



## **API RESPONSE TO THE CIP MCIP PROJECT**

January 10, 2007

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 This document is the Atlantic Planners Institute's (API) formal response to the proposals and recommendations with respect to the CIP MCIP Project. The sources used to prepare the response are the report "Membership Continuous Improvement Project: New Horizons for the Profession", prepared for CIP by Jim Pealow of Association Management Consulting and Evaluation Services (AMCES) in June 2006 and a presentation made on behalf of the CIP Council by Ron Keeble, MCIP, at the API annual conference and Annual General Meeting held in Saint John, NB, in mid October 2006. The response has been prepared by the API Council following consultation with its four Branches covering Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. The response also reflects the view of the API Membership Committee which deals with Membership issues.
- 1.2 It has been 15-20 years since the last major review of CIP membership standards and processes. CIP is to be commended for undertaking this task. There is no doubt that the mood in API is one of support for change which will move the planning profession towards full professional recognition by the public and other comparable professions.
- 1.3 Ron Keeble, in his presentation to the API AGM/Conference in Saint John in October, set out four objectives for the new membership standards and processes:
- i) CIP should be a state of the art profession.
  - ii) The new membership regime should strengthen the public reputation of CIP's members.
  - iii) CIP members should receive better services in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.
  - iv) The new membership standards should be rigorous, fair and consistent.
- 1.4 Immediately following the Keeble presentation on October 19<sup>th</sup>, the API Council met to consider how it should respond. The Council prepared an interim response to the MCIP Project proposals. This was sent by email to Mr. Keeble on October 26<sup>th</sup> and copied to CIP President Chris Leach, MCIP, CIP Executive Director Steve Brasier, and Jim Pealow at AMCES. In that response the Council indicated its general support for the objectives set out. However, because several issues had been raised during the discussion, the Council said that "it is API Council's intention to consult with its Branches and develop a more detailed response to the proposals." The timing set out was to undertake the consultation and prepare the response by early January 2007.

## 2.0 THE CURRENT SITUATION

2.1 API believes that the final plan which will emerge from the National discussion of the MCIP Project proposals must be based on a realistic assessment of where the planning profession is across the Country as well as where it intends to be in the future. This includes recognition of the following:

- a) Planning is a young profession and its size (about 7000 members in all CIP classes) is small, particularly in relation to other professions (lawyers have about 85,000 members and Chartered Accountants 71,000 for example).
- b) Planning practice is diverse across the Country. Many important distinctions among planning approaches have long been recognized and accepted within CIP and the affiliates including:  
  
Urban/rural contexts.  
Municipal/Provincial/Federal spheres.  
Public/Private/Nongovernment organizations.  
Government/ Private developer perspectives.  
Plan making/plan implementation  
Planning operations vary widely (staff size, for example, which has resulted in specialization in large operations and the converse in small ones).
- c) CIP has limited resources and should not forget that, in addition to the challenge of raising standards, it must also continue to accommodate the existing and future needs or services, such as CPL, of its existing membership.
- d) The affiliates vary substantially in their membership numbers and, consequently, in the resources available to provide administration and services to their members. It is important to balance the affiliates' need to provide services with local benefits which are valued by the members with the resources available to implement the final recommendations of the MCIP project.
- e) Planning, as a professional discipline, is still, to a significant degree an art as well as a science and this needs to be reflected in the new requirements and processes for membership.
- f) Part of the strategy for improving standards of practice depends on ongoing high quality research at both the applied and academic levels.

## 3.0 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

3.1 As noted above, API responded to the Keeble presentation at the October Conference and AGM on October 26 2006. In that response we indicated our support of the objectives set out in section 1(c) above. API believes that there should be some additional objectives accepted as requirements to be met in the development of an implementation plan for the MCIP project. In summary, the new membership regime must:

- a) ***reflect the diversity of planning practice across the Country and the wide range in the resource levels available to the affiliates and CIP.***
- b) ***be acceptable to the majority of the membership.***
- c) ***be affordable and not result in either limiting or diminishing services to the existing membership or becoming a heavy financial burden on prospective***

**members.** One of the serious shortcomings of the Pealow report is that it does not discuss the costs of implementing its recommendations.

- d) **be as expeditious as possible.** The process leading to Full Membership should not take longer than is required to ensure that the members admitted can credibly provide professional services to employers and the public.
- e) **position CIP in the role of the standard setter and accreditation body and not an educator and the direct examiner.** In these circumstances the accredited University planning programs will remain the primary engine for teaching planning and undertaking research. The consequences of abandoning the current approach of setting standards for University planning program accreditation were not examined in depth and could be very damaging. If, for example, the Universities which provide these programs decide that there is no advantage to continuing to offer them (or students decide not to take them), the programs may well disappear. This would mean the loss of planning as a recognized discipline within the University structure and with it the direct ability to undertake planning research.

