

Busy fall planned for integrated GL program

By DAVID SMITH

Following a year of planning, training and more than a few healthy debates, the activities of PEO's Government Liaison Program (GLP) have now been integrated as an ongoing part of the operations of the association.

Over the past 12 months, a project team comprising four members of PEO staff worked with the Regional Councillors Committee (RCC) and input from chapter leaders on a plan to integrate an enhanced version of the pilot Government Communications Program into PEO's day-to-day business. A draft GLP plan was presented for comment to the RCC in January and to chapter leaders at the February round of regional congresses. The status of the program and plan was then discussed at the Chapter Leaders' Conference at the annual general meeting in April, and a basic training session was held for spokespeople. The Executive Committee and Council had a look at the plan in June, and it was presented at the June round of regional congresses for final input.

Key to the program is ongoing communication with PEO licence holders about program activities, achievements, and ways to get involved. Accordingly, this is the first entry of GLP Journal, a new column in *Engineering Dimensions*, where we'll share information about what's happening with the GLP, the people involved, program tools available, and upcoming events.

Since the launch of the pilot Government Communications Program in January 2005, PEO has met almost half of Ontario's MPPs and held informal discussions with many other legislators on issues having an impact on the regulation of professional engineering.

In the coming months, a Government Liaison Program Subcommittee in each chapter will work with

Regional Councillors to oversee and manage local government contact activities, and report results to chapter executives, regional congresses and the RCC. With the support of the subcommittees, PEO staff, and public affairs consultants Brown & Cohen, local GLP spokespeople will seek out opportunities to meet with MPPs at their events, and invite MPPs to participate in chapter events. To help them get started, chapters have been provided a GLP manual, or toolkit, including information on government structure, protocols, contacts, and correspondence and invitation templates.

Campaign college

Coinciding with the ramp-up of the local outreach activities, is a call for P.Engs to also become more politically active, as volunteers for elected officials or as candidates themselves in future elections. To provide interested P.Engs with the tools and required knowledge to get more involved in politics, PEO scheduled a first-ever "campaign college" event for September 7 in Toronto. Politicians from all levels of government and representatives from the three main political parties were invited to discuss lessons learned from the campaign trail, provide an overview of the political environment and opportunities to get more politically active, and offer ways to run a campaign and mobilize support. Watch this space for a full report in the November/December issue.

Road trip

Meanwhile, PEO President Pat Quinn, P.Eng., is scheduled to tour the province in September and October to meet chapter GLP spokespeople, media and government representatives, to make PEO more visible to government officials locally and bring attention to the issues affecting the association.

Engineering for Ontarians

Plans are also firming up for PEO's second annual Engineering for Ontarians' Day with MPPs at Queen's Park, which this year is scheduled for October 23. Last year's debut event was attended by more than 170 people, including 45 MPPs and their advisors, and featured an address by Attorney General Michael Bryant. Watch PEO's website at www.peo.on.ca for details of this year's event as they become available.

GLP website

Speaking of the website, we're building a Government Liaison Program component for the "Chapter HQ" page of the chapters section of the PEO website, and filling it with information on PEO's government liaison activities, program participants and opportunities for involvement; weekly updates from Brown & Cohen; the GLP toolkit; details of upcoming political events; and news from Queen's Park. Portions of the site will be accessible only to GLP spokespeople and chapter subcommittees, Councillors and PEO staff. Other areas will have public access. Visit the site often for updates.

Council believes establishing a local spokesperson presence is key to PEO's future relations with government. The Government Liaison Program—with its current pool of more than 70 spokespeople and hopes for many more soon—aims to foster recognition by government, PEO members and the public of the association's regulatory mandate, in particular its contributions to maintaining the highest level of professionalism among engineers working in the public interest.

Your comments on the program are encouraged, as are topic suggestions and content for this column. If you have any feedback or suggestions, or would like to get involved in the program, please contact me at dsmith@peo.on.ca.