

Engineer MPPs are making a difference

By HOWARD BROWN

PEO's Government Liaison Program (GLP) has been up and running for two years. I think it has been a big success in introducing PEO to members of provincial parliament (MPPs).

There are a couple of role models at Queen's Park worth meeting as we go down to the wire for the October 10 provincial election.

Creating a voice

Phil McNeely, P.Eng., is an MPP and former engineering consultant who stepped into the political world in 2000, first as a municipal councillor and now as a Liberal MPP. For the last two years, he has served as parliamentary assistant to the minister of transportation.

McNeely became involved in politics because he wanted to create a voice for both the engineers in Ontario and the people of his riding of Ottawa-Orléans. He also wanted to use his experience as an engineer to make his riding a better place to live. He is now on the campaign trail and looking forward to the provincial election.

"My biggest surprise is not being my own boss anymore," he told *Engineering Dimensions*. "It's a big change working in government. But I feel good. I've been out door to door. I've lost weight. Talking to people is invigorating."

A classic example of showing that it's never too late to be involved in politics, McNeely, 69, says he now has the time for public service, as his children are grown up and have children of their own.

Recently, McNeely and Donna Cansfield, minister of transportation, unveiled the new 500-tonne Island Park Bridge in Ottawa, which was replaced overnight. Using innovative technology, commuters were not subject to delays, as the bridge reopened in a record-breaking 15 hours.

"It was a magic moment on Sunday, August 12, to be standing on the Queensway cutting a ribbon with Minister Cansfield to open a bridge that had been

built in less than a day," he said. "The construction crews, the engineers from industry and those from MTO could be rightfully proud of this modern-day miracle."

McNeely says he believes engineers have the power to make an impact on the environmental problems of today. "Engineers have the skills to explain the cause," he said. "And, more importantly, to find the solutions."

McNeely also brought forward the "McNeely Amendment" that seeks to keep cigarettes out of the sight of children by banning cigarette power walls in retail stores. The amendment calls for the elimination of all retail displays of tobacco by 2008.

Nine times lucky?

The other engineer who has made a difference is Norm Sterling, P.Eng., 65. Elected in 1977, he is one of the longest-serving MPPs in Ontario.

Sterling's next goal is to be elected for the ninth time as an MPP for the Progressive Conservative Party in the riding of Lanark-Carleton.

During his 30 years in provincial politics, he has been involved in various ministries. "One of the ministries I enjoyed the most was transportation, where I could use my skills as a civil engineer," he told *Engineering Dimensions*.

In Sterling's role as transportation minister, he led the initiation of the province's Interlock Ignition Program in 2002. The act was part of an effort to curb drinking and driving through the installation of an in-car alcohol breath-screening device that prevents a vehicle from starting if it detects an unacceptable blood alcohol concentration in the driver.

As an engineer, whose code of ethics compels him to regard as paramount his duty to public welfare, his position permits Sterling to give the public the opportunity to influence the Ontario Legislature.

Time to get involved

Engineers should be proud of the great example set for them by their peers. With



At the Engineering for Ontarians Day at Queen's Park in June 2005 are (left to right): Norm Sterling, P.Eng., MPP Lanark-Carleton; Ernie Parsons, P.Eng., retired MPP Prince Edward-Hastings; former PEO President Bob Goodings, P.Eng.; and Phil McNeely, P.Eng., MPP Ottawa-Orléans.

over 70,000 engineers in Ontario, there are, on average, about 700 in each riding, creating great opportunities to be involved in government policy.

McNeely is calling on the next generation to get involved in the political arena. "Engineers should run if they feel they can make a difference," he said. "They should be encouraged to compete. This is a competition."

Sterling said politics "is the most rewarding career that one could possibly seek because it gives you the ability to use many of the disciplines we have as engineers."

Having personally been involved politically for 35 years in federal and provincial politics in Ontario, I believe the PEO Government Liaison Program is a terrific example for all professionals. PEO is on the map. Instead of two engineers in the Ontario Legislature, let's set a goal of 10 engineers in the 2011 legislature.

Now is the time to get started.

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