

A NEW APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

By Howard Brown and Blake Keidan

The beginning of 2017 saw a dramatic change in the way politicians are allowed to do business in Ontario: they are no longer able to attend fundraisers. Plus, corporations and unions are banned from making political donations. The new rules should be welcomed because they provide us with a more open government.

For organizations like PEO, there are implications to the way they build and maintain relationships with MPPs. As a result, PEO's Government Liaison Program (GLP) initiatives, such as Take Your MPP to Work Day and academies and congresses, have become the focus of PEO outreach.

CHAPTER TRAINING

One of the most important parts of the GLP is making sure PEO chapter volunteers have the tools they need to succeed. This is the goal behind PEO's academy and congress initiative, a one-day training session on government process and engagement.

This forum is where chapter members can hear from local MPPs and government relations professionals about their expertise. Guest speakers offer insights into how members can build strong relationships with local politicians. At the core of the program is the opportunity to learn about approaching and engaging MPPs, regional and municipal council representatives, political parties and community leaders on matters pertaining to the engineering profession. Engineers can also discuss issues concerning public safety and regulations, governing engineers as well as the development of Ontario.

"GLP regional academies offer GLP chairs an opportunity for professional development in the areas of government liaison activities," says PEO Manager of Government Liaison Programs Jeannette Chau, P.Eng. "Interfacing with politicians is not necessarily something that many engineers are exposed to, so it is important that they have the proper training and knowledge to do this effectively."

There are additional benefits, as the training is more local, and PEO can reach out to local MPPs and help foster the relationship between them and the members at the grassroots chapter level: "The smaller, regional settings for the academies allow for more one-on-one training and the ability to address specific needs and questions of individual GLP members," says Chau. "It allows for more time to gain a good understanding of the current regulatory issues facing our profession."

In the last five years, PEO has hosted 16 academy and congress programs. In 2011 and 2016 it held a full-day Government Relations Conference.

The 2016 Government Relations Conference, jointly hosted by PEO and the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), was held on October 26, 2016. The conference

keynote speaker was NDP Leader Andrea Horwath, MPP (Hamilton Centre). Attendees also heard from Arthur Potts, MPP (Beaches-East York), parliamentary assistant to the minister of the environment and climate change; Jim McDonnell, P.Eng., MPP (Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry), PC government and consumer services critic; and Catherine Fife, MPP (Kitchener-Waterloo), NDP early years, childcare, economic development, employment, research and innovation critic, in a panel discussion.

MPPs AT WORK

Launched in 2013, the Take Your MPP to Work Day program allows PEO chapters to invite local MPPs to visit engineering companies. Through facility tours and discussions, the MPP becomes more familiar with the different aspects of the work done by PEO members.

"It is an opportunity to bring together three parties: PEO chapters, professional engineers at their place of business, and MPPs," says Government Liaison Committee Chair Darla Campbell, P.Eng. "The MPP gets to meet engineers and learn first-hand about the work of engineers. The MPP also gets to meet with a business (that employs engineers) in their community. The business gets to celebrate their successes with the MPP while highlighting the work of P.Engs."

PEO chapters have hosted 16 of these initiatives since its inception. Six events were held last year alone, including the first joint chapter event. Ministers, parliamentary assistants and critics from all three parties have taken part, expanding their knowledge of the engineering profession and building stronger local relationships.

MOVING FORWARD

Given the scale of change in the political rules, PEO members need to seek fresh ways to engage our elected officials. The work done over the past decade by PEO members to build strong ties with MPPs illustrates the success of our strategy. But now, a new approach is required so none of the momentum is lost. To ensure our standing, all members need to be part of the drive towards greater engagement in the coming months.

If your chapter is interested in hosting a Take Your MPP to Work Day or an academy and congress in 2017, contact Jeannette Chau at jchau@peo.on.ca. [!\[\]\(19d44b37fb4fa155bf9d60c77a3d3cb2_img.jpg\)](#)

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NDP House Leader Gilles Bisson, MPP (Timmins-James Bay) (front row, centre left), and Timmins Mayor Steve Black, P.Eng. (front row, centre right), were guest speakers at PEO's Northern Region Academy and Congress in Timmins, Ontario. With them in the photo are (back row, left to right) then PEO student and government liaison programs coordinator Gonzalo Piñeros, EIT; Algoma Chapter representative Marc Pilon, EIT; Sudbury GLP Chair Mehwish Obaid, P.Eng.; Sudbury Chapter representative Alice Bom, P.Eng.; North Bay Chapter Chair Lindsay Keats, P.Eng.; Porcupine-Kapuskasing Chapter representative Wayne Mohns, P.Eng.; and (front row, left to right) Porcupine-Kapuskasing GLP Chair Tony Linton, P.Eng.; Lakehead Chapter representative Amalia Rey-McIntyre, P.Eng.; PEO Manager of Student and Government Liaison Programs Jeannette Chau, P.Eng.; and Porcupine-Kapuskasing Chapter Chair Michael Barker, P.Eng.

Labour Minister Kevin Flynn, MPP (Oakville) (far left); Indira Naidoo-Harris, MPP (Halton), minister responsible for early years, child care, and women's issues (far right); and Amrit Mangat, MPP (Mississauga-Brampton South), parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues, and to the minister responsible for accessibility (second from right), participated in the first-ever joint Take Your MPP to Work Day event. With them in the photo are PEO Mississauga Chapter GLP Vice Chair Karanjeet Singh, P.Eng. (second from left), and PEO Oakville Chapter GLP Chair Jeffrey Lee, P.Eng. (centre).



Jeff Yurek, MPP (Elgin-Middlesex-London), PC health critic (back row, second from right), at a Take Your MPP to Work Day event hosted by PEO's London Chapter. Participating were (back row, left to right) PEO London Chapter members Kevin Spicer, P.Eng., Remona Johnson, P.Eng., Matt Miedema, P.Eng., Julian Novick, P.Eng., and Luke Seewald P.Eng.; Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) Policy Analyst Patrick Sackville; former PEO London Chapter chair Oscar Avila, P.Eng.; Government Liaison Committee Chair Darla Campbell, P.Eng.; PEO London Chapter Chair Imtiaj Shah, P.Eng.; and (front row) Presstran Industries Department Leader of Business Development Tom Brier and PEO London Chapter GLP Chair Iretomiwa Olukiyesi, P.Eng.