

CALLING ALL CANDIDATES: 2014 PROVINCIAL ELECTION DEBATES PUT ENGINEERING ON THE AGENDA

By Howard Brown and Kaitlynn Dodge



MPP candidates attended a June 4 all-candidates debate organized by PEO's Mississauga Chapter. Front row (left to right) Michelle Bilek, Mississauga-Erindale (NDP), Bob Delaney, MPP–Mississauga-Streetsville (Liberal), Amrit Mangat, MPP–Mississauga-Brampton South (Liberal), Nina Tangri, Mississauga-Streetsville (PC), Pauline Thornham, Bramalea-Gore-Malton (Green), and Vivek Gupta, Mississauga-Erindale (Green). Back row, Colin Moore, P.Eng., FEC, former PEO councillor; Phil Maka, P.Eng., FEC, former PEO councillor and Engineers Canada director; Art Kirmichansky, P.Eng., PEO Mississauga Chapter chair; Khaled El-Rahi, P.Eng., Mississauga Chapter GLP chair; Paul Acchione, P.Eng., OSPE acting CEO; Lisa MacCumber; Gerard McDonald, P.Eng., PEO registrar; Thomas Chong, P.Eng., FEC, PEO president-elect; and Jeannette Chau, P.Eng., PEO manager of student and government liaison programs.

ELECTION CAMPAIGNS are fast, busy, hard to predict and over in the blink of an eye.

In Ontario, the writ was drawn up on May 7, launching the start of a 36-day campaign to be concluded on June 12. The campaign meant that engineers across the province had an opportunity to put key regulatory issues on the agenda.

As an organization committed to public safety, it was important that PEO educate candidates on the need to repeal section 12(3)(a) of the *Professional Engineers Act*, also known as the industrial exception, and its recommendations for the way inspections and other engineering activities should be done, especially in light of the Elliot Lake Inquiry.

Thanks to PEO's dedicated volunteers, three all-candidates debates took place for the 2014 provincial election in the cities of Ottawa, Kitchener and Mississauga.

The first, on May 27, was hosted by Ottawa Chapter in partnership with the Ontario Society of Professional

Engineers (OSPE), and the Kanata Career Group at the Vitesse Re-Skilling offices in Kanata.

The second, held May 30, was hosted in Kitchener by Grand River Chapter in partnership with the Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists (OACETT) at the Central Ontario Chinese Cultural Centre.

The third was hosted by Mississauga Chapter on June 4 at the Noel Ryan Auditorium in the Mississauga Central Library.

All three events were well attended, had multiple parties participate, and gave engineers in the community an



A May 30 all-candidates debate organized by PEO's Grand River Chapter attracted eight MPP candidates. Left to right, Shervin Reyhani, C.E.T. (OACETT), Wayne Wettlaufer, Kitchener Centre (PC); Marion Thompson Howell (moderator), Tracey Weiler, Waterloo (PC); Daiene Vernile, MPP-Kitchener Centre (Liberal); Jamie Burton, Waterloo (Liberal); Wayne Wright, Kitchener-Conestoga (Liberal), Catharine Fife, MPP-Waterloo (NDP), Stacey Denckert, Waterloo (Green), Gabe Tse, P.Eng., PEO Grand River Chapter GLP chair; and Margaret Johnston, Kitchener Centre (NDP).

opportunity to hear first-hand about the platforms of those up for election.

In Ottawa, issues such as the regulation of engineering, infrastructure investment and job creation attracted the participation of three candidates: Jack MacLaren, P.Eng., the incumbent Progressive Conservative candidate for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, John Hansen, P.Eng., a New Democratic Party (NDP) candidate, and Gordon Kubanek, P.Eng., a Green Party candidate.

MacLaren shared his views on how to create jobs and where the party stands on key campaign issues.

When asked if his party supports the repeal of the industrial exception, MacLaren said, "Our party does not support the repeal because we have been told that it will place an undue burden on business, especially the manufacturers in the province." He went on to say that the economy is their number one priority.

Hansen shared his experience in the IT sector and how he felt his party could help create jobs and benefit the economy, if elected. When asked about the repeal he noted, "If other provinces have done it then I don't see a reason why Ontario should be any different."

Kubanek referenced lessons from Scandinavian countries and indicated he was happy the group was looking at issues broadly and not just as they relate to Ontario. He was also supportive of the repeal.

The Kitchener debate attracted eight candidates from three ridings who met with engineers and community members and thoroughly discussed issues of importance to over 80 members of the public, of whom over half were engineers.

When asked what the candidates said regarding their position on the repeal, Gabe Tse, P.Eng., GLP chair, Grand River Chapter, reported that there was an interesting discussion on the repeal and most candidates thought it was an issue that needed more consultation.

Tse said: "Catherine Fife (incumbent NDP MPP) was passionate about promoting worker safety in Ontario industries and was supportive of the repeal of the industrial exception."

Fife and her colleague, NDP MPP Taras Natyshak, both wrote the government in June 2013 in support of the repeal of the industrial exception.

Mississauga Chapter's event also gave engineers an opportunity to meet their provincial candidates and learn their stances on issues important to the profession's regulation in Ontario. The event was well attended and positioned PEO as an organization that contributes to the democratic process in Ontario. Participants included two incumbent MPPs: Bob Delaney, who, prior to the election call, was chief government whip and parliamentary assistant to the minister of energy; and Amrit Mangat, who was also a parliamentary assistant prior to the election.

All chapters engage with local MPPs on a regular basis, which makes it easier to pull together these large events within a short period of time.

"Elections are short, but their outcomes are what determine the course of history in Ontario," says Jeannette Chau, P.Eng., PEO's manager of student and government liaison programs. "Engineers want to be involved, have a say and, where possible, contribute to giving residents an opportunity to make an informed choice on election day."

Achieving these outcomes starts with volunteers who bring people together and do the hard work to create a forum for discussion during what is often an adversarial time in the political process. Σ

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