

SIX ONTARIO PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS FILL CITY COUNCIL SEATS

By Howard Brown

The Ontario municipal elections in October 2018 saw 14 known professional engineers running for office. Six P.Engs, including two former PEO presidents, won seats on their local councils. They are:

- George Comrie, P.Eng., FEC, who won re-election for a second term as councillor in Whitestone. He finished first out of seven candidates with 733 votes. At PEO, he served two terms as president, in 2004–2005 and 2016–2017;
- Andrew Dowie, P.Eng., in Tecumseh Ward 1 and Bill Altenhof, P.Eng., in Tecumseh Ward 2, who were both acclaimed;
- Diane Freeman, P.Eng., FEC, PEO president for 2010–2011, who was re-elected for a fourth term on Waterloo City Council in Ward 4. She finished first with 2461 votes—1467 more than her opponent;
- Ron Starr, P.Eng., who was re-elected in Mississauga as city councillor for Ward 6. He finished first out of 11 candidates with 4859 votes—347 more than his opponent, accounting for 36.2 per cent of the total votes; and
- Ian McDougall, P.Eng., who was elected Ward 1 councillor in Scugog. He finished first out of four candidates with 681 votes—426 more than his opponent, accounting for 42.67 per cent of the total votes.

Across Ontario, other professional engineers who ran in the elections include: Mike Bell, P.Eng., for Hamilton City Council in Ward 12 (Ancaster); Steve Black, P.Eng., for re-election as mayor in Timmins; Thomas Chong, P.Eng., for York Region District School Board in Wards 3, 5 and 6 (Richmond Hill); Elie Diab, P.Eng., for Mississauga City Council in Ward 6; Wayne Hancock, P.Eng., for mayor of Minden Hills Township; Andrew Herbst, P.Eng., for Toronto City Council in Ward 18 (Willowdale); Michel LaBonte, P.Eng., for Upper Canada School Board Trustee in Ward 5 (Brockville and Maynard); and José Vera, P.Eng., for Toronto City Council in Ward 4 (Parkdale-High Park). Congratulations are in order for all 14 engineers who stepped up to run and contribute to public service.

A FIRST-TIME P.ENG. CITY COUNCILLOR

Engineering Dimensions had a chance to interview Ian McDougall, P.Eng., the only engineer to be elected on his or her first run for office. McDougall outlined what made him successful, why it is important for engineers to run and the issues that he will be facing in the next four years.

McDougall was elected as the Ward 1 councillor in the Town of Scugog. His victory is a notable one: He distributed only one piece of literature, knocked on every single door in his ward, and executed his entire campaign on only \$2,700.

At only 46 years old and the father of four girls, McDougall heads up his own engineering firm in Whitby, where he works with large industrial, agricultural and residential clients. He also runs a 15-acre farm where, as per his brochure, he “takes care of his chickens.”

On his success, McDougall notes that it is his engineering background that makes him the ideal candidate. “My strength is my engineering background in the sense that engineering teaches you strong problem-solving skills,” he says. “As engineers, we learn to go around mountains and not through them.”

McDougall stresses the need for engineers in public office. With a “lack of STEM-educated professionals present in the government, how can we make decisions that are going to be sustainable and smart?” he asks.

McDougall also has a genuine concern for the environment. His first item of business as councillor will be to “consider the environmental sustainability of the township, as it is critical for me to support our greenbelt.”

Before the election, McDougall was involved at the regional level with Durham Region’s Active Transportation Committee, Vision Zero and the Cycling Coalition. He is an outdoors person: He cycles, hikes, swims, boats, runs, boards and skis.

When he joined the Durham Region committee, he took on a leadership role and urged the committee to create an official trails definition, saying “I am an engineer; we need an official definition.”

Lindsey Park, MPP (Durham), parliamentary assistant to the attorney general was on his team for a local cycling event. In fact, she publicly congratulated him for his successful election at PEO’s 12th annual Queen’s Park reception on October 24 (see p. 9).

To inspire and implement change, “it is important to understand the drivers behind governance,” McDougall says. He summarizes it in a simple message that can also be used to describe his aspirations and driving force as councillor of Ward 1 in Scugog: “We’ll get it done.” **e**

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