

# SEEKING PUBLIC OFFICE? COMMUNITY SERVICE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

By Howard Brown

ON MAY 23, FORMER Economic Development Minister Michael Bryant, MPP St. Paul's, announced his resignation. Many PEO members will know him better as the former attorney general of Ontario and his responsibility for the *Professional Engineers Act*.

In December 2004, Bryant advised PEO's leadership team that it was the regulator's job to ensure government's awareness of issues affecting the profession and opportunities to better serve the public interest. PEO promptly responded with the launch of its Government Liaison Program.

In July, I had the privilege of serving on the Liberal party candidate search committee for the riding of St. Paul's to help find the candidate to take Bryant's place. Over 30 potential candidates were identified through a variety of avenues, including the premier's office, St. Paul's riding association, other Liberal party members, the public and the media.

All of the potential candidates are impressive. All are professionals (although none are engineers). But what has clearly set three candidates apart—Judith Moses, Charles Finlay and Eric Hoskins—is their level of community involvement. It was these connections to their community that won the hearts of voters in the riding association.

Judith Moses has been a public servant for 30 years. She has been an active participant in her community as the current chair of Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPIY Canada), a national organization for early childhood learning, and has worked as the outreach director for the Women's Institute of Ontario.

Charles Finlay is a trial lawyer and social activist. His personal projects have garnered him admiration from his peers, choosing to spend his free time serving some of the most marginalized groups in our communities, including prisoners and the mentally ill.

Eric Hoskins is a practising doctor at a Toronto medical clinic and founding president of War Child Canada, a multi-million-dollar

Canadian charitable organization that raises funds for development programs in support of war-affected children around the world. Hoskins was also the youngest recipient of the United Nations Lester B. Pearson Peace Medal, was awarded the governor general's Meritorious Service Cross and, in 2008, was made an Officer of the Order of Canada.

The nomination meeting for these candidates was held on August 12 and Hoskins was elected after a vigorous three-week race.

In addition to Hoskins' Liberal nomination, the Progressive Conservatives are appointing *Toronto Sun* city hall columnist Sue-Ann Levy as their candidate. So far, three people are vying for the NDP nomination: former Scarborough East MPP Bob Frankford, lawyer Julian Heller, and former British Columbia Green Party leader Stuart Parker. The Green Party has chosen local realtor Chris Chopik as its candidate. The election has been called for September 17.

It's important to know that if you're thinking of running for office some day, or know someone who is, success is not assured for the person with the highest profile on day one, or based on what they do in their professional life; the key is their connection to the community.

So start now. Volunteer for a charity or the parent-teacher association, sit on a library board or coach a team. What you do doesn't have to be a high-profile position. But by showing commitment to your community, and not just through financial support, you are showing you care about those around you.

That is what voters want to know. They want to be able to trust that you have their interests in mind when you take your seat in the legislature or the council or parliament. Σ

Howard Brown is president of Brown & Cohen Communications & Public Affairs. He has worked with PEO on its Government Liaison Program since its beginning in January 2005. He has worked on public policy issues with governments for over 30 years.

## ENGINEERS INVITED TO CANDIDATE COLLEGE IN OCTOBER

On October 14, PEO and Engineers Canada are hosting the 2009 Engineers Candidate College at PEO's Toronto office to train engineers on getting elected.

If you are interested in attending, sign up for this evening event now by contacting Kendra Dubyk at Brown & Cohen Communications & Public Affairs Inc., [kendra@brown-cohen.com](mailto:kendra@brown-cohen.com).