#### **4.0 SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON KEY RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PEALOW REPORT**

4.1 Overall, API's position on the summary of key recommendation in the Pealow report is support of the majority of them. API has the following comments on each of the specific recommendations.

##### **a) Development of new comprehensive Affiliate Agreements**

API supports this recommendation in principle. API Council has authorized the signing of the new core agreement and will review the schedules when they have been drafted. API's existing Bylaw and its proposed new Bylaw contain principles to guide the content of affiliate agreements and these will be a factor in the development of future agreements.

##### **b) Develop an Internal Trade Mutual Recognition Agreement**

API supports this and its proposed new bylaw requires that this be a feature of future affiliate agreements.

##### **c) Develop National Competency Standards**

API supports the commitment to the continuation of competency standards.

##### **d) Develop Designation Criteria**

API has serious reservations about several of the components which form this recommendation:

- l) API does not support the recommendation respecting work experience requirements and certification. The work level standard proposed for full membership in CIP is higher than is necessary. The focus should be on progressively responsible experience and should not exclude entry level experience. Three years of work experience should be reduced to two and the number of sponsors should be reduced to one to accommodate those who are practicing in small offices or in isolated locations. The focus should be on the quality and qualifications of sponsors, not their number. Moreover, the ongoing commitment which full members must make to Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) provides a level of assurance that full members remain current throughout

their professional careers and can judge whether a candidate's experience is satisfactory.

- ii) The oral examination should be substantially revised but retained. It continues to be relevant because planners have to communicate verbally in professional, public and political settings. The focus on the code of professional conduct and values should remain but the current documents are in need of revision.
- iii) API does not, at this time, support the universal National Professional Examination recommendation (or the Professional Education Program and National Board of Examiners recommendations which complete the proposed package) for the following reasons:

The proposal puts CIP in the position of being the standard setter, the educator (at least in part) and the examiner. API believes that this is fundamentally wrong because this approach does not recognize the benefits of separating these functions to ensure balance and assigning them to those who can best deliver them.

Practically speaking, although the cost of this approach has not been determined, it would, of necessity, be substantial. An additional education program would have to be developed, an examination process and content developed and a National board of examiners established and maintained. CIP has limited its revenue increases from fees to the percentage increase in the National cost of living. The approach outlined will add time and expense to the process of becoming full members for those who are graduates of accredited programs. Moreover, logic would say that either the cost has to be completely borne by applicants or service levels to existing members must be lowered. Neither of these outcomes is desirable. There are already commitments to increasing service levels to the existing membership. An example of this is the requirement for existing members to meet the new CPL requirements. This will require time and money investments by the membership, CIP and the affiliates. This, and other services to the existing membership, should have priority.

Testing of accredited program graduates carries with it the message that the Universities cannot be trusted to do their job or that the accreditation process is either not complete or has not been well done, or that there is no adequate University training program in place now or in the future.

Given the diversity of planning across the Country the content of the proposed universal examination, not to mention the determination of what constitutes a correct answer, will be subject to potentially divisive debate. This would occur at a time when there is a need to find common ground across the country in order to meet the demands created by existing challenges, including, for example, implementing CPL across the Country, determining what the appropriate standards for full membership should be as well as the need for completing a legislative strategy across the Country.

Accreditation of University planning programs has the advantage of offering diversity to those who are seeking the training and at the same time ensuring that planning programs continue as a separate university discipline. This is key to continuing to improve the quality of University

training over time, as well as increasing and improving the research needed to advance the theory and practice of planning.

The separate testing procedure will probably add to the length of time for candidate members to qualify for full membership. This may, in turn, delay qualifying for salary levels commensurate with full membership. This could impact on planning program graduates ability to pay back student loans. This is particularly important for Atlantic Canada where salary levels in many parts of the region are well below the national average.

- iv) API supports abiding by the ethical standards developed (Code of Practice) and CPL and believes that these should be priorities in terms of implementation.
- v) The Professional Education Program (PEP) is a part of the National Professional Examination system. For the reasons set out in responding to the recommendation to establish a National Professional Examination this proposal should be set aside, at least for the time being, in favour of implementing CPL, revising the accreditation system (including the setting of standards for content and quality), developing a new Code of Practice and developing a new oral examination.
- vi) Establishing a National Board of Examiners is part of the National Professional Examination system and should be set aside in favour of meeting the needs set out above.
- vii) API agrees that Transitional Provisions will be necessary.
- viii) API supports the recommendation that PLAR arrangements be made for those with at least 7 years experience.
- ix) API does not support the recommendation with respect to university training. The recognition of a four year university program as the most desirable education would discriminate against post graduate programs when there is no real evidence that this is required or desirable. Graduation from either an accredited undergraduate or post graduate planning program, coupled with the required length and type of experience, should continue to be sufficient for election to full membership. This issue should be part of a revised approach to accreditation.

