



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES • SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

February 2, 2015

Mr. Jerry DeMarco
Alternate Executive Chair
Environment and Land Tribunals Ontario
655 Bay Street, Suite 1500
Toronto, ON M5G 1E5

RE: Environment and Land Tribunals Ontario Co-Location

Dear Mr. DeMarco:

The Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Environment and Land Tribunals Ontario (ELTO) Co-Location. As a key stakeholder in Ontario's planning system, we are pleased to provide our input.

OPPI is the recognized voice of the Province's planning profession. Our more than 4,000 members work in government, private practice, universities, and non-profit agencies in the fields of urban and rural development, urban design, environmental planning, transportation, health, social services, heritage conservation, housing, and economic development. Our Members meet strict practice requirements and are accountable to OPPI and the public to practice ethically and to abide by a Professional Code of Practice. Only Full Members are authorized by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute Act, 1994, to use the title "Registered Professional Planner" (or "RPP").

www.ontarioplanners.ca

Further to your email, please find below our response to the questions posed regarding co-location. Please note that in some cases we have provided more than the one or two answers that were requested as this response is a compilation of comments that we received from our members.

- 1. What two things would you change about the hearing rooms as they currently exist?**
 - Currently, in the majority of the hearing rooms, there is not any audio equipment. When audio equipment is available, it is often not working properly. This, coupled with the physical layout and composition of the hearing rooms, often makes it difficult for the audience, sometimes even the parties, to hear everything clearly. An assessment should be done for each new hearing room to provide an amplification system that is easy to operate.

- The hearings come in all types and sizes. It is important that the new site has a flexible layout with rooms that are appropriate in size for each hearing.
- The rooms should be arranged so that visual evidence is more readily visible to all persons attending the hearing.
- There should be a better space for large visual exhibits. Currently, the shelf used to prop up displays is often awkwardly positioned.
- Members of the public do not always have their displays available on foam core and this can limit the ability of others to see their material. As such, there should be easels, clips etc. in each room.
- There should be more space in the witness area to accommodate the sometimes extensive materials, such as document books. It would be helpful to have a shelf large enough to accommodate a binder directly in front of the witness area.
- There should also be more table space for those presenting at hearings so that they can better manage their information.
- During long hearings, it may be appropriate to let those speaking have the option of sitting as it can be uncomfortable for people to have to stand for extended periods of time.
- There should be a posting outside of each hearing room door as to what hearing is being held on that day.
- At the current location for the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hearings the elevator is not accessible to non-OMB staff after 6 pm which is an issue when hearings sit late. If a hearing runs past 6:30 pm, the lights will also automatically go out. There should be a system in place at the new location that takes late meetings into account.
- Climate control is an issue in hearing rooms with some being very hot and others very cold. It is important that there is a level of comfort for all participants.

2. What benefits do you foresee in having a Welcome Centre?

- For many people, the hearing that they are attending may be the first and possibly only hearing that they will attend. It is important the Welcome Centre is staffed so that visitors can receive timely information and be given appropriate assistance. This is especially important for a shared facility.

3. What one thing would you like to see in the Welcome Centre?

- The electronic notice board that was recently implemented at the downtown Toronto venue via television screens is often not working properly. When it is working, it can still take a considerable amount of time for the screen to scroll through to the appropriate information. Electronic displays, similar to those used in airports for departures and arrivals, would allow all participants to quickly access information. In addition to an electronic display, a paper agenda for the week that includes a listing of the subject matter, room location, presiding member(s) and allotted timeframe for the proceedings, should be provided. This electronic and print information needs to be coupled with good signage that includes information on the layout of the floor(s).

4. How can we improve the people traffic flow into and out of the hearing rooms?

- The rooms should be arranged with a door at the front and back, situated so as to minimize disruptions to the hearings.

5. With respect to technology and the advances that have been made, how would you recommend we incorporate technology into the hearing process, whether it is pre-hearing, during a hearing or post-hearing?

- Electronic streaming of evidence within the hearing room via monitors would be an improvement. This should reduce substantively the visual boards that are currently not that readily visible to most people in the room.
- There should be an electronic sharing of visual evidence at the hearing, including document book material, photos, plans, mapping etc.
- It would be helpful to have the website provide additional hearing information along with an improved search function regarding items such as hearing dates scheduled by municipality/address, name of the case worker to contact, status of hearings, decisions issued, and future dates for subsequent hearings. Presently, it can be difficult and confusing for the public to search through the information.
- The hearing rooms need to be fully wired with an adequate number of electrical outlets to accommodate the electronic devices.

- 6. Please describe your current experience at tribunal locations at the following points of your visit:**
- **Arrival**
 - **First point of contact with a staff member**
 - **Engagement**
 - **Departure**
- Our members found that, in general, their recent experiences at tribunals were positive.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact me at (416)668-8469 or by email at l.ryan@ontarioplanners.ca

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ryan', followed by a horizontal line.

Loretta Ryan, MCIP, RPP, CAE
Director, Public Affairs
Ontario Professional Planners Institute

Copy: Paul J. Stagl, MCIP, RPP, President, OPPI
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