



In 2019, COG President and CEO Stephanie Smith was named the first female Deputy Senior Vice President of Darlington Nuclear (pictured). During an OCNI Leaders Series talk, Feb. 5, Smith discussed the importance of supporting young female leaders in the nuclear industry, with OCNI's Navneet Dhaliwal (also pictured).

Leading in a time of change

COG President and CEO Stephanie Smith discussed her thoughts on collaboration for a changing nuclear industry and shared her passion for coaching young leaders for the OCNI's Leaders Series

FEB. 19, 2021 — CANDU Owners Group (COG) President and CEO Stephanie Smith says her six months at the helm of an organization focused on nuclear excellence through collaboration has been an adjustment from her previous career roles.

Taking over during a global pandemic?

An adjustment and a challenge.

Smith shared her experiences as part of the Organization of Canadian Nuclear Industries' (OCNI) Leaders Series, Feb. 5, in a wide-ranging discussion with OCNI's Navneet Dhaliwal.

"It's been a transition for me," said Smith on her departure from Ontario Power Generation (OPG), where she had a [30-year career marked by historic milestones](#). Smith joined COG, Sept. 1, 2020, as its first-ever female president.

"I've really had to switch my thinking from what's happening today, in this [plant] outage, to where are we going to be a year from now, as an industry," Smith said in her chat with Dhaliwal.

Smith also talked about the challenges of getting to know and leading a new team while working remotely.

"It's been hard to build relationships virtually," said Smith, who explained that a big part of her leadership philosophy involves getting to know her team, on a personal level, to build trust and bring out people's best.

In response, Smith has started to offer "open lunch hours," where staff can connect with her and bring forward ideas or constructive feedback, while her team has embraced fun virtual activities like Bollywood dance classes.

Smith touched on how her role at COG allows her to think more strategically about the nuclear industry.

"There's a lot of change going on in the industry and there's all this new technology and innovation, from advanced manufacturing and SMRs, to artificial intelligence," said Smith.

"The way we do business is changing, too. Through that change, we have an opportunity in Canada to work together, we've got very strong supply chains, very smart people, we need to continue to bring people together for collaboration through these changes."

Smith believes part of helping the industry navigate change is supporting the next generation of nuclear professionals, through mentorship and coaching. Particularly, young female leaders.

She regularly connects with young professionals through LinkedIn, frequently participates in industry events focused on women in leadership and is an executive member of the [Driving Advancement of Women in Nuclear \(DAWN\) initiative](#).

Smith credits her facilitative and supportive leadership style to her own early mentors like Nuclear Waste Management Organization's Laurie Swami, and her parents. Smith's mom, Mary, was virtually cheering her on during the OCNI event.



Stephanie Smith received the 2020 Leader of the Year Award from Electricity Human Resources Canada.

Like the young people Smith mentors, the COG president says her organization, and its CEO, are on "a journey," and she continues to seek input from across the nuclear industry as she thinks about what "collaboration for the future," looks like.

Smith was recently named the [Electricity Human Resources Canada 2020 Leader of the Year](#). View the awards event video [here](#).

[Click here](#) to view Smith's OCNI leadership discussion.