

Ask the Candidates I John Stephenson

Electoral District: Province of Ontario

Question 1: Are you a Climate Change Denier? If you answer yes, I'll vote for you.

From: Don Bielech
City: Toronto

A: The building sector is the single largest contributor of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere and in my view there is no doubt that these are impacting our climate. The OAA should be advocating for the leadership role that architects are playing in reducing these impacts through design and at the same time it should be encouraging our profession to do more. If we want society and ultimately our clients to value the work that we do then it is imperative that we are seen to be fully and meaningfully engaged in the conversation about issues such as this that are of such important public interest. It's also critical that the OAA communicates in a broad sense that through our actions we are an important part of the solution....that we are walking the talk. This is no small challenge, but it is one that we must rise to.

Question 2: Currently most committees of the OAA exclude the participation of Intern Architects and student associates. Shouldn't we be trying to embrace the energy of the next generation of practitioners? Where do you see the role of intern architects and student associates in the OAA?

From: John (Anonymous)
City: Toronto

A: Over the past few years the Association has been actively seeking out the voice of students, interns and young practitioners on matters that impact the future of our profession. This is a trend that I wholeheartedly support. It's not just that the energy of these individuals is invaluable, more importantly it's that their creative, objective and yes even idealistic ideas and thoughts about the future of our profession challenge us to look at what we do in new ways. It has been my privilege through my work at the OAA over the past three years to see that when we welcome the insights and inspirations of our young practitioners to join with the experience and expertise of more seasoned architects surprising benefits result.

Question 3: I was wondering why the OAA no longer supports a backlog of hours? I officially finished (and passed) my M.Arch program in January and have been working at an architectural office for the last 5 months (approx. 700 hrs.).

I started working at the end of June but did not become an official OAA intern until September 21st (3 weeks ago). I was informed by colleagues that I could backlog up to 6 months of hours however upon receiving my official Intern status, the OAA said that I could not count any of those hours.

I feel that this is unfair because I already came from an accredited M.Arch program and there is absolutely no difference in my knowledge from when I graduated/received my diploma and when I became an official intern with the OAA. The OAA should take into account the amount of time that it takes for a recent graduate to find a stable job, the time it takes for the CACB to process an application, and the time it takes for a person to choose a Supervisor at their employment. It is only fair to allow 6 months backlog from the time that an Intern gets official status.

From: Alessandra B.
City: Toronto

A: In my view the quality of the experience that is recorded through the Internship in Architecture Programme (IAP) through the very short period of time that is professional internship is more important than the quantity or timing of that experience.

The IAP is structured as a national programme which is administered by the provincial regulators to consistent standards so as to promote the portability of licensure across the country. Effective mentorship is a key component of the structure of this programme. Structured mentorship helps to ensure that interns benefit fully from the professional growth that results when the learning that the work experience offers is leveraged by high quality mentorship both within the work environment and from external mentors. This is why the IAP requires that experience be logged while registered in the IAP.

The OAA must continue to work with students and interns in Ontario and nationally through the [Committee of Architectural Licensing Authorities](#) (CALA) to refine and improve the IAP. The Interns Forum (TIF) is a committee of the OAA that includes interns, newly licensed architects and more seasoned practitioners which is focused on improving the internship experience. I have chaired this committee in the past, fully support its work and am an advocate on Council for its recommendations.

Question 4: The current state of architecture in Toronto is banal when compared to the rest of the world. For example, Toronto waterfront is a sea of mediocre green glass towers that will likely overtime not age well. How will you change this if elected?

From: Nancy Cohen
City: Toronto

A: The OAA must continue and strengthen its messaging and public communications about the importance and value of design excellence. All existing vehicles, such as Perspectives, the E Newsletter, the Awards of Excellence, Continuing Education, Prodemnity Insurance and all media relations activities should be enlisted to carry a consistently strong message that validates the contribution that architects make to the excellence of our built environment on all levels. Continuing Education for architects should

also help to develop the important business skills that should be required of a principal in an architectural practice.

On a proactive basis the OAA must also continue to insert itself (through the media) into the public dialogue about issues that affect the quality of the built environment. It should also be proactive in stimulating these discussions by continuing to create and lead public events, such as our Chamber of Commerce Forums held these past two years across the Province, where these issues can be raised.

Having said that, the condo industry and the developers that drive it present unique challenges that OAA needs to find new strategies to tackle using all of the tools noted above and more. OAA needs to find a way to reach out to the developers of these projects and advocate for the business value of more creative and indeed responsible solutions, in other words better. A part of this should also involve providing public recognition through the OAA Honours and Awards programme and other vehicles for those projects where design excellence is in fact achieved. There has been a real dearth of submissions from this sector and Honours and Awards needs to consider more proactive approaches to soliciting these submissions.

Question 5: Architects around the world are designing exceptional buildings yet the OAA seems focused on only the production side of the business. What do you think the role of the OAA is?

From: Nancy Cohen
City: Toronto

A: As a regulatory body which must always act in the public interest, the OAA is and should be engaged in supporting and advocating for excellence in all aspects of architectural practice. See my comments in answer to the first question. Promoting and achieving design excellence is most definitely a key part of that mandate.

Question 6: Why are there so few women partners in architecture firms, especially the larger and well established ones? Like Justin said, it is 2015, so what is wrong with our profession? What will you do to affect this if elected?

From: Nancy Cohen
City: Toronto

A: The OAA must continue to be proactive on this issue through its educational and policy approaches. An example of this is the OAA committee called The Interns Forum which has in the past and is currently looking at the process of internship to examine how these requirements can be more supportive of interns, eliminate unconsidered barriers of any kind, including gender bias, and also provide for a relevant and valuable educational experience as a key element of the path to licensure and which builds a strong future for the profession as a whole. On council I will also work so that everything the OAA does at all levels is passed through a similar filter. This is and should be a core value of the Association.

In general though this should not be about quotas or arbitrary ratios. The OAA's role should be to promote the value of the contribution that excellent practitioners of both genders make to the profession and to advocate for the removal of those unconsidered and unreasonable barriers to gender equity that may stand in the way of their advancement. 2015 is behind us. My focus as an OAA Councilor will be on 2016 and beyond, building a strong future for our profession.