

# Building a New National Body

**T**rust architects to be perverse. While the rest of the country seems to be coming apart at the seams since the collapse of the Meech Lake Accord, officials from the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) and the Committee of Canadian Architectural Councils (CCAC), Canada's two national architectural bodies, are working to create a new single organization to represent architects across the nation.

A joint RAIC/CCAC task force has proposed that the new organization be called "The Institute of Canadian Architects/Institut canadien des architectes" or ICA (they considered "CIA" but thought better of it) and will be mandatory for all registered architects. An architect would automatically become a member through his or her provincial association membership. So far the provinces are all behind the proposals and have approved them in principle. After an interim period when the RAIC and CCAC will operate as a joint venture, the new body is scheduled to kick in by January 1995.

Judging by lively debates this year in British Columbia and Alberta, the proposals have been greeted with, for the most part, positive support in the west. But reactions have been sleepy and muted elsewhere. At the Ontario Association of Architects annual meeting in May, for example, not one member raised a question or comment about the new organization following an address by Richard Young, president of the RAIC. And in Quebec, at least in May when this article was written, few architects seemed to be even aware of the moves afoot. This is surprising, given the importance of the province to the negotiations — which had already been going on for 16 months!

The lack of interest (or is it lack of information?) is doubly surprising, given the turbulent history of Canada's national bodies in the last two decades. Canada has not had a mandatory national organization since the early 1970s when the Ordre des architectes du Québec (OAQ) opted out of the RAIC, taking with it a sizable chunk — about one-third — of the members.

The RAIC hit another crisis in 1980 when it became a voluntary organization and gave up its formal role as a federation of the provincial associations. This at least brought architects from Quebec back into the fold and meant that they could again belong to a national body if they wanted to. But for people such as Irving Boigon, who was president of the RAIC at the time, it was very distressing to watch an institution that had been going since 1908 seemingly fall apart.

There are different accounts of what caused the break-up. One version says it was

because a large province wanted to assert its power and independence. Another says the RAIC had become too costly and cumbersome. Board members — usually provincial association presidents — were going back to the provinces on every issue, and since the presidents were replaced every year, it became difficult to get a decision.

Not surprisingly, architects who were around in the 70s are wondering whether the step back to a mandatory national body might simply be a step back into the fire. What is to stop the same problems cropping up again?

Bill Shields, executive director of the RAIC, thinks there is a difference. First, he thinks that there is a new national context, brought on by the U.S. free trade agreement and the general shift to a global economy. Canadian architects have to get their own house in order before they can take on the world. Up to now, the RAIC and CCAC have been in the ridiculous situation of negotiating reciprocity with the U.S. when there isn't even full reciprocity between provinces.

Second, Shields points out, the new organization is being purposely structured to streamline decision-making. Board members, for example, will serve for three years, and membership will be staggered so that experienced members are serving at all times. It's also being proposed that if any province wants to withdraw, it must give at least two years' notice.

Some architects are asking why it's necessary to make the new body mandatory, especially since the Royal Institute of British Architects in Britain and the American Institute of Architects in the U.S. are both voluntary national bodies that seem to prosper reasonably well. Ron Bain, director of practice for the CCAC, and the person who is stage-managing the new organization, says the task force felt that if the new body is to have a strong voice, it must be seen to represent all architects in the country, not just a certain proportion who volunteer their loyalty.

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*Plans are afoot to create a new national body that all architects will belong to through their provincial registration*



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*By Bronwen Ledger*

Secondly, the new body will be a federation of the provincial associations, so that in a sense all architects *will* be involved in it. In this, the new body will absorb the current role of the CCAC.

The CCAC, for those who don't know — and we spoke to two architects who had never heard of it — stands for the "Committee of Canadian Architectural Councils." Every architect contributes to it through a levy on his or her provincial fees (\$30 this year). It filled the gap left when the RAIC became voluntary and provides a forum where the presidents of the provincial associations can get together and co-ordinate their practice affairs. It deals with such issues as competition rules, examinations, contract documents, liability insurance, and reciprocity. Though the RAIC has had a broader, more educative role, sponsoring research programs, publications, and seminars, for example, there has been growing crossover with the CCAC in areas

such as free trade. One of the major reasons for creating a new national body is to avoid this duplication of roles.

