



Ontario  
Professional  
Planners  
Institute

Institut des  
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professionnels  
de l'Ontario

Ontario Planners: Vision • Leadership • Great Communities

# DECISION TIME

## The Planning Profession is *changing...*

### Planning for the Future

#### *It's about Standards*

**1** Standards for accepting new members into the profession

**2** Standards for planning practice

**3** Standards for planning education

It is anticipated that in the next 6-8 months you will be asked to vote on the National Standards Initiative of the Canadian Institute of Planners, known as *Planning for the Future*.

Do you know what you need to know to make an informed vote?

Do you understand the importance of this initiative to the future of the profession?

This brochure provides an overview of the issues and indicates how to find out more.

# Why *National Standards?*

As the world gets more complex, more is demanded of planning professionals. Therefore, planners across Canada need to ensure that the training and certification process for becoming a planner remains relevant and adequately prepares planners to meet those new demands.

Planners are also more mobile. Those trained in Ontario may end up working elsewhere, while planners from other provinces or countries may come to work in Ontario communities. National standards are needed that allow planners to work in all provinces and to represent Canadian planning values abroad.

Finally, the recognition of planning as a profession by the public and by decision makers means that planners must uphold the highest standards and that those who carry a professional designation have a clearly specified set of skills, knowledge, and experience.

This is also a move in the direction of self-regulation of the planning profession, so that it gains the same status as law, architecture, or engineering.

## Why *now?*

Our membership standards were last reviewed 25 years ago.

Given the complexities we face as a profession, we need to act now.

The proposed changes will ensure a process for ongoing review of our standards and procedures, so that the profession can respond quickly to future challenges and changes.

# Standards *for Becoming a Planner*

All professions need a rigorous, uniform, and transparent process for becoming a practising member. At present, the membership process for becoming a planner varies from province to province and there is no single membership standard. A consistent process and a set of national standards are needed to ensure ongoing recognition for planning as a profession by government, the public, and other professionals.

In 2008, a certification task force delivered its report on the membership process, focusing particularly on ways to recognize work experience, deliver the final examination, and assess the knowledge and skills of candidates for membership who have graduated from an accredited planning program, as well as those who have not taken a planning degree or who are from another country.

The recommendations, which have been endorsed by CIP, included developing a final written membership examination, similar to that used by other professions, since oral examinations do not allow for transparency or oversight, and are hard to standardize.

A subsequent report on Membership Standards recommended a uniform process to be used across the country. For those who have graduated from a recognized planning school,

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the process will be similar to the process currently in place in Ontario, with the addition of a mentorship requirement, a mandatory ethics course, and a final written examination for admission to membership. For candidates trained in a discipline or profession other than planning, or trained overseas, the new process also includes a procedure for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) which allow these candidates an alternate route to membership.

Finally, the report recommends the creation of a national, independent Professional Standards Board to review applications for membership and mark written examinations in accordance with standards set by CIP and its affiliates. The goal is to put in place a process that can be administered to ever-greater numbers of people who want to enter planning in a way that is both impartial and fair to all and that maintains respect for the planning profession.

Note that the introduction of the written examination will occur in Ontario even if national members vote no in the fall, since the oral exam was becoming harder to organize and regulate as the number of candidates increased; however, a yes vote will support the creation of the Professional Standards Board to administer the exam.

## *for Planning Practice*

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At present, each affiliate has a slightly different code of ethics and code of practice. It makes sense to create a national standard from these various codes that can be endorsed by all affiliates. This was the recommendation of the task force on Ethical Standards, which delivered its report in 2008.

CIP has approved the task force report, which contains the recommended national code of ethics, a recommended code of practice, and guidelines for administering these codes.

To support the commitment in the code that relates to maintaining professional competency, the affiliates will gradually be moving towards formalizing the requirements for continuous professional learning. This trend towards a culture of lifelong learning is evident in all professions. Continuous professional learning requirements are related to the national standards, but are under the control of each affiliate. OPPI is working to ensure that the requirements are reasonable and that low-cost and no-cost options are available to all members in all parts of the province.

## *for Planning Education*

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In a mature profession, it is important to train students in a consistent way. Students entering a planning program need to be assured that their credentials will be respected across the country and that their studies prepare them adequately for the work they will do. Graduates will then be eligible to work in any province they choose.

In 2008, a task force representing all the affiliates released a report on the competencies (that is, knowledge and skills) all planners should have when they graduate from planning school. More than 1,200 respondents, including CIP members as well as stakeholders who employ planners, assisted the task force by responding to a national survey. The competencies identified in the report will be the basis of planning curricula across the country, to ensure that all graduates, no matter where they study, meet the required standards for entry into the profession.

