

## Environmental Business Council Formed

by Patrick L. Porter

A vital new growth industry has been discovered in Massachusetts and it's about to form a business council all it's own.

According to preliminary data gathered by the state Office of Economic Affairs, about 30,000 people are employed by Massachusetts-based energy and environmental engineering firms. And the industry is growing by as much as 25 to 30 percent annually. Despite its size, however, the state's energy and environmental engineering organizations have labored in relative obscurity.

Now, thanks to some initial prodding from Gov. Michael Dukakis — and four months of hard work by Boston attorney Donald Connors — companies, universities, consultants and scientists who work on energy and environmental subjects will soon have a professional council to represent their interests.

The first informal gathering of the Environmental Business Council will be held at the Vista Hotel in Waltham on November 16 from 7:30 to 9:30 AM. At that gathering, a panel will debrief Gov. Dukakis and the environmental engineers who accompanied him on a recent trade mission to Europe.

According to Connors, an environmental lawyer with 20 years experience, the Environmental Council grew out of conversations he had with Gov. Dukakis, Secretary of Economic Affairs, Alden Raine, and other members of the governor's staff.

The first meeting between Connors and Dukakis occurred at an export conference for environmental engineering firms last July. Dukakis was impressed with the turnout and wondered if a business council could help the industry promote its interests and deal more effectively with state government.

Dukakis was talking to the right man. Connors, a senior partner at Choate, Hall & Stewart, has a profound knowledge of the global environmental

engineering industry. During the past two decades, Connors has been involved in environmental issues on behalf of clients in the United States, Europe, Japan and China. Thanks to his experience, Connors was in a good position to advise the governor and a small group of key business executives about the state's relative strength in the environmental engineering field.

"When it comes to expertise about the environment there is something really unique about Massachusetts," says Connors. "It's special because there are to be found in our region so many people of extraordinary talent. In terms of environmental engineering and science, I don't believe there is such a collection of talent anywhere else in the world."

During the past four months, Connors has drawn together a group of prominent business executives to help start the council and establish its structure and goals. Connors expects to have the council fully formed and functioning by January.

Connors says many well-known industry leaders are helping to make the Environmental Council a reality. Among them: Dan Moon, a consultant who each year organizes the New England Environmental Expo in Boston; John Driscoll, president of HNU systems; Sherif Fam, president of Thermo Energy Systems; Nancy Howard, head of the Bank of Boston's environmental financing group, and many more.