

## **PAULO BRANCO JR. (1955–2019)**

By P.K. Chatterji, Heinrich Heinz, Jason Lee and Weiss Mehdawi



The Southern Ontario and Canadian geotechnical communities lost a gifted engineer and a good friend to many, with the passing of Paulo Branco on October 9, 2019.

Paulo was born and raised in São Paulo, Brazil and received his BSc in Civil Engineering from the University of São Paulo in 1977. He obtained his MSc and PhD in Civil Engineering at the University of Alberta in 1981 and 1988, respectively, under the supervision of the late Dan Eisenstein. Nordie Morgenstern, also close to Paulo's PhD research in oil sands geotechnique, once described it as "having been conducted with distinction and aptly combining theory with practice" – this was a hallmark of Paulo's professional career.

Paulo emigrated to Canada in 1990 to join Thurber Engineering Ltd, where he remained for the remainder of his career, initially in Edmonton and later in Toronto. At Thurber, Paulo progressed from project engineer to partner and director of the firm. He was regarded as a technical leader and mentor, generous with his time and always willing to help others, and a wise voice on Thurber's board of directors. Although his major interest was in tunnelling, he also worked on a variety of other projects, including bridge foundations and embankments on soft ground. Paulo was also an able numerical modeller and made important contributions in the field of damage assessment to structures due to underground construction.

In addition to his technical and business activities at Thurber, Paulo was involved with professional associations such as the Canadian Geotechnical Society and the Tunnelling Association of Canada, rising to positions of leadership in both. He was a member of the Executive of the CGS Southern Ontario Section for many years, occupying the position of Chairman in 2001-2002 and Regional Director from 2003 to 2006. He was also a member of the Foundations Technical Subcommittee for the Canadian Highways Bridge Design Code from 2003 to 2015. The CGS Southern Ontario Section recognized his contributions in 2014, with their annual award.

An avid cyclist and runner, Paulo completed the Boston marathon, as well as the Wisconsin Ironman triathlon. His most important personal success, however, was his family. With his wife Lucila (a retired banker) they raised three daughters: Patricia (medical doctor), Renata (high school teacher) and Monica (business analyst). They have eight grandchildren, whose presence in his life Paulo enjoyed immensely until the time of his passing.

Footnote from Paulo's family: Paulo fought a long battle with ALS, a degenerative disease for which there is no cure. People and families affected by ALS are faced with significant emotional and financial challenges. Contributions in Paulo's memory can be made to the ALS Clinic at the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation <https://hamiltonhealth.ca/memorialgiving/> please select for designation "OTHER" and type in "ALS Clinic" in the box provided.