Networks Inc., Rexdale, ON

David Kiguel, P.Eng., an engineer trained in Chile, remembers coming into PEO's office to apply for his licence back in 1976, shortly after he immigrated to Canada.

"I was waiting in the lobby and one PEO staff person came out and looked at the papers I had and said, 'Okay, you've got to write four exams,'" Kiguel recalls.

Things have changed, of course, he says. Now, the files of international engineering

Satish Kanaujia, P.Eng., (left) and David Kiguel, P.Eng., served on a recent interview panel for the Experience Requirements Committee.



graduates may go to the Academic Requirements Committee for a detailed review of the applicant's academic background against a syllabus of what's considered necessary academic background for practice in the applicant's discipline in Canada. Sometimes, applicants are assigned examinations to either fill in what appear to be gaps in their academic background, or confirm their academic background. Often, applicants assigned exams are then referred to the Experience Requirements Committee (ERC)—a committee on which Kiguel has volunteered since 2003. He says many of the ERC members are international engineering graduates like him, who not only identify with applicants, but integrate themselves into the work of PEO.

The ERC reviews applicants' work experience and may recommend waiving certain of the assigned exams should the applicant demonstrate that he or she has implemented the required engineering concepts effectively in prior experience.

"It gives much more fairness to the applicants," says Kiguel, who conducts ERC interview panels at PEO about 10 days a year.

"I think the highest priority for PEO is protection of the public. So, while keeping that protection to the public, we try to provide fairness to the foreign graduates through a process that is probably more expedient than it used to be."

Kiguel joined the former Ontario Hydro in 1977. His career has allowed him to excel, first in developing computer programs for the analysis of reliability and other power systems problems. Currently, as senior advisor with Hydro One Networks Inc.'s asset management group, he manages issues of development and compliance with technical standards in the new competitive electricity industry. It's a job that keeps him busy, but he still makes time for volunteer commitments. He has helped recent immigrants prepare tax returns, and run bingos to fundraise for his daughter's former aquatic club. He plans to continue volunteering with PEO.

"I think it's a way of contributing to an institution that guides our work. Canada has been good to us, so it's a way of returning that to the community."



Suja John, P.Eng., stands in the foreground at the University of Ottawa's new steel teaching aid for engineering students, donated by the Canadian Institute of Steel Construction, for which she works. (Photo: University of Ottawa)

"What do I do for fun? All of this is supposed to be fun," she laughs. "My husband and I feel it's very important to contribute in whichever way we can, so professionally I feel I'm doing that with PEO; at home, I try to do it with the kids, the church and that kind of thing."

John, now a mom with two teenagers and a job promoting the interests of the steel industry, trained and worked in civil engineering in Singapore before coming to Canada in 1997. Not long after her own interview with members of PEO's Experience Requirements Committee (ERC), she was approached to serve on the ERC in 2002, and continues with

the committee, typically carrying out interviews once a month.

"I totally appreciated the fact that I didn't have to do all the technical papers all over again, because I had graduated years ago," John says of her own experience going through the steps toward her P.Eng. She readily identifies with the international engineering graduates, and stands behind PEO's licensing process and requirements.

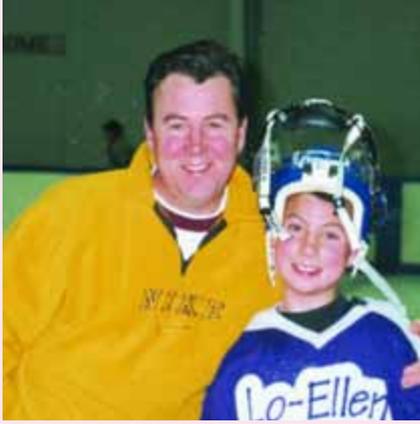
"When we come in, we're qualified, but it's a struggle because we're trying to establish ourselves in a new country. So I feel it's very important that the [experiential review] process is allowed."

With the number of licence applications from international engineering graduates on the rise, John also recognizes the need to maintain the standards and safeguard the integrity of the profession in Ontario, rather than trying to be accommodating. "We have to make sure that they [the applicants] are qualified, and this process allows it."

## Bring it on

Suja John, P.Eng., regional director, Canadian Institute of Steel Construction, Willowdale, ON

The mom, the taxi for the kids' lessons, the Sunday school teacher, and the working professional...sound familiar? For Suja John, P.Eng., every day is a balancing act—and she's always ready to take on more.



