

# BREAKING BREAD WITH AN MPP

## HOW YORK CHAPTER MADE IT HAPPEN



Gerry Meade, P.Eng. (right), chair of York Chapter's Government Liaison Program Committee, thanks MPP Frank Klees for his participation at the chapter's Breakfast Meeting with Your MPP event in June.

*By David Smith*

Recently, the York Chapter's Government Liaison Program Committee (GLPC) hosted an event that engaged an MPP with members of the local engineering community. As a result of the event's success, we invited the York GLP representatives to share their experience in making it happen.

On June 20, 2008 the York Chapter held its inaugural "Breakfast Meeting with Your MPP." The guest speaker was Frank Klees, MPP Newmarket-Aurora, caucus chair for the official opposition and critic for the ministries of transportation and public infrastructure renewal.

Klees spoke on the need for long-term planning and predictable funding for Ontario's public infrastructure. He urged the government "to put planning above politics or our infrastructure problems will never be solved."

Although the chapter's GLPC had been successful in meeting with several MPPs and having them attend such events as certificate ceremonies, design challenges and mathematics competitions, "we were looking for other ways to bring our members in closer contact with their MPPs to discuss issues of importance to our profession," said Gerry Meade, P.Eng., chair of the chapter's GLPC.

Following a brainstorming session, the GLPC decided to host a breakfast meeting to bring chapter members together with an elected representative. If the first event was successful, the chapter would plan several more with each of the six MPPs with whom it is responsible for developing relationships as part of PEO's Government Liaison Program.

They made the decision to approach Klees for several reasons: he could easily speak on a topic of interest to engineers, he had shown great interest in the role of engineers in the past, and the chapter had already met several times with Liberal members and wanted to maintain contact with the opposition party.

The event was advertised to chapter members using the PEO list server, but a little later than might be ideal. In the

future, the chapter's GLPC would like to send the first notice about six weeks in advance.

The breakfast was held at a hotel central to the riding to facilitate the attendance of members residing in Klees' riding. The local presence also attracted some municipal politicians to the event.

The GLPC planned a 30-minute networking session prior to breakfast and name badges were printed in advance.

The meeting was organized to be revenue neutral for the chapter, so they charged a nominal fee of \$20 a person to cover the cost of the hot breakfast. Although they worried that the fee might deter attendance, it did not seem to be a determining factor in anyone's decision to attend, with those attending commenting they had received excellent value for their time and money.

Arranging for local media to cover the event was difficult, but after many phone calls, the local newspaper sent a reporter who wrote an excellent article. Having media coverage is important in providing additional value to the MPPs as well as boosting the profile of the profession.

Although the event fell short of breaking even by about \$100, the York Chapter GLPC was pleased with its inaugural breakfast meeting and is planning another in the fall.

Members of the York Chapter GLPC are: Gerry Meade, P.Eng. (chair), Peter Cushman, P.Eng., Mike Mahabir, P.Eng., Jeff Mark, P.Eng., Mervat Rashwan, P.Eng., Edward Poon, P.Eng., Thayaparan Thangavelautham, P.Eng., and Nilesh Zinzuwadia, P.Eng.

Members interested in getting involved in PEO's Government Liaison Committee should contact their chapter chair, Chapter Manager Matthew Ng at [mng@peo.on.ca](mailto:mng@peo.on.ca), or me at [dsmith@peo.on.ca](mailto:dsmith@peo.on.ca). Σ