**f) Updated Standards of Ethical Conduct**

API supports this as a priority for CIP.

**g) Make ethics a part of PEP**

This can be incorporated into a new Code of Professional Conduct. The Code could, if required, be made a part of the accreditation requirements for University programs as well as forming the base upon which the oral examination is developed.

**h) Assign out-of-country members to affiliates**

API believes that CIP should not assign international members to Affiliates for the following reasons:

- i) Out-of-country members would be charged the affiliate fee with very little or no benefit.

- ii) There would be no practical way for out-of-country members to take part in affiliate activities.
  - iii) API has no way of dealing with complaints about out-of-country members.
  - iv) API's ability to process international applications is limited.
- i) Go from university recognition to Canadian Accreditation Program**
- API does not support this, except to the extent that a Canadian Accreditation Program would cross over into the content of an examination for those without an accredited degree.
- j) Create a university equivalencies program**
- API supports this recommendation.
- k) AICP and RTPI members with one year Canadian experience be permitted to challenge the National Professional Examination**
- API supports the principle of reciprocity but, as set out earlier, not the National Professional Examination. API believes that CIP should examine the RTPI, AICP and other relevant designations. If these designations meet the standards set for Canadian training for full membership, the members should be treated the same as graduates of an accredited planning program. This should be subject to reciprocal arrangements being made with AICP, RTPI and any others accepted.
- l) Adopt RPP as the Canadian professional planning designation**
- API supports the designation proposed but suggests that, since this is a professional designation conferred by the affiliates under Provincial statutes, MCIP, which is the National designation, remain.
- m) Develop a legislative strategy for planners.**
- API supports this recommendation.
- n) Provisional Members renamed as candidates.**
- API supports this recommendation. In addition, because CIP's purpose is to represent planners who are, or were, in practice and Public Associates are intended to be those who are interested in planning but do not practice, API believes that the Public Associate class of membership should be reviewed to determine if it has relevance in the new scheme of things.
- o) Review the FRPP/FCIP designation**
- API believes that the FCIP designation, which mirrors MCIP/MICU, and is the recognition of exceptional service, should remain as is.
- p) Develop on-line orientation, training and communication enhancements**
- API supports this recommendation and would add that on-line courses should be developed for the oral examination and those who are required to write the examination.

**q) Change National/Affiliate Membership Committee to National/Affiliate Standards Committee.**

Subject to seeing the terms of reference which would presumably exclude alterations to standards without CIP Council approval, API supports this recommendation.

**r) Use technologies to reduce the cost of serving members.**

API supports this recommendation subject to the condition that the use of technology not result in lower service levels.

**5.0. API RECOMMENDATIONS.**

5.1 API wishes to stress that it is not opposed to change and applauds the initiative taken by CIP in studying membership matters. It has concluded that, for the reasons set out above, several of the recommendations should not be accepted at this time. The approach taken should build on the strengths developed and further the diverse partnership approach which has been developed.

5.2 API recommends the following main course of action.

a) CIP should focus on the following:

- i) setting National standards for membership in CIP, renaming Provisional Members as Candidate Members and reviewing the Public Associate membership category.
- ii) continuing to implement and improve CPL;
- iii) developing accreditation standards covering training content and quality for application to Canadian university planning programs;
- iv) developing a professional education program, and a National written examination for candidate members who do not hold accredited planning degrees;
- v) developing a new oral examination for those who hold accredited planning degrees or have passed the National examination where this is applicable. The new oral examination should focus on testing the understanding of a new Code of Professional Practice and the ability to express this verbally.
- vi) setting National experience standards for those who either have accredited planning degrees or will be taking the new National examination. The standards for experience should recognize that recent graduates will not be holding policy or plan making positions immediately and should credit this junior position experience in addition to responsible planning experience. The number of years of responsible experience should be two and the number of sponsors should be one. The standards set should continue to permit Full Members to sign off candidates log books.
- vii) developing reciprocity with international planning organizations whose standards meet the Canadian standards.

- b) CIP should develop a National Professional Examination, Professional Education Program, and National Board of Examiners for candidates who do not hold accredited planning degrees. Inherent in this could be an evaluation mechanism for this system to see whether there would be benefits if this was applied universally at a future time and, if so, at what cost.
- c) CIP should aggressively promote the development of research in planning practice, methods and theory with priority being given to topics which will contribute to the standards which it has developed.
- d) CIP should proceed to establish National Committees to deal with the matters set out in section 5.2 (a), (b) and (c) above.