Tony Cecutti, P.Eng., and his son Peter.

## All in a day's work

Tony Cecutti, P.Eng., project engineer, Earth Tech Inc., Sudbury, ON

Some people don't think twice about going the extra mile. Tony Cecutti, P.Eng., says his volunteer work for PEO and for his hometown of Sudbury, is part and parcel of being a professional engineer.

"Part of what makes us want to be engineers is we want to solve problems and help out," says Cecutti. "That's what

it boils down to. I'm not sure you could ever put your finger on exactly why you do it, you just know that it's important and it's the right thing to do."

Cecutti, a former Northern Regional Councillor, has 15 years and counting under his belt as a PEO volunteer, and was inducted into the Order of Honour as a member in 2005. In the roles of vice chair, chair and past chair of the chapter executive and chair of the chapter's Education Committee, Cecutti was instrumental in maintaining a high chapter profile in Sudbury.

He strengthened the already successful "Engineer for a Day" job shadowing event, which grew from 40 to 170 students participating, and created a slide show for chapter members to explain to students what engineers do, and where they do it, for educational outreach. He also established the chapter's annual golf event as a significant fundraiser for local charities. Over the last six years, more than \$50,000

raised from the event has gone to the PEO Fund, which Cecutti established under the umbrella of the Sudbury Community Foundation (SCF).

"As professionals, we make a career out of these communities and we have to think of ways to benefit less fortunate people," he says. "We, as engineers, have a sense of responsibility to the community."

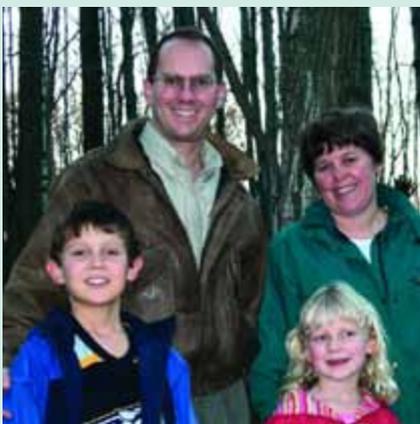
Currently, he serves on PEO's Complaints Committee and remains active with the Sudbury Chapter. When he's not at the Earth Tech office managing such projects as roads, sewers, water mains, and environmental assessments, he's busy with his wife and three boys, coaching hockey or playing on his local hockey team. Even that comes with a community-mindedness, he says: "For a recent hockey tournament we had, we already had corporate donations for our entry fee, so I collected \$20 from my teammates and gave \$400 cash to the [Sudbury] Community Foundation. It was great."

## Head of the class

Heather Sheardown, PhD, P.Eng., associate professor, chemical engineering, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON

When Heather Sheardown, P.Eng., joined PEO's Academic Requirements Committee (ARC) last May, she didn't know a lot about the inner workings of the organization. Months later, she's happy to report she's learned a valuable lesson about licensure through her volunteer work.

Heather Sheardown, P.Eng., enjoys the great outdoors with husband Ron, son Jamie, and daughter Lindsay.



"As faculty members, we're always told that we need to be licensed," says Sheardown, who previously worked on a Canadian Council of Professional Engineers' committee to develop a biomedical engineering syllabus for licensing purposes.

"But it's not very clear about why we need to be. This has been quite an eye-opening experience, even working with the people who are on the committee and the perspectives that they bring to it. It really gives me perspective as to the importance of the whole licensing process, and the importance of having professors who are licensed. We do set the example."

ARC members spend about 10 days a year at PEO, reviewing the files of applicants referred to the committee to determine whether the applicant meets the prescribed academic requirements for licensure and to recommend the appropriate course of action. "The committee also discusses relevant issues related to the whole licensing process and issues specific to the committee,"

Sheardown says. "That's been quite enlightening."

Not one to shy away from paperwork (an essential attribute for an ARC member), she says the teaching and research she does "is about half and half. A lot of what I do is write papers and grants."

She also doesn't mind taking on extra work for a worthy cause. She's active on several administrative committees at McMaster, including the Women in Engineering Committee, which works to recruit and retain female engineering students. The committee recently hosted an annual experience day for students in grades 7 through 11 for hands-on engineering learning.

