

Three goals announced by Advocacy Committee; AHJ is 2019 priority

The Alberta Association of Architects (AAA) Advocacy Steering Committee, established at the direction of Council in 2016, recently finalized a high-level action plan to pursue strategic advocacy initiatives on behalf of members. The next phase of this advocacy master plan will be the immediate creation of three 'task force' sub-committees, as follows:

- Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) Task Force
- Government & External Relations Task Force
- Public Education Task Force

The AHJ Task Force has been identified as a priority by the Advocacy Steering Committee. The anticipated benefits from providing municipal authorities with updated information about professional scope aligns closely with the AAA's regulatory focus and public safety:

The AAA upholds and administers the professional conduct and practice standards as set out by provincial legislation. Beyond these established responsibilities, the AAA champions the value that registered architects and licensed interior designers bring to Alberta's built environment – including the intrinsic duty to serve and protect the public interest.

Moreover, municipal authorities are a definable and very accessible target audience so a formal implementation plan toward this prioritized objective would be both attainable and measurable.

The purpose of this AHJ task force is to enhance the awareness of municipal authorities so they better understand the legislated requirements of professional involvement. Ultimately, the AAA hopes this focused initiative will significantly reduce, and ideally eliminate, instances of non-professionals illegitimately gaining municipal approval for projects.

The AHJ task force will identify issues, stakeholders and key messages, as well as establish an annual work plan. The sub-committee will also give direction to a contractor, a position that council has funded for 2019.

The terms of reference for the new AHJ Task Force, as recently approved by the Advocacy Steering Committee, call for a minimum of three members serving one term. The chair of the AHJ sub-committee is to be appointed by the chair of the Advocacy Steering Committee who is currently Coben Christiansen. Please email Coben at president@aaa.ab.ca if you are interested in serving on this unique committee.

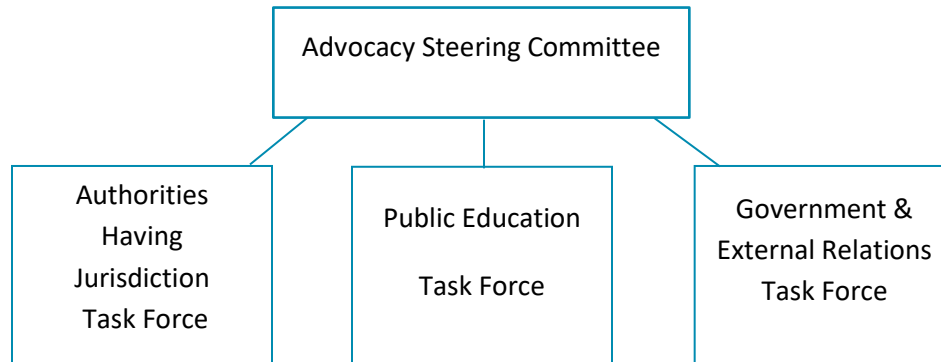
Other Initiatives

The other two AAA task forces within the Advocacy Steering Committee are also vitally important.

The new Government & External Relations Task Force has a mandate to develop and implement specific strategies on any matters related to promoting the value of our profession with government decision makers.

The new Public Education Task Force, also a working group, is responsible for identifying and implementing cost-effective strategies to promote the public's perceived value and understanding of the services provided by professional architects and Licenced Interior Designers.

As per the AHJ Task Force, all members of these two ad hoc sub-committees are appointed by the Advocacy Committee Meeting Chair for one year. No one has yet been appointed to any task force committees; interested members can email president@aaa.ab.ca for more information.



More about AAA advocacy

For the purpose of this initiative, the AAA has defined 'advocacy' as a strategic and deliberate process to influence attitudes in order to create change in policies and behaviors.

The AAA will grow this program cautiously as there is a critical balance between advocacy and the regulation of Alberta's design professions (which is a legally mandated role that can never be compromised). While AAA's regulator role will always take precedence, the Advocacy Steering Committee and AAA administration have identified the following potential roles for future AAA advocacy:

- **Advocate** – Where public interest and regulatory interest coincide with the interests of the professions of architecture and licensed interior design, the AAA can assist in promoting specific policy positions on behalf of members to various stakeholders.
- **Educator** – The AAA is uniquely positioned to provide information on the scope and 'big picture' value of professional services as well as the more technical requirements set out in the Architects Act, General Regulation, Code of Ethics and AAA bylaws.
- **Expert** – The AAA can be a confidential 'go-to' expert for members, clients, government, allied organizations and professions, and the public on matters of professional scope, regulation and practice.
- **Facilitator** – With careful planning and thoughtful preparation, the AAA can enable membership with tools and messages to provide consistent information about the profession.
- **Supporter / Collaborator** – On some matters, it may be more appropriate for allied organizations to take the lead on issues, with the AAA playing a supportive role.

Summary

The AAA is now well-positioned to commence strategic advocacy initiatives that are complementary to its legislated regulatory role. While the AAA's legislated regulatory focus and resource limitations will guide the extent of the AAA's advocacy involvement, the AHJ Task Force initiative will be Step 1 of an ongoing effort to promote the value of Alberta's professional building design professions.