

# AATO comes to Ottawa

Ottawa once again has its own chapter of the Association of Architectural Technologists of Ontario (AATO), thanks to the initiative of a local architectural technologist.

**PAMELA EADIE** – The Ottawa Construction News Editor

Herb Lagois of North Gower's Lagois Drafting and Construction is a long time member of the AATO, but felt he wasn't deriving as much from it as he could if there was a local branch.

"I always felt that being in Ottawa we do have a large group of people here who deserve the benefits of a local chapter," says Lagois, the new chair of the AATO's Ottawa chapter. "I thought we definitely needed a chapter in Ottawa."

"I've actually been thinking about this for 20 years."

With no chapter in Ottawa it was difficult for Ottawa-area technologists to become accredited, as they had to travel to Toronto to take the courses and examinations. For that reason, many Ottawa AATO members retained an "intern" status rather than become fully accredited. The Ottawa chapter will encourage its intern members to become fully accredited.

Dexton Bennett, the chapter's secretary, says until now Ottawa-area members have been isolated from the major body of the association. Now, he says, "You don't have to go to Toronto to get certified, you don't have to go to Toronto of Kingston to feel like you're part of the association."

The Association of Architectural Technologists of Ontario's membership includes architectural technologists, architectural technicians, registered building technologists and registered building technicians. It represents 7,000 members across Ontario.

It is the only qualifying body in Ontario for Architectural Technologists. An Accredited Technologist is a person who has graduated from a recognized program in architectural technology, participated in a series of upgrading courses and lectures, fulfilled a probationary period of related work experience and successfully completed a formal examination.

Lagois feels it's important for architectural technologists to continue updating their skills through education. "I think the education component is key," he says.

But the main catalyst behind Lagois taking the initiative to launch an Ottawa chapter lies in the Ontario government's Bill 124, amendments to the Building Code Act. These changes will require building practitioners, including Chief Building Officials, inspectors, registered code agencies and designers, be qualified before engaging in duties specified in the



**Herb Lagois**

Building Code Act and Ontario Building Code. Individual firms also must become registered, and carry special insurance. Compliance is required by July 1, 2005.

"I felt this was good motivation to get a chapter going because there are a lot of us seriously impacted by Bill 124," says Lagois. To that end, the Ottawa chapter is running the legal course required as part of qualification, and is part way through the first round. A second one is planned for March.

Brian Sindall, the Ottawa chapter's treasurer, concurs. "It was primarily Herb's doing. With the Bill 124 legislation there's been

a push to get more courses and training. Everything is so Toronto-centred, so we've been trying to get it here in Eastern Ontario," he says.

The Ottawa chapter held its first chapter meeting on Dec. 3, 2004, at Lagois' North Gower office. The executive positions were established at this meeting, including the chapter's education committee, comprised of Bert Rupert and Lilat Verma. Regular monthly meetings will be held on the last Thursday of every month at 7 pm, at Lagois' office.

As chair, Lagois plans to emphasize the educational aspect of the association. "I'm definitely very keen on getting keynote speakers in anything from safety issues to air barriers; all the important components," he says, noting that as the chapter grows he would like to have a social component as well. "Networking is very important."

So is public education. "The general public doesn't know what an architectural technologist is, let alone what the AATO is," Lagois says.

Bennett says it's important to have a strong AATO branch in Ottawa because he believes architectural

technologists are the engine of the architecture industry. He hopes the AATO-Ottawa branch can help to ensure technologists are being used properly in the industry.

Professionalism is another key factor, says Sindall. "It will raise the level of professionalism, from the architectural technologist's point of view."

The association welcomes new members, and while it isn't looking for numbers alone, the more members there are the stronger the association becomes. "Frankly, the fees are not exorbitant," Sindall says.

For more information on the AATO's Ottawa branch, contact Herb Lagois at [hlagois@lagois.com](mailto:hlagois@lagois.com)

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## The AATO's functions are to:

Provide Architectural Technologists in Ontario with an Association which advances the profession, increase their professional knowledge and skills, and grant them Accreditation with the Province of Ontario.

Foster the attainment of quality and competence in the field of Architectural Technology.

Encourage continual upgrading to remain current with constantly changing technology.

Establish, maintain and enforce strict rules of ethical conduct for the members of the Association

Inform the public of the purpose and aims of the Association.

Promote a harmonious relationship among members to stimulate the development of the Association and enhance its public reputation.

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