

# PEO CHAPTER TOWN HALL MEETINGS RAISE ISSUES WITH PROVINCIAL CANDIDATES

*By Howard Brown and Kaitlynn Dodge*



Members, volunteers and election candidates at the PEO Mississauga Chapter town hall meeting on September 8.

PEO's Government Liaison Program (GLP) is driven by its chapter system and the October provincial election demonstrated why.

Established in 2005 to ensure the Ontario government respects the mandate of PEO to govern licence and certificate holders and regulate engineering in the province, the GLP has successfully put the profession on government radar. This has been done through ongoing and consistent engagement of public officials by PEO's 36 chapters across the province.

"The onset of the Ontario election presented professional engineers with a unique opportunity to connect with candidates on issues of importance and to learn about how the platforms of each party impact the profession," says Jeannette Chau, P.Eng., PEO manager of student and government liaison programs. "That is just what they're doing."

In September, six PEO chapters held all-candidates meetings. The events highlighted such key issues as the infrastructure deficit, support for internationally trained professionals, energy security, jobs and getting engineers involved in the public policy process.

## MISSISSAUGA CHAPTER TOWN HALL

Nearly 75 engineers participated in Mississauga Chapter's town hall meeting on Thursday, September 8.

Chapter Chair Khaled El-Rahi, P.Eng., welcomed engineers in attendance, and Art Kirnichansky, P.Eng., chapter vice chair, moderated the event. PEO President David Adams, P.Eng., FEC, brought greetings on behalf of PEO.

Seven provincial candidates participated, including Harinder Takhar, MPP, Liberal candidate for Mississauga-

Erindale; Bob Delaney, MPP, Liberal candidate for Mississauga-Streetsville; Wafik Sunbaty, P.Eng., PC candidate for Mississauga-Streetsville; Raed Ayad, NDP candidate for Mississauga-Streetsville; Michelle Bilek, NDP candidate for Mississauga-Erindale; Lloyd Jones, Green Party candidate for Mississauga East-Cooksville; and Pauline Thornham, Green Party candidate for Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Other participants included PEO CEO and Registrar Kim Allen, P.Eng., FEC; Jeannette Chau; PEO Engineers Canada Director Phil Maka, P.Eng., FEC; and PEO councillors Colin Moore, P.Eng., FEC, and Rob Willson, P.Eng.

At the event, each candidate had a chance to introduce him or herself, followed by a question period where five questions were prepared and asked by Mississauga Chapter executives. Prepared questions were followed by an open question-and-answer period and networking session.

## LONDON CHAPTER TOWN HALL

Over 100 people participated in the PEO London Chapter town hall meeting on Thursday, September 15.

Chapter GLP Chair Oscar Avila, P.Eng., welcomed guests and introduced Chapter Chair Stela Stevandic, P.Eng., who introduced the event moderator, PEO government relations consultant Howard Brown.

Brown introduced the candidates and moderated a lively discussion with Teresa Armstrong, NDP candidate for London-Fanshawe; Chris Bentley, MPP, Liberal candidate for London West; Jeff Buchanan, NDP candidate for London West; Kevin Labonte, Green Party candidate for London North Centre; and Khalil Ramal, MPP, Liberal candidate for London-Fanshawe.

## [ GLP JOURNAL ]

Members of the PEO London Chapter Executive Committee and participating panellists at the September 15 town hall meeting in London.



Linda Jeffrey, MPP, Liberal candidate for Brampton-Springdale, and Keith Foster, Green Party candidate for Mississauga-Brampton South, at the PEO Brampton Chapter town hall meeting on September 15.

Rakesh Shreewastav, P.Eng., a PEO lieutenant governor appointed councillor, led the question-and-answer session following the panel discussion.

### BRAMPTON CHAPTER TOWN HALL

Approximately 80 people participated in the PEO Brampton Chapter town hall meeting on Thursday, September 15.

PEO Brampton Chapter GLP Chair Raj Singh, P.Eng., welcomed guests and panellists, emceed the event and fielded questions from the floor.

All candidates from the ridings of Brampton-Springdale and Mississauga-Brampton South were invited. Participating were Linda Jeffrey, MPP, Liberal candidate for Brampton-Springdale, and Keith Foster, Green Party candidate for Mississauga-Brampton South.

### YORK CHAPTER TOWN HALL

The September 20 town hall meeting held in York was a joint undertaking of PEO, Seneca College, Canadian Automobile Association (CAA), *Markham Economist & Sun*, Markham Board of Trade, Newmarket Chamber of Commerce, Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce and Vaughan Chamber of Commerce.

This event differed from the other chapter debates in that the candidates were representing their party rather than themselves or their ridings. They were to articulate the views and standpoints on behalf of their party at the debate.

Stan Talesnick, director, academic IT, Seneca College, moderated the panel. Questions came from John Ennis, government relations, CAA; Bob Gernon, government affairs, Markham Board of Trade; and Gerry Meade, P.Eng., PEO York Chapter GLP chair.

The panel included Joe Whitfeld, NDP candidate for Oak Ridges-Markham; Myles O'Brien, Green Party for Markham-Unionville; and Frank Klees, MPP, PC candidate for Newmarket-Aurora. Adam DeVita, P.Eng., NDP candidate for



Richmond Hill, and P.C. Choo, NDP candidate for Markham-Unionville, also attended but did not speak on the panel.

### OAKVILLE CHAPTER TOWN HALL

The fifth town hall meeting organized by PEO chapters in September was also a joint effort with another local organization. The Oakville Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) and PEO Oakville Chapter held a breakfast on September 21. The group also organized a similar meeting in Halton on September 16.

Kevin Flynn, Liberal candidate for Oakville; Lesley Sprague, NDP candidate for Oakville; and Mike Harris, independent candidate for Oakville, participated in the debate. Twelve questions were squeezed into the program on issues ranging from child care to climate change. Health care was an important topic as were the environment and job creation for engineers.

### WILLOWDALE-THORNHILL TOWN HALL

About 20 people attended the Willowdale-Thornhill Chapter's town hall on September 30 to discuss the issues with MPP David Zimmer (Liberal) and challenger Alexander Brown of the NDP.

The topics debated ranged from each party's position on the use of nuclear energy, to the role engineers can play in the political process.  $\Sigma$

Howard Brown, president of Brown & Cohen Communications & Public Affairs Inc., and account executive Kaitlynn Dodge have provided government relations services to PEO since 2005.