

Putting lessons into action

By DAVID SMITH

In a typical year, the dog days of summer have hit the Queen's Park legislature by now and MPPs have moved on to their more accessible, and perhaps quieter, constituency offices. But while the Second Session of the 38th Parliament prorogued early on June 5, this summer will be anything but quiet for them, as MPPs and their rival candidates start their campaigns for the October 10 provincial election. It should be an exciting few months.

During the past year, PEO has promoted the value to the association and to society of its licence holders taking roles in the political arena, so they may carry their fair share of the load in provincial decision making and governance. Prior to last year's municipal elections, for example, PEO hosted Campaign College, an event providing P.Engs with information on becoming more politically active—as volunteers for elected officials or as candidates themselves in future elections. Attendees heard from several politicians that a great way to begin involvement is through local riding associations, which are responsible for overseeing all the activities that go into election readiness. A DVD summary of the session, entitled *The Why and How to get involved in public life*, is available at www.peo.on.ca/GLP/GLP2007.html.

As a regulator, it's important for PEO to contribute to government policy development and priority setting. And members are encouraged to explore the various avenues that are available to them, personally, to participate in the political process. In the days before the October vote, for example, there are many ways to help the candidates in your riding. Volunteers are always needed to run and staff campaign offices, help on sign crews, deliver flyers, stuff envelopes, assist with mail campaigns, telephone voters and identify supporters, or serve as scrutineers or act as poll captains on election day. Political parties will often do their best to provide you with responsibilities in

which you have an interest. And any amount of time you can give them will certainly be appreciated.

A strong local campaign is vital to a party's overall success. While media attention often focuses on the party leaders during a campaign, the reality is that elections are won riding by riding. PEO's Government Liaison Program participants can do much during the upcoming campaign to help build a foundation for a collaborative relationship with our future provincial leaders.

Fostering collaboration

It is important to have a good sense of the candidates' background and experience. Check out their biographies on the party websites. The biographies provide useful information on their previous occupations, involvement in the riding, and

request that their constituency assistants be included in the meeting, since they, and not their political masters, are often the ones who will have more time to deal with you on a day-to-day basis. Throughout their time in office, invite your local representative to chapter functions, such as certificate ceremonies, annual general meetings and special chapter forums and technical seminars. Each chapter has its own calendar of events, all of which should be considered as potential opportunities to involve government representatives.

So, there is much you can and should do, since the work of the engineering profession impacts governments at every level and has significant influence on dozens of issues. To learn more about how you can assist your local candidate, visit the website of your preferred political party: www.ontarioliberal.on.ca,

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family profiles. In the months leading up to the election, note the position of your local candidates on issues relevant to PEO. See how these views align with those of the association. Then, provide the candidates with information on PEO that they may work into their campaign.

Following the election, phone or write the winning candidate in your area to congratulate them on their success, and to set up a meeting to cultivate or expand an existing relationship (be sure to phone or write the unsuccessful candidates, too. After all, they may run again someday...and win). It's also a good idea to

www.ontariopc.com, www.ontariondp.com or www.greenparty.on.ca.

Interested in politics?

Join the growing number of professional engineers involved in PEO's Government Liaison Program. Through your local chapter, you will network with government officials to raise awareness of the self-regulating profession and its role in protecting the public. To learn more about the program and the many ways for you to contribute, contact your chapter chair or David Smith, manager, communications, at dsmith@peo.on.ca or 416-840-1068. ❖