She also has two school-age children and a serious ambition to run a full marathon. She did her first half-marathon last spring and is training for her second half-marathon next May.

"I find the busier I am, the more efficient and productive I am," she says. "So it's not all that difficult, as long as you're organized and keep things in perspective."

## Starting over

Galal Abdelmessih, P.Eng., principal of A2Z Technical Services Ltd., Mississauga, ON

Back in the early '70s, Galal Abdelmessih, P.Eng., was warned by the Canadian embassy that he might end up as a dishwasher if he left Egypt and immigrated to Canada. He graduated in 1968 from mechanical engineering at the University of Ain Shams in Cairo, and had progressed through the ranks at the Egyptian Iron and Steel Co. for about six years when he decided to bring his family to Canada.

"Immigration is not an easy decision to make," says Abdelmessih, citing the desire for a better standard of living and the freedom to express his views as his reasons for deciding to come. "Immigration is like cutting your roots and then planting them once again. The bottom line is personal drive. If you're aware of expectations, this makes life easier."

Armed with realistic expectations and considerable ambition, Abdelmessih made a swift transition to life and work in Ontario. His first technical job was mon-

itoring field welding with Babcock & Wilcox Canada Ltd. in Cambridge in 1976, and he received his P.Eng. in 1978, paving the way for future opportunities with other consulting firms and the former Ontario Hydro.

Now a father with three grown sons and his own consulting engineering firm, Abdelmessih is very much involved with volunteer work for the engineering community. He has served on PEO's Experience Requirements Committee (ERC) and a subcommittee since 2004, reviewing the work of applicants who are referred by the Academic Requirements Committee to determine the applicants' degree of understanding of engineering principles and how they are applied.

"It is a very successful process," he says, adding that he has recruited other volunteers for the ERC. "Whatever you see on the paper [application forms] doesn't always reflect the reality [of the applicant's qualifications for practice], so this is a good



Galal Abdelmessih, P.Eng., serves on the Experience Requirements Committee.

avenue to communicate and evaluate the applicant's experience."

Abdelmessih also joined an engineering group of immigrants within his church in 2002, helping to extend its social activities to include workshops, seminars and courses, which cover technical topics and address soft skills, problem-solving techniques, project management, and career planning.

"It's a very rewarding experience," he says. "A lot of people helped me before and after I came to Canada. Without their help, mentoring and guidance, I would not be where I am now. I think it's time for payback."

## Hands-on outreach

Diane Freeman, P.Eng., senior project manager, air quality group, Conestoga-Rovers & Associates Ltd., Waterloo, ON

"The thing that people don't understand is that when you volunteer, you get so much back—you get more back than you ever give," says Diane Freeman, P.Eng. She certainly practises what she preaches, dedicating huge amounts of her "leisure" time, squeezed in between her responsibilities to her two young sons, her church music group, and her full-time job.

Her list of volunteer duties goes beyond the usual, but that's just the way she was raised, she explains. Her parents were always in service agencies and they still volunteer. For Freeman, it's much more than making a cash donation. "You can give money to a soup kitchen, but this past Thanksgiving I went and I held the ladle and I filled their bowls. You've said to this person, I care about you, and I'm here."

She became active within her PEO chapter in 1992, and now serves as Western Regional Councillor and chair of the Regional Councillors Committee. Free-

man is also a member of the Awards and Education committees, and is vice president of the Executive Committee.

"I think PEO is a great organization to be involved in and it's a privilege to be elected," she says. Her participation has been an opportunity to gain leadership skills, network with peers, and engage future engineering students and their parents through outreach programs developed by the Education Committee and its partners. Promoting engineering and science education is something that's close to her heart. She helped found a childcare centre, the Butterfly Learning Centre, in Waterloo, which offers a curriculum for kids to learn through science. The centre also has a signed subsidy agreement with the Region of Waterloo for parents who can't afford the full fees.

Freeman is also very comfortable with the politicking part of PEO volunteering, especially during election time. Next year, she is considering taking her volunteering to the next level

and running for Waterloo city council, to give back to her community where her work will have the most impact on taxpayers, she says.

"It's not about finding the time," she adds. "It's about making time for the things that are important." ✎

Diane Freeman, P.Eng., helps Samantha, 3, one of the children at the childcare centre Diane helped found in Waterloo.

