

Dr Ben Torchinsky **Canadian Foundation for Geotechnique's 3rd Legacy Donor**

The Canadian Foundation for Geotechnique's *Legacy Donor Program* was established in the Fall of 2008 to honour individuals who have donated, or who donate, \$25,000 or more to the Foundation. In 2009 the Foundation honoured its first two Legacy Donors, Dr Jack Mollard and Mr Charles Ripley (1922–2007).

Doug VanDine, President of the Foundation, is very pleased to announce its 3rd Legacy Donor, **Dr Ben Torchinsky**. Dr Torchinsky graduated from the Civil Engineering program at the University of Alberta with a BSc (1947) and a MSc (1949). In 2003 he was honoured by that university with an Honorary Doctor of Science.

In the early 1950s Dr Torchinsky taught soil mechanics at the University of Saskatchewan. While there he carried out extensive research into highly plastic clays that shrink and swell with changes in moisture content, and developed, what was then, a novel foundation technique to deal with the problem – deep foundation, drilled caissons. In 1952 he founded BB Torchinsky and Associates Ltd, an engineering consulting firm, and in 1954 he founded Western Caissons Ltd, a foundation contracting company. Dr Torchinsky left the university in 1957 to devote his full time to his businesses.

Over the next four decades both his consulting and contracting companies flourished, and eventually expanded into the multi-faceted public company, AGRA. In 1999, the year before its merger with AMEC, AGRA employed 6,500 people in 160 offices in 24 countries.

Over the years, while continuing to provide leadership to his geotechnically-related companies, Dr Torchinsky pioneered several other businesses: a cable television system, an all-news radio station, a canola crushing plant, a plastic recycling company, and a electronic toll highway – all “firsts” in Canada. Another of his companies developed the thin film technology used by the Bank of Canada to protect its bank notes against counterfeiting. Since “retiring” in 2000, Dr Torchinsky has maintained an interest in a number of companies, including one that constructs offshore wind farms in Europe.

Dr Torchinsky is a lifetime member of both the Association of Professional Engineers of Saskatchewan and the American Society of Civil Engineers. Among other organizations, he is a member of the Canadian Geotechnical Society, Engineering Institute of Canada, and a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Engineering. Dr Torchinsky is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Sir John Kennedy Medal from the Engineering Institute of Canada, its most senior award, and the Beaubien Award from the Association of Consulting Engineers on Canada, its highest distinction.

Dr Torchinsky will be honoured by the Canadian Foundation for Geotechnique at the 63rd Canadian Geotechnical Conference's Awards Banquet in Calgary, in September 2010.

The following is some background to the *Legacy Donor Program*. Contributions can take the form of cash, securities or bequests. Contributions can be made by an individual or by a group of individuals to honour another's passing. Contributions can be targeted to one of the Foundation's existing initiatives or to the Foundation for unspecified purposes.

Legacy Donors will be honoured at a Canadian Geotechnical Conference Awards Banquet, in the *Geotechnical News* and on the Foundation's website. Each year, when the Foundation honours its new Legacy Donors, all previous Legacy Donors will be recounted. The amount of the contribution will never be disclosed.



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