CIP has endorsed this report and is continuing to solicit comments on the process of accreditation of planning schools. As with the membership process, the Professional Standards Board will administer the accreditation process on behalf of CIP and its affiliates to ensure consistency and cost efficiency.

# Ten things you need to know about Planning for the Future (PFF)

## 1. You will be asked to vote yes or no on the proposed national initiative.

It is anticipated that within the next 6-8 months you will be asked to vote on this major national initiative by the Canadian Institute of Planners. If there is support for the initiative, OPPI will hold its own vote to amend the necessary by-laws to allow for implementation. So you need to become informed about what all this means for you and for the future of the planning profession across Canada — and also about what it does not involve.

## 2. The focus of the initiative is on standards — ethical standards, competency (i.e., educational) standards, membership standards — that will apply to all planners and planning schools in Canada.

For the most part, these are the standards that we have always upheld in our codes, in our planning schools, in our disciplinary bodies, in our membership processes. The difference is that with a “yes” vote at the national and provincial levels, a consistent set of agreed-upon standards for entry into the profession and a national ethics code will be formally adopted by all provincial affiliates, making it easier for planners to move from one province to another.

## 3. A yes vote means the membership process will change for new planners entering the profession after the new standards are implemented.

The proposals include a national, independent Professional Standards Board that will review applications for membership and mark written examinations in accordance with standards set by CIP and its affiliates. As the profession matures, the membership process must too. The existing process has evolved over time, and the profession has now outgrown it. We need a process that can be administered to ever-greater numbers of people who want to enter planning in a way that is both impartial and fair to all and that maintains respect for the planning profession.

## 4. A yes vote will ensure greater consistency in planning school curricula.

In a mature profession, it is important to train students in a consistent way. Students entering a planning program need to be assured that their credentials will be respected across the country and that their studies prepare them adequately for the work they will do. A panel of senior planners and educators from across Canada, with input from more than 1,100 CIP members across the country, identified the competencies (skills and knowledge) that all planners should acquire in planning school, and Canada’s planning schools will be required to demonstrate how they are helping students build those skills and acquire that knowledge.

## 5. The oral membership examination (Exam A) will be replaced by a written examination.

This will ensure greater consistency, objectivity, and transparency in the membership process across the country. The introduction of the written examination will occur even if national members vote no in the fall, since the oral exam was becoming harder to organize and regulate as the number of candidates increased; however, a yes vote will support the creation of the Professional Standards Board, which will then administer the exam.

## 6. A yes vote will formalize requirements for Continuous Professional Learning.

This change is a concern for many planners, who fear that meeting CPL requirements will be both expensive and onerous. As part of its contribution to this national initiative, OPPI is strongly committed to supporting its members by providing a range of no-cost or low-cost CPL options, and by making the CPL reporting process as simple as filling out the annual application form.

## 7. A yes vote will standardize the designation Fellow of the Canadian Institute of Planners (FCIP).

This honorary designation will be retained, and all CIP members who meet certain criteria will be eligible for this honour. The procedure for naming Fellows will be standardized at the national level. The FCIP designation will no longer be a class of membership. Those granted the Fellows designation will be considered as Full Members of the Institute with an honorary title permitting them to use FCIP instead of MCIP.

## 8. A yes vote is not a vote for higher membership fees.

Many planners are concerned that this initiative means higher fees for existing members. This is not the case. Revenue from members’ fees will be deployed differently, but a change to the total fees is not part of this proposal. Fees for those entering the profession will be restructured, however, and may be higher, lower, or the same relative to those paid by current provisional members, depending on the individual’s path through the membership process.

## 9. The proposals were developed in consultation with planners across the country.

This initiative has been in the works for four years. OPPI members have participated with members of other affiliates in the three task forces that developed the standards, and feedback has been sought and received on the proposals through membership-wide surveys and focus groups. OPPI has received and considered hundreds of comments from members in framing its position on this initiative.

## 10. Consultation is continuing . . .

If you would like to talk about these proposals, either in your workplace or in a district meeting, OPPI would be happy to send a task force member to meet with your group, describe the proposals, answer your questions, and lead a discussion on what the initiative means for the profession and for you personally. There is also a wealth of information available at

<http://www.planningincanada.ca>

and on the OPPI website

<http://www.ontarioplanners.on.ca>

*(follow the link to the fact sheet from the home page).*

You can let us know your thoughts and concerns

by sending an e-mail to

[planningforthefuture@ontarioplanners.on.ca](mailto:planningforthefuture@ontarioplanners.on.ca)

by writing a letter to us at

**OPPI, 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 201, Toronto, ON M4P 1K5**

or by calling **Mary Ann Rangam, Executive Director, OPPI** at

**416-483-1873 or 1-800-668-1448, x 223**