



Ontario Association
of Architects

Fall 2019 OAA Architectural Society Workshop

SESSION REPORT

OVERVIEW

Society's Chairs and Council liaisons met at the OAA Headquarters for their annual Fall workshop on September 20, 2019, providing an opportunity for feedback, open discussion and new ideas.

OAA President, Kathleen Kurtin welcomed all to the meeting and opened the session with a brief overview and update on progress related to Council's priorities for 2019 which were discussed at May Society chair meeting: the establishment of a new Comprehensive Education Committee; Membership Engagement; and, Inclusiveness, Equity and Diversity.

The morning session focused on local membership engagement.

The groups were also challenged to consider the value of a more symbiotic relationship between Architects/Licensed Technologists OAA/ and intern architects, encouraging all members to join and participate in society activities.

The afternoon session included an update by Immediate Past President, John Stephenson on the development of an Architectural Policy for Canada (APC), followed by an open discussion focusing on local society issues and concerns. This discussion included diverse topics such as linking the OAA to local communities; sharing materials including regulatory information and enforcement by the OAA, strengthening the relationship among Societies as well as directly with the OAA.

This report will be shared at the November 2019 Council meeting for information.

Society Chairs are encouraged to share the information with local members to ensure that two-way communication continues and is further enhanced. The report also includes specific action items as agreed to at the end of the meeting.

The following represents the agreed to action items at the close of the session. Work on moving these key items forward will begin shortly.

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

- **Establish a standing date for a periodic conference or skype call with the society chairs and liaisons would be useful to increase engagement and connection during the year – i.e. every 6 – 8 weeks.**
 - **Not everyone will make all meetings/calls, those than can make it will do so.**
 - **Some calls could be a check-in with no set agenda, others will have specific agendas.**

- OAA Architectural grad will set a schedule and circulate
 - One call each year will be focused on a review of the Society Manual – running a local society orientation, etc. OAA to create the agenda and format for that meeting.
- **Next Society Chairs Meeting in May will include:**
 - A presentation/discussion segment from individual societies focused on “greatest hits” of their year. Activities that are of most interest and that have been successful and share with the rest of the group to foster better communication and sharing of ideas
 - A current and relevant topic for the profession and/or society should be chosen as a forum/workshop discussion among the chairs (i.e. what does climate crisis mean for the profession)
- **Societies to consider a current and relevant topic that could be established as an open forum discussion and debate that each society could undertake locally once a year and then share ideas amongst societies (similar to above)**
- **Individual Societies to consider a short Survey (survey monkey format) to their members to get feedback regarding engagement activities of interest; society initiatives and focus for their societies work, etc.**
- **Consider ways to optimize use of the Society Portal on the new OAA Website and create e-communities for Society Chairs to access information and resources that are society specific.**
- **Review current Society boundaries and composition – what is in regulation?**
- **Society Chairs were interested in a common format for an e-newsletter that they could use individually; however not all wish to do a newsletter.**
- **OAA staff will forward a copy of the information to members regarding the OAA survey and encourage all to participate.**
- **Consistency in the Architectural Graduates Email address for use with Societies (don’t use individual graduate’s email).**

**DETAILED
DISCUSSION**

**MORNING
SESSION**

The following is a summary of the discussion/comments gathered during the day.

Membership Engagement

The meeting broke into smaller groups to brainstorm ideas regarding the challenges that both societies and the OAA are facing around membership engagement. Areas of discussion and exploration included:

- What do we mean by membership engagement?
- Level of engagement – with the OAA; the profession; the public
- The importance and impact of all three levels
- Sharing what has been effective for societies locally
- Brainstorm new ideas for engagement

Each table elected a spokesperson and the following is a summary of the ideas and directions regarding Membership Engagement that were presented.

There was general consensus that including interns, students and allied professionals as members of the society and/or as associates is of benefit make societies richer and more diverse. Engagement should go beyond the profession and reach to the public, other disciplines and to the schools. There was considerable discussion about enhancing efforts to reach out to the universities and the local elementary and high schools.

There was discussion regarding challenges around engagement due to geographical location vs. society boundaries and as a result whether the boundaries can be reviewed and possibly changed. How Societies capture individuals however has been a challenge and how they might reach out in a more proactive way was discussed. Creating a stronger relationship and thus fostering engagement with simple tools such as skype calls among members, students, and societies would be useful and easy to arrange.

