



# Building Boom

by Virginia Corner

**FROM THE VERY BEGINNING**, Patrick Monahan knew that much of his time as Dean of Osgoode would be spent on fundraising. When he took over from Peter Hogg on July 1, 2003, he inherited a proposal to add “a little wing” on the west side of the Osgoode building where the loading dock was located. Its estimated cost was around \$7 million.

Hogg, an authority on constitutional law and respected member of the faculty for 33 years, the last five spent as Dean, had listened carefully to a litany of complaints from students, professors, staff and alumni about the lack of space in the Law School, its windowless classrooms, and tired look. He had responded by commissioning a space study that recommended a west wing addition.

That’s as far as Hogg got, however. York University’s senior administration, despite Hogg’s urgent entreaties, was not prepared to put Osgoode on its list of building priorities, which would have helped garner government funding, nor was York willing to help fund the addition. “I had not managed to pierce the University bureaucracy,” says Hogg who put his energy instead into raising \$11 million for student financial assistance and upgrading several existing classrooms. In hindsight, he says, “had we gone ahead with the west wing idea, we never would have got the radical redesign that we’ve got now.”

Enter Monahan, a purposeful and engaging man, Gold Medalist of the LLB Class of 1980, Osgoode faculty member since 1982. He had to – and wanted to – take the next great step to bring about changes to the Osgoode building. He showed the west wing proposal to a potential donor and asked if they would give a major donation to the project. “I remember the reaction was, well, this doesn’t seem that big. We were asking in the seven figures, you know. There wasn’t much enthusiasm for a little wing,” Monahan recalls.

“The more we thought about it, we realized there were so many issues about the building that wouldn’t be addressed by the west wing addition. We thought if we’re going to do something, we

should really do something that’s going to make a difference in terms of the School.”

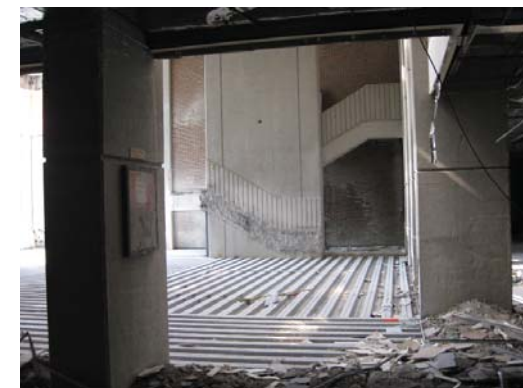
Much to Hogg’s astonishment, Monahan was able to convince Gary Brewer, York’s Vice-President of Finance and Administration, and Lorna Marsden, York’s President at the time, to hire an architectural firm to create a design plan for the Law School. “The University wasn’t committing to doing the renovation, but they were prepared to assist, to hire an architect to do a nice plan that would be really special,” Monahan says.

Five architectural firms were interviewed and Diamond and Schmitt Architects Inc. was hired. “Jack Diamond went to work,” says Monahan. “He wanted to know what our budget was. We just made up a number of \$25 million. We thought that should be enough. They came up with a beautiful design. The University said to us, unless you can raise half of the money, around \$10 million, we won’t be able to give you the go-ahead. We said, okay, we’ll go out and start fundraising.”

And so began a long and difficult six-year process to raise money for the renovation and expansion of Osgoode’s 40-year-old building. It was such a big challenge that many people – Monahan included on occasion – felt it would never happen.

“Members of the Osgoode community and I worked on this for years,” says Monahan, singling out Advancement Director Anita Herrmann in particular for “keeping me organized and focused” and former Osgoode Dean and York President Harry Arthurs for eloquently advocating for the Law School with the University’s senior administration. “I asked a lot of different people for major gifts. And a lot of people turned me down. I have to say, a lot of times it was very disappointing.”

