

Established in 1889, the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) is the self-regulating body for the province's architecture profession. It governs the practice of architecture and administers the Architects Act in order to serve and protect the public interest.

City of Toronto Executive Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
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[Sent by email to: exc@toronto.ca]

April 10, 2026

Re: EX30.3 - Towards a Beautiful City: Update on Priority Items

Her Worship Olivia Chow and Members of the Executive Committee,

The Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) applauds the City of Toronto for promoting the use of Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) as part of the City's evaluation for design services and its implementation of median-priced scoring approach as outlined in the report on initiatives to improve the public realm.

The OAA has long encouraged governments at all levels to adopt the QBS model for consulting services over lowest-bid procurement. The Association offers further resources [on its website](#). Via its membership with the Construction Design Alliance of Ontario (CDAO), the OAA has also been involved in the creation of a [Procurement Guide](#). This Guide explores better procurement practices, including the use of QBS, and may assist the City in its work.

As outlined in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) document, "[Selecting a Professional Consultant](#)," QBS "raises the quality of consulting services," helping "identify long-term, cost-effective solutions." Ultimately, this allows government to "reap the benefits of well-defined projects that take advantage of innovations and technical advice that minimize lifecycle costs."

Under QBS, the most appropriate professional or firm is chosen entirely based on qualifications such as knowledge, skill, and previous experience with broadly similar projects. This leaves fee considerations to be addressed separately through negotiation before ideas are explored.

The Association strongly urges City Council to adopt a holistic understanding of qualifications that includes quality metrics as a current and forward-looking demonstration of a proponent's qualifications. "Qualifications" based strictly on credentials and too narrowly defined "past performance" might yield unintended consequences that further commodify procurement, such as repeatedly preferring the same proponents. This will ultimately lead to fewer and fewer proponents being able to qualify.

Furthermore, it is encouraging to see in the report the City's initiatives to increase opportunities for small and/or local design firms to participate in the procurement process. These design firms often offer emerging talent who can provide unique contextual perspectives and value to designing the public realm.

On behalf of the OAA, I look forward to learning more about the City of Toronto's plans to implement and formalize the QBS evaluation methods and use of the median-priced scoring approach in Q2 of 2026.

The OAA enjoys a longstanding, collaborative relationship with government, and looks forward to continued work with the City of Toronto to advance policies that protect and promote the public interest.

Yours truly,



Lara McKendrick, Architect, OAA
MRAIC
President