

March 17, 2021

Open Letter: Ongoing Support for Bird-Friendly Design

As we approach the annual Bird Impact Reduction Day, the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) wishes to reaffirm its commitment to supporting bird-friendly design in Ontario.

As the self-regulating body of Ontario's architecture profession entrusted with serving and protecting the public interest, the OAA is dedicated to administering the Architects Act while promoting and increasing the knowledge, skill, and proficiency of its members. Environmentally sustainable design practices continue to be an area of concern for the OAA, and to this end, our members play an important role in minimizing the impact of buildings on wildlife.

According to the Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP), the estimated number of migrating birds killed in North America annually in collisions with buildings ranges from a staggering 100 million to 1 billion birds. Collisions with buildings are a leading cause of death of migratory birds, second only to habitat loss.

Wildlife collisions with buildings are caused by numerous intersecting factors including site-specific conditions, landscaping, habitat destruction, glazing design, and building illumination. Making informed design decisions can have a significant impact on mitigating bird collisions. Architects, landscape architects, developers, clients, and users all play a role in helping reduce the negative impacts of our actions on wildlife.

We have witnessed in the past few years, significant progress towards bird-friendly design strategies, including the recent development of the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) nation-wide standard *A460:19 Bird-Friendly Building Design*, which lays out a set of standards necessary for effective bird collision mitigation. In an open letter on this topic penned in 2016, we noted our strong belief in the importance of producing a single province-wide standard for bird-friendly design which could be incorporated into the Ontario Building Code. **The CSA A460 Bird-Friendly Building Design standard presents a ready and achievable opportunity to ensure efficacy, feasibility, and consistency in bird-friendly design across the province.**

In addition, while building code changes will ensure bird-friendly design standards are followed in new buildings and those undergoing significant renovation, we must not overlook those existing buildings with a high rate of bird collisions. In these cases, we must go beyond building code requirements and take retroactive measures to mitigate these collisions and the subsequent loss of wildlife. **In this spirit, the OAA has installed the first phase of our own bird-friendly design strategy to mitigate collisions in the high-impact zone identified by FLAP in an evaluation of our headquarters.**

The OAA also wishes to emphasize the need to support ongoing research on this topic, including the development and identification of design strategies and products that are truly effective in reducing wildlife collisions. Whether through

design elements like glazing or user-based interventions like artificial light use, we must continue to explore ways to reduce harm caused by buildings. Advocacy groups such as FLAP continue to be a key resource as we move toward wildlife-friendly design, and we encourage our members and the public to learn more about this topic.

Indeed, existing research and tactics require a well-considered public education strategy to ensure architects and the public are aware of the information available. Clients must have an understanding of the cost implications of various solutions, ensuring budgets and expectations are clear from the beginning. With informed architects, landscape architects, developers, clients, and users, we can create a long-lasting culture of change.

As always, the OAA remains committed to working with the Province, cities, and different stakeholder groups on issues relating to built form, including the development of wildlife-friendly design. Through our Sustainable Built Environment Committee (SBEC), we will continue to examine the situation and work with allied organizations to increase the knowledge, skill and proficiency of our members on this important issue.

Sincerely,

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President