



Ontario Association of Architects

April 7, 2020

The Honourable Steve Clark, MPP  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
17th Floor  
777 Bay St.  
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5

[sent via email]

Dear Minister,

The Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) is the licensing body and professional association for the province's architects. It was established under a provincial mandate to regulate the practice of architecture "in order that the public interest may be served and protected." The profession's responsibility to the public interest is incredibly important during this pandemic, and architects stand ready to help. Indeed, some of our architectural firms and schools with 3D printers have begun making critical pieces for frontline healthcare workers.

All levels of government have referenced the need for additional health-care units, shelters, and emergency clinics to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. These projects require the expertise of not only architects, but also municipal building officials. It is critical that everyone be able to work together safely, maintaining physical distancing practices. It is also important that processes be streamlined and expedited for this work to move forward as quickly and responsibly as possible. To this end, I offer the following suggestions on behalf of the architecture profession.

**1. Fully embrace the potential of digital services.**

Ontario should encourage municipalities to implement digitally processed permit applications, reviews, and issuing wherever possible. Cities that have already led the way using new technologies can continue to show leadership and resiliency by leveraging these existing processes to provide services during the COVID-19 crisis. Digital services can also be expanded to include site reviews and inspections by introducing simple protocols such as live webcams and real-time mobile video calls that facilitate physical distancing.

**2. Enable municipal building officials to work with their "essential" counterparts.**

While professional services were removed from the "essential services" list, Ontario's architects would still be considered essential under many scenarios including various construction projects and services as well as the supply chain provision. By the same logic, we believe that officials in municipal building and planning departments would also be considered essential. While architects are ready and prepared to step into action wherever needed, we need our counterparts to continue operating so we can bring critical health-care projects to fruition.

Maintaining good-quality construction with strong infection control protocols in place is critical. To achieve this, we strongly recommend remote technologies be explored as a means that we can all work together. If there are functions that can be safely done without risk to planning and building officials, or those serving on associated panels, committees, boards, and tribunals, then that work should continue.

If you have any questions, wish to discuss any of this further, or would like the architecture profession's perspective on any matters, I am always open to discussion. I would look forward to working with you.

Thank you for your continued leadership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Kurtin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Kathleen Kurtin, Architect  
OAA, FRAIC  
President