Periodically, though, there were very pleasant surprises. Like the time Monahan’s assistant, Cathy Malisani, reached him on his car phone driving back to the School from a meeting downtown and told him she had just opened a letter containing a personal cheque for \$1 million from a donor who asked to remain anonymous. “I just about drove off the side of the road,” Monahan laughs. >>>



**ANOTHER PIVOTAL MOMENT** came when former Ontario Premier Bill Davis, who had gone on a number of fundraising calls with Monahan, introduced him in 2006 to businessman and philanthropist Ignat Kaneff '10 LLD (Hons), head of the Kaneff Group of Companies, whose daughter, Kristina, was a student at Osgoode. Monahan and Kaneff hit it off over golf at Kaneff's Lionhead golf course in Mississauga.

"Iggy would say to me that Kristina loves Osgoode, but the building is awful," Monahan says. "And I would say, yes, you know, you're right. We got talking about different things and had a couple of meetings with Jack Diamond. One thing lead to another, and eventually Iggy agreed to be the lead donor for the campaign."

Kaneff's gift of \$2.5 million was the impetus behind the School's decision to launch the "public" phase of the Building Osgoode Campaign in May 2007. Up until that point, the campaign had been in its "quiet" phase and had raised a total of about \$5 million. "Once I had Iggy's commitment, the University was very supportive, the President was very supportive, and so at that point we then decided we would launch the actual campaign," Monahan recounts. "We had a big launch event at the Design Exchange. We had Jack there, Iggy was there, Rudy Bratty was on board and there. At that point, we felt we had a very

good chance. We were really making progress."

But the celebration was short-lived. In 2008, the Building Osgoode Campaign was hit with two major setbacks. The first shock came in the form of a gloomy report by an independent cost consultant engaged by the University to provide a detailed costing of Diamond and Schmitt's design. The consultant estimated the cost of the design to be \$104 million, which included a contingency of 20 per cent. That was four times the School's budget. The biggest cost that had not originally been properly estimated was what Monahan refers to as "the nuts and bolts" of the existing building: heating, ventilation and air conditioning, the electrical system and asbestos removal.

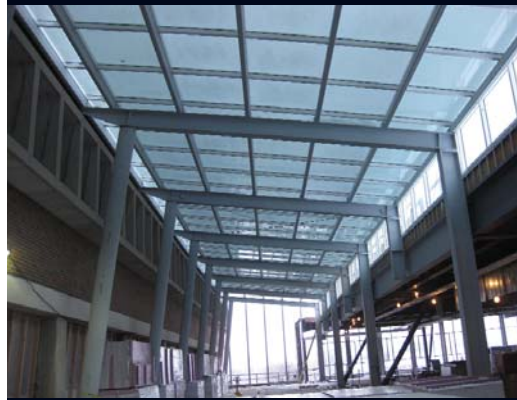
A dejected Monahan went home that night, sat on the deck in his backyard, and thought, "We can't do it. There's absolutely no way."

Still, he persevered. A short time later, a decision was made to rip up the original design plan, and have the architect go back to the drawing board and come up with a more affordable plan. Diamond and Schmitt responded with a graceful \$40 to 50 million student-focused design that everyone liked.

"I thought we're now ready to raise that money," Monahan says. "We're going to have to re-double our efforts." That's when the Building Osgoode Campaign experienced its second major setback: the global economic meltdown. "People would just laugh at you and say I don't want to talk to you about giving money," Monahan says of the calls he made to prospective major donors at the height of the financial crisis. "Once again, I thought to myself we're not going to get this project done."