The group discussed ways to strengthen the relationship among societies by using a common communication platform and sharing operating principles and ideas. More frequent 'check-ins' amongst Chairs would be useful.

Providing education was identified as a key way to foster better engagement. Not only with members but also with the public and local municipalities. The group discussed using attention-grabbing topics, such as climate crisis, for better engagement and to encourage professionals to participate in debate and dialogue. Crafting controversial topics that resonate with the public/practitioner relationship in a comprehensive manner is a great idea.

**AFTERNOON
SESSION**

Creating social networks between schools and other institutions, such as museums and local societies that can benefit both will generate better engagement as well.

Establishing a standard item for the annual meeting of the Societies where they can present in a 'greatest hits format' was also discussed. It was suggested that the spring Society meeting include a focused discussion on a current topic or societal issue -- -- like a forum debate.

Architecture Policy for Canada: RISE for Architecture

Immediate Past President Stephenson reported on the status of the development of an Architectural Policy for Canada. Stephenson distributed a copy of draft materials that have been developed to aid in the national consultation process which is now underway. He noted that the project has been branded as *RISE for Architecture*. Topics discussed with the group included: a stronger understanding of design and environment, the public consultation process being launched across the country, creating a model and branding to consult between politicians and community, and the importance of this dynamic.

The APC will help establish a stronger understanding of design and its impact on the environment and society. This project is a critical opportunity to engage the profession and community in the same conversation. The goal is to create a national conversation around architecture from various perspectives and in the broader context across the country and ultimately to push the matter onto the political agenda. The document distributed provides a guide to the full concept and focus of the public consultation.

A national website has been established along with various social media platforms.

The group discussed how each of the local societies could become involved in the member and public consultation process over the next 12 months. Stephenson indicated that the national committee will be reaching out shortly to individual societies and provide details and further instructions regarding options for setting up local workshops.

OPEN TOPIC DISCUSSION AND GROUP FEEDBACK

The President asked for feedback from the group regarding the value of the annual President-Society meetings each fall

The majority of the Society Chairs indicated that they see considerable value in the annual tour and those attending appreciate the in-person connection with the OAA.

The group felt that creating an equal dialogue between the president and members is important. It was suggested that in future it might be useful to

focus the agenda on three specific issues to enhance the interaction among members. It was further suggested that the agenda be split half for president's/council agenda and half for members' items.

OAA's annual Special Project Funding Program

The President described the annual process and noted that some additional changes will be made to increase access to the funding and equity across the societies. It was noted however that the amount each year fluctuates and is a function of the annual budgeting process. OAA Council appreciates and supports the efforts being put forward by the society to engage in programs under the program.

The Comprehensive Education Committee

The group commended the mandate of the new Comprehensive Education Committee. Recognizing Gaps in the progression of learning and education from child to retirement is important.

There was discussion regarding the need to ensure the profession is current and up to date – the new Construction Act and financial literacy were cited as examples, Architects and Licensed Technologists need to know this!

The idea of a better connection with younger students who will be future clients was noted as well as the need for more effort to show that architecture is an option for high school students. Societies can help with this local outreach.

The importance of the results of the Survey 2019 is vital in informing OAA programs and services. Participating in activities with art teachers can help educate students in architecture.

World Architecture Day and OAA Queen's Park Event

As the final item of the day the President opened the floor to a presentation and discussion regarding World Architecture Day. The President asked OAA Vice President Strategic, Gord Erskine to speak to the group regarding World Architecture Day and the OAA's annual Queen's Park event. The President also welcomed OAA Manager, Policy & Government Relations to the meeting to provide additional details.

The OAA's QP event is scheduled for December 10, 2019, noting that it had to be rescheduled away from World Architecture Day this year due to the legislative break. MPPs are asked each year to nominate a local building. Eight Queen's Park Picks are selected, researched, and mounted into an exhibit at the event. These are also shared virtually through OAA channels and with media. Each QP Pick display is typically paired with a representative from the design team and the local Society Chair and/or their representative.

Together, the two participants are expected to discuss the project with MPPs and other notable guests.

It was noted that MPPs are particularly interested in speaking with people directly from their ridings to learn about some local issues and concerns. Being able to tell MPPs that local architects are participating encourages MPPs from your region to attend and take interest in the event.

MPP meetings are also arranged for early in the afternoon. Local representation by Society Chairs or their representatives is extremely valued by MPPs who want to meet with their constituents.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m. The President thanked all for attending and for the very positive level of engagement and participation in the workshop format.