In January, COG’s Rachna Clavero returned from a nine-month secondment at OPG’s Pickering Nuclear Plant. Her experience highlights how COG continuously works to understand members’ needs.

There is no experience like nuclear plant experience. Rachna Clavero, CANDU Owners Group’s Director, Nuclear Safety & Environmental Affairs (NSEA) can attest to that. During a recent secondment opportunity at Ontario Power Generation (OPG) Pickering Nuclear Plant, Clavero gained on-site experience and contributed her strategic and industry knowledge to the CANDU plant’s operations and performance.

The secondment was part of a first-ever staff exchange between COG and OPG. As part of the exchange, Nahi Rahman, then Senior Manager, Plant Safety at COG, would install plant modifications and serve as station project liaison between operations and construction of Units 3 and 4. He moved to Pickering Nuclear as manager for Pickering’s safe storage program. And for Clavero, her return to COG, included new responsibilities as COG’s Deputy CEO, in addition to her existing role as NSEA Director.

Rahman got his start at Darlington Nuclear in reactor safety before moving on to the project group installing plant modifications and serving as station project liaison between operations and construction of Units 3 and 4. He moved to Pickering Nuclear as manager for Pickering’s safe storage program. And for Clavero, her return to COG, included new responsibilities as COG’s Deputy CEO, in addition to her existing role as NSEA Director.

The biggest takeaway for me was getting a different perspective. This was really a chance to get on-site and understand plant priorities and how they can be integrated into the team,” says Clavero. “Ultimately, COG’s purpose as an organization is to help the industry improve performance, and this experience at Pickering, and the knowledge gained and transferred, will help continue to do that, which is what the secondment experience was all about.”

Over the course of the secondment, Clavero connected with employees from all levels of OPG, job shadowed plant staff, joined in daily meetings and oversight committees, observed strategic planning sessions, provided input to the WANO station review and spoke to the Community Advisory Councils (CACs) for Pickering and Darlington Nuclear.

“Getting the chance to speak to the CACs, to communicate directly with the plant communities was a first for COG,” says Clavero. “The CACs challenge industry to be its best, to keep safety as its top priority and to be good environmental stewards. To share the story of how COG works, internationally, to do that important work, was a great opportunity.”

During her time at Pickering, Clavero was also recognized by OPG Chief Nuclear Officer Sean Granville and Senior Vice President of Pickering Randy Lockwood with an award in appreciation of her own contributions to the plant and support to the station review. Clavero says the value of the secondment experience goes beyond individual recognition, achievements or personal development.

“At COG, we bring a very different perspective, a diversity of thought that is key to this kind of experience. We can share information on industry collaboration, COG programs and services and we can find common ground,” says Clavero. “This secondment model really has the potential to benefit all of our members.”

Since returning to their home companies in January, both Rahman and Clavero have already had an opportunity to put their learnings to use in new ways. Rahman is now project director for Pickering’s safe storage program. And for Clavero, her return to COG, included new responsibilities as COG’s Deputy CEO, in addition to her existing role as NSEA Director.

In November 2019, Rachna Clavero presented to the Community Advisory Councils of Pickering and Darlington Nuclear, a first for COG.

“I spent a lot of my time building up the SMR portfolio, learning about the technologies and different stakeholders,” says Rahman. “It was fascinating to gain that broader context of the industry, how SM technology is evolving and how COG is working with players across Canada to advance and harmonize SMR work. It was a real new for me to learn about that space.”

As for the secondment exchange model, he says the benefits go beyond COG or OPG. Rahman believes exchanges of this nature advance a growing need within the nuclear workforce.

“The secondment exchange model is a good one. Everyone brings a unique perspective and knowledge to the table and the secondment allows you to bring both to a new organization,” says Rahman. “There also is a demographic shift right now, within the industry, leading to a shortage of experience. Secondments let the industry leverage limited resources to everyone’s benefit.”

Now back at OPG and leading Pickering’s safe storage program, Rahman says his time with COG provided him with a greater appreciation for its commitment to supporting members.

“We’re in a time where every cost is being carefully evaluated. The benefit of COG is its interest in the interest of its members and I don’t think you can say that about many other organizations. COG is about driving value for its members, period.”