

# PREPARING ENGINEERS FOR PUBLIC OFFICE

By David Smith

PEO TOOK AN IMPORTANT step towards its goal of having 11 engineers in the 2011 legislature by co-hosting its first annual candidate college with Engineers Canada on October 14.

Politicians from all levels of government and representatives from the three main political parties joined 140 participants for a discussion on how engineers can take their expertise, experiences and leadership skills and turn them into a life in public office.

“The leadership role engineers play in society should extend naturally to a life in public office. But up to now it has not, as today there are only two engineers in the legislature: Phil McNeely and Norm Sterling,” said PEO President Catherine Karakatsanis, P.Eng.

“PEO has set a goal of electing 11 engineers in the 2011 legislature, in part to raise our profile at Queen’s Park, but also so our profession can shoulder its fair share of the task of governing this province in the public interest.”

The workshop was originally scheduled to be held at PEO headquarters but was moved to the Westin Prince Hotel to accommodate the overwhelming demand.

“Clearly, we’re on the right track,” added Karakatsanis.

The workshop featured presentations from seven in the political arena, including Norm Sterling, P.Eng., MPP Carleton-Mississippi Mills; Martha Hall Findlay, MP Willowdale; David Zimmer, parliamentary assistant to the attorney general, MPP Willowdale; Christine Elliott, MPP Whitby-Oshawa; Peter Tabuns, MPP Toronto-Danforth; Jack Heath, Markham deputy mayor and former president, Ontario Liberal Party; and Tim Reid, former Scarborough East MPP and former president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

The speakers covered a variety of topics, such as how to win a nomination, build your profile, raise money, build an election team, run a cam-



PEO President Catherine Karakatsanis, P.Eng., welcomes the contingent of aspiring politicians to the first annual PEO/Engineers Canada candidate college workshop. Looking on are Christine Elliott, MPP Whitby-Oshawa, and Peter Tabuns, MPP Toronto-Danforth.

paign and mobilize support. They each also led a breakout session that enabled participants to talk directly with the experts.

Christine Elliott was quick to dismiss any perceived mystique about politics attendees may have had. “Politics is not rocket science. There’s no magic to it. It’s all about organization and hard work,” she said. “Engineers bring a particular skill set there that will allow you to be successful at that, and that’s a large part of the work you have to do in building a team to get yourself elected.”

Veteran MPP Norm Sterling spoke of the value of having more engineers in public office. “You are the wealth creators in our province and in our country, and my view is you do not have your fair say in how our governments are run,” he said. “So I encourage each and every one of you to become involved in politics. It is probably the most noble profession you can get into...because you are in the position to really help people and to help shape our future.”

To watch an edited video of the event, visit PEO’s website at [www.peo.on.ca](http://www.peo.on.ca). DVDs are also available on request by contacting me at [dsmith@peo.on.ca](mailto:dsmith@peo.on.ca). Σ