By now, Monahan was getting ready to step down as Dean and begin a new job as York's

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### Renovation and Expansion Highlights

- The total Law School building area is approximately 215,100 square feet of which 192,050 square feet was renovated
- Substantial gutting of the five-storey building, including most mechanical and electrical distribution networks and devices, allowed the space to be completely redesigned and repurposed
- A single-storey addition of 23,050 square feet was built over the podium structure of the existing library reading room to house the Office of Student Services, a new student bistro and lounge, the Paul B. Helliwell Centre for Innovation in Dispute Resolution, and the Community and Legal Aid Services Program (CLASP)
- An atrium links the single-storey addition with the existing building and provides a central meeting space and thoroughfare for the new building
- The building's west-facing side is substantially new, with large portions of the exterior consisting of aluminum curtainwall glazing
- The east-facing side is similar to the existing building, although a new entry pavilion above the entrance was constructed, and windows were inserted into the large classrooms facing the east wall
- The renovation and addition was targeted for a LEED CI Silver classification
- The renovation allowed for the following design features:
  - Adding much needed flexible classroom space
  - Reconfiguring the library for increased student access
  - Complete removal of all asbestos from the building
  - Creating space especially designed for the delivery of clinical legal education programs
  - Creating space for centres and programs
  - Redesigning the building to promote increased contact between students and faculty and improved access for persons with disabilities
  - Adding additional faculty offices to accommodate increases in faculty numbers

**PROJECT ARCHITECTS:**  
DIAMOND AND SCHMITT ARCHITECTS INC.

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** BIRD CONSTRUCTION

Photography by Cameron Johnston

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projects? Slim to nil, most people felt. Imagine Osgoode and York's elation when, on May 29, 2009, Peter Kent, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), announced \$12.5 million in federal stimulus funding for the Osgoode project, and the Ontario government announced a commitment of \$12.5 million in matching provincial funding. Two days earlier, the two levels of government had announced \$70 million in funding for the new Life Sciences building at York.

"It was the high point of my entire time as Dean," says Monahan, noting that by then Osgoode had raised \$10 million in private funding to help meet the cost of the project and the University had agreed to contribute \$15 million. "We had been rebuilding Osgoode's reputation in so many different ways through our curriculum reform, admissions policy reform, our great faculty and so on. But we had our terrible building. Getting the infrastructure funding meant that Osgoode was really going to achieve what we had hoped for, which is to become pre-eminent in Canadian legal education."

It fell to Interim Dean Jinyan Li to supervise the daunting task of quickly moving Osgoode faculty and staff out of the Law School and into temporary spaces at York. As well, she had to ensure that classes continued in the academic wing—and any faculty and student concerns were addressed—while demolition, including the removal of dangerous asbestos, and construction took place all around the classrooms. Construction got underway in September 2009 and was substantially completed by the spring of 2011.

"We had to overcome so many hurdles," Li says. "I think the community as a whole came together very well."

Under Dean Lorne Sossin, who took office on July 1, 2010, the Law School is busy making plans for a grand celebration on Sunday, October 16, 2011 of the official re-opening of the Osgoode building. "The launch of our new building is a truly amazing moment in the life of the Law School, with enduring benefits going forward," Sossin says. "We invite everyone to join us on this very special day."

One person who will be at the building opening for sure is Monahan. "I'm really excited about it," he says. "I really am." ☺

Vice-President Academic and Provost. Osgoode Professor Jinyan Li had been chosen Interim Dean. With the days ticking down to his departure, Monahan worked feverishly, meeting with Tony Clement's and Jim Flaherty's offices in Ottawa, and anyone else he could buttonhole.

He talked about the Knowledge Infrastructure Program—the government's economic stimulus plan to create jobs—with Finance Minister Flaherty himself. "Jim Flaherty was a big booster of the Osgoode project," Monahan says. "But what he said to me was you have to get this as your University's top project." Monahan spoke to York's new President, Mamdouh Shoukri, about listing the Osgoode project as number one. Shoukri replied that in his view it was in the best interests of the University to list a new Life Sciences building as the top priority and Osgoode as number two.

What were the chances that York would receive federal stimulus funding for two



**May 2009 Government Funding Announcement**  
From left: York President and Vice-Chancellor Mamdouh Shoukri; MPP Mario Sergio; MPP John Milloy; Ignat Kaneff; MP Peter Kent; Legal and Literary President Sanford Murray; Osgoode Dean Patrick Monahan.



*Virginia Corner is Osgoode's Communications Manager.*