



OCSI Reaches Out to Young Professionals, Future Leaders

On November 7th, OCSI hosted a panel discussion in London, Ontario as part of the Value of Water Workshop organized by the Canadian Water Network (CWN). The audience for this event included young professionals and students at the post graduate level.

OCSI was invited by CWN to organize a career panel to address “Skills, Career paths, and Challenges related to the Water Industry”. What better organization, than OCSI, to reach out to its constituent associations to bring together an informative, thought provoking and inspirational panel of speakers?

Representing three of OCSI’s member associations, the following panelist engaged the audience, managed questions and challenged the audience to become future leaders in the sustainability of municipal infrastructure:

- Tom Copeland, P.Eng., City of London, Wastewater and Drainage Engineering (representing Municipal Engineers Association (MEA))
- Dan Huggins, City of London, Water Operations, winner of the OWWA meritorious operator award (representing Ontario Water Works Association (OWWA))
- Debbie Korolnek, P.Eng., General Manager, Engineer, Planning and Environment, county of Simcoe (representing Ontario Public Works Association (OPWA))

The panel was moderated by Darla Campbell, P.Eng., Executive Director of OCSI.

Each panelist, in their opening statement, provided an overview of their current job and described the career path to get there. The moderator posed questions for discussion amongst the panelists and the audience asked more questions in the Q&A.

Ontario Coalition for Sustainable Infrastructure

Municipal Engineers Association (**MEA**), Municipal Finance Officers’ Association (**MFOA**)
Ontario Good Roads Association (**OGRA**), Ontario Public Works Association (**OPWA**)
Ontario Water Works Association (**OWWA**), Water Environment Association of Ontario (**WEAO**)



One of the topics of discussion was the role of infrastructure and the importance of providing safe and sustainable infrastructure for delivering water, wastewater and storm water management. Consider that the Romans built the aqueducts back in 312 BC and a few are still partly in use. The building of infrastructure defined the people, as stated in the Roman Antiquities by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, “The extraordinary greatness of the Roman Empire manifests itself above all in three things: the aqueducts, the paved roads, and the construction of the drains.” Could we do our jobs without reliable infrastructure?

Highlights from the discussion include the following:

- “Sustainability is not screwing it up for your children’s children.”
- “We are showing leadership in our Asset Management Plans and long-term financial plans.”
- “In hiring, employers look for personality, communication skills including the ability to distill complex ideas and the ability to write well.”

The closing question asked what advice each panelist would like to give their 23-year old self. Responses ranged from “get your personal financial plan and strategy in place” to “figure out what really turns your crank” to “read more books of fiction, expanding your creativity in problem solving and making you more interesting”.

The discussions continued over lunch, as the audience was keen to learn more about careers in the water sector.

In other developments, our Executive Director, Darla Campbell, spoke at Municipal Finance Officers’ Association (MFOA) conference on September 26th, providing an overview of the OCSI umbrella organization and welcoming MFOA as a new member of the coalition.



OCSI was also invited to participate on the Working Group of the Ontario Critical Infrastructure Assurance Program – Water Sector, an initiative led by the Ministry of the Environment (MOE). We have member representatives through MEA, OWWA and WEAO.

We congratulate OGRA on their Queen’s Park Advocacy Day 2013, held on November 27th, where OGRA delivered the message of the importance of infrastructure in their meetings with 72 MPPs. The day included meetings with various Ministers including Transportation, Infrastructure, Municipal Affairs & Housing, Labour and Northern Development & Mines. Meetings with the leaders of the opposition New Democratic Party and Progressive Conservative Party have also been scheduled.

Through articles such as this, I will keep you apprised of OCSI’s progress. If you wish to know more about OCSI, please view our website at www.on-csi.ca or contact Darla at ExecutiveDirector@on-csi.ca . If you feel there are issues which OCSI should examine, please let the Executive Director of your respective organization know so that they can bring them to our attention.

Darla Campbell, P.Eng.
Executive Director, OCSI

OCSI brings together the combined resources of six well-established organizations to work toward sustainable infrastructure in Ontario. The Coalition comprises:

*Municipal Engineers Association (MEA)
Municipal Finance Officers’ Association (MFOA)
Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA)
Ontario Public Works Association (OPWA)
Ontario Water Works Association (OWWA)
Water Environment Association of Ontario (WEAO).*

The mission of the Coalition is the promotion of “Safe and Sustainable Infrastructure”.

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