

TAKE YOUR MPP TO WORK DAY CONTINUES TO GROW IN POPULARITY WITH CHAPTERS

By Howard Brown



Sophie Kiwala, MPP, Kingston and the Islands (in grey jacket), participated in Kingston Chapter's first Take Your MPP to Work Day, which was hosted at the Bombardier Transportation Systems engineering site in Kingston on March 13. With Kiwala are, from left to right, Frederick Bourgoïn, P.Eng., manager, test and commissioning, Bombardier Transportation; Sangeeta Shakrawar, EIT; Bruce Anderson, P.Eng.; Chris Van Der Vyver, director of engineering, Bombardier; Florentin Blejdea, general manager and head of operations, Bombardier; Doug Hamilton, P.Eng., Kingston Chapter chair; Darla Campbell, P.Eng., PEO Government Liaison Committee chair; Harald Muller-Scholten, EIT, Kingston Chapter secretary; Charles Kidd, P.Eng., PEO Eastern Region councillor; Doug Hatfield, P.Eng., Kingston Chapter treasurer; Susan Clancy, finance manager, Bombardier; and Marko Kroenke, director of product development, Bombardier. Missing from the photo is Kingston Chapter GLP Chair Hafiz Bashir, P.Eng.

IN THE TWO YEARS since PEO first launched its Take Your MPP to Work Day, it has become one of PEO's most successful Government Liaison Program initiatives.

On March 13, Sophie Kiwala, the new MPP for Kingston and the Islands, participated in the program.

Kiwala, who is also the parliamentary assistant to the minister of tourism, culture and sport, spoke in the legislature on March 30 to describe her experience:

"Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge our province's world-class engineers. Recently, I was asked by Professional Engineers Ontario to take part in their 'Take Your MPP to Work program.'

"I would like to thank Darla Campbell, P.Eng., and Hafiz Bashir, P.Eng., the government liaison chairs [provincially and locally], for putting the event together.

"The good work done by our diligent engineers largely takes place behind the scenes, but one major aspect of their work—safety—affects us all every day.

"I commend PEO for their leadership in developing standards that prioritize the safety of Ontarians and, furthermore, I would like to recognize them for encouraging female participation in engineering.

"We still have a ways to go, but with their strong support, and three of the last five presidents being women, including Annette Bergeron [P.Eng., FEC] from my riding of Kingston and the Islands, PEO has established positive, inspiring female role models for the engineers of tomorrow.

"Going to the 'front lines' (in my community) is a priority for me, so I was thrilled that my visit took me to Bombardier's state-of-the-art light rail transit design, testing and manufacturing facility just outside Kingston.

"Their 450-plus highly skilled employees are, right now, building rail transit for cities around the globe literally from the ground up for delivery to South Africa, Brazil, Kuala Lumpur and Vancouver.

"Mr. Speaker, at a time when governments are focusing on environmental stewardship and fiscal responsibility, it is very exciting that rail transit optimized to these requirements is being produced right here in Ontario."

Bashir is the GLP chair for PEO's Kingston Chapter and a member of the PEO Government Liaison Committee, which is chaired by Campbell.

Based on a similar initiative by the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, PEO's Take Your MPP to Work Days have attracted the following MPPs at events across the province:

- Kevin Flynn, MPP (Oakville), minister of labour, visited Siemens Canada with PEO's Oakville Chapter. At the time, he was the parliamentary assistant to the minister of transportation;

- Cindy Forster, MPP (Welland), NDP labour critic and caucus chair, visited Niagara College with PEO's Niagara Chapter. At the time, she was NDP municipal affairs and housing critic;
- Bob Bailey, MPP (Sarnia-Lambton), PC natural resources critic, visited Shell Canada's refinery facility in Sarnia with PEO's Lambton Chapter;
- Mike Colle, MPP (Eglinton-Lawrence), parliamentary assistant to the minister of labour, visited the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute with PEO's West Toronto Chapter. At the time, he was the parliamentary assistant to the minister of transportation;
- Teresa Armstrong, MPP (London-Fanshawe), NDP critic for citizenship, immigration and international trade and seniors' affairs, visited the Upper Thames Valley Conservation Authority with PEO's London Chapter; and
- Arthur Potts, MPP (Beaches-East York), parliamentary assistant to the minister of agriculture, food and rural affairs, visited the R. C. Harris Water Treatment Plant with PEO's East Toronto Chapter.

"This initiative has taken on a life of its own," says Jeannette Chau, P.Eng., PEO's manager, student and government liaison programs. "Chapters are coming forward and volunteering to host the Take Your MPP to Work Days. MPPs are excited to be involved and so are the companies invited. It is an excellent way for PEO chapters and professional engineers to build a relationship with their local MPPs, and for MPPs to learn about the contributions engineers and engineering companies make to their local communities through their work, and the mandate of PEO to regulate professional engineering to protect public safety."

"The success of the initiative is largely a result of the enthusiasm of PEO chapter GLP representatives working closely with their MPPs," says Chau.

"Each one is so unique," says Campbell, who has participated in four of the Take Your MPP to Work Days. "I think we have found a way to really connect with our elected officials." Σ

Howard Brown is president of Brown & Cohen Communications & Public Affairs Inc. and is PEO's government relations consultant.

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