It was a symposium convened by the RAIC in November 1989, "Architecture in the Year 2000," that spurred the CCAC and RAIC decision to combine. Events moved quickly. Two months later a joint task force co-chaired by Richard Young of Toronto and Paul Polson of Calgary met, and by mid-

1990 Ron Bain had moved the CCAC office from its Vancouver base to Ottawa, and was sharing premises on Murray Street with the RAIC.

The task force — Essy Baniassad (Halifax), Paul Polson (Calgary), Doug Shadbolt (Vancouver), Paul-André Tétreault (Montreal), Ron Hershfield (North York), Alex Rankin (Ottawa), Brian Sim (Vancouver), and Richard Young (Toronto) — produced a report in November 1990 with specific recommendations. It gives its vision as *One national organization representing all architects in Canada to lead the advancement and promotion of architecture through co-operation and communication within the architectural profession and with the public to improve the quality of the built environment.*

The priorities are, broadly, to promote architecture, support architectural practice, and advance architectural education and professional development. One concrete aim is to standardize experience requirements and education criteria for registration, both on a national level and to be recog-

nizable in the U.S. (Already this year, common registration examinations, compatible with the U.S. NCARB examinations, are being taken in all provinces except Quebec, where they are pending translation into French.)

The proposed ICA board would have 17 members: 10 appointed from the provincial associations and seven elected members, drawn from the "regions," defined as the Atlantic, Prairies and N.W.T., B.C. and Yukon (1 member each), Quebec, and Ontario (2 members each). Five members of the board would act as the executive committee. The schools of architecture would be unofficially represented on the board by the chair of the Canadian Council of University Schools of Architecture.

Despite these specific plans, there is a long way to go. The crucial factor is, of course, Quebec. While Quebec separation wouldn't necessarily affect an OAQ decision to be part of the ICA, it's difficult to see how firm plans can be made until that question is settled.

Besides, the OAQ has some serious problems of its own. It has a large deficit brought on by *l'Union internationale des architectes* World Congress last year, and a complete change in the executive has just taken place. The group of architects now in charge might not view a new mandatory national organization with the same favour as did the old.

Another potentially thorny issue is the name. Many architects are reluctant to give up the designation "Royal." Then there is the question of funding. The task force proposed that the roughly 7,000 architects in Canada would pay \$100 each to cover the ICA's operating costs. However, simple arithmetic shows that this will yield less than the current CCAC dues of \$30 per 7,000 architects plus the \$185 that the RAIC receives from its 3,500 voluntary members. Finding a solution to this core funding problem is now the work of an "implementation task force," which is also looking at ways of obtaining the approval of members.

Hopefully, however, the new organization will weather these initial trials and emerge stronger because of them. A new united national organization would be a powerful lobbying tool with government and the construction industry, and certainly having two organizations made no sense. A new architectural body might also infuse the profession with the energy and confidence it needs to enter the year 2000.

*The 1991 RAIC Annual Conference is scheduled for October 24-26 at the Four Seasons Inn at the Park Hotel in Toronto. The theme of the conference will be "Architecture in the Year 2000," with a focus on an exploration of the skills and roles the profession will be called upon to provide at the end of the decade.*

#### 1990 RAIC MEMBERSHIP BY PROVINCE

	Architects	RAIC Members	%
British Columbia	1,015	488	48
Alberta	530	423	80
Saskatchewan	119	84	71
Manitoba	217	131	60
Ontario	2,384	1,584	66
Quebec	2,338	459	20
New Brunswick	70	48	69
Nova Scotia	208	127	61
Prince Edward Is.	19	12	63
Newfoundland	39	30	77
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,939</b>	<b>3,386</b>	<b>49</b>
U.S.	81,500	AIA: 57,000	70
U.K.	29,000	RIBA: 23,000	79