



Governance Review of Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society

*Summary Report of Findings and
Recommendations*

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Introduction

The Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society (CMOS) is a not-for-profit scientific organization that is, according to its website, “dedicated to advancing atmospheric and oceanic sciences and related environmental disciplines in Canada.” CMOS is an open membership organization and currently has approximately 700 members.

CMOS is governed by the Executive, soon to be centered in Halifax, and a governing Council of 12 members and has a small, part-time staff. The Executive Director provides 2 days per week and other staff support the organization’s efforts related to the annual Congress, education and outreach, awards, the website, and publications including the regular CMOS *Bulletin* and the journal, *Atmosphere-Ocean*. The organization benefits significantly from the contributions of volunteers.

CMOS has a set of by-laws with appendices on specific functions such as prizes, awards and scholarships; committees and editorial boards; and duties of elected and appointed officers. Amendments can be tabled at the annual general meeting (AGM). The organization is in the process of updating its Strategic Plan and has recently undertaken a survey of its membership to inform a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis.

CMOS engaged the Institute on Governance (IOG) to review its governance — its governing documents, structures, functions, and formal relationships — with a view to informing the effective and efficient governance of the organization.

Scope and Approach

The governance review involved a preliminary work planning session with members of the CMOS Executive, a document review, and a series of 12 interviews. The document review involved an examination of information available on the CMOS website and the following key documents:

- CMOS Letters Patent (dated August 28, 1984)
- CMOS By-laws and Appendices (dated June 2020)
- CMOS Operational Policy (dated December 12, 2019)
- CMOS Meeting Preparation Procedure (dated October 7, 2019)
- Membership Code of Conduct (dated June 23, 2020)
- CMOS Annual Review 2019 (dated May 2020)
- CMOS Strategic Plan 2021-2024 Member Survey (undated; received January 21, 2021)
- CMOS Strategic Plan Survey: Free Form Comment Summary (Marek Stastna)



The IOG team scheduled and conducted interviews with twelve individuals identified by CMOS as having knowledge and experience related to CMOS governance. The interviews were conducted by the IOG team via Zoom or phone during January and early February, 2021. Interviewees are listed in Appendix 1. The interviews were semi-structured, guided by an Interview Guide (see Appendix 2) developed in consultation with the CMOS President, Vice-President and Executive Director, but allowing for additional questions depending on the interviewees' familiarity and experiences with CMOS.

The findings of this governance review are based on the interview responses, the document review and the IOG's leading expertise and experience related to the governance of public purpose organizations. The IOG team consisted of Dr. Jeff Kinder, Executive Director, Science and Innovation; Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright, Senior Associate; and Laura Edgar, Vice-President, Board and Organizational Governance.

The remaining report is organized into three parts. Part I provides an overview of good governance and what governance means for not-for-profit organizations. Part II summarizes the results of the document review and interview responses, highlighting the overall perspectives of the respondents regarding current governance strengths and areas for improvement. Finally, Part III provides recommendations for addressing some of the concerns and challenges raised by interviewees or identified by the IOG team through the governance review process.

Part I: Governance of Organizations

Governance is the process whereby organizations take decisions on matters of strategic importance. It rests on a framework of structures, policies and traditions that define how decision-making power is allocated, who has voice or input into decision-making, how key relationships are maintained, and how decision-makers are held to account.

Although it does not end with the central governing body of a community or organization, good governance certainly begins with it. In the case of CMOS, that body is the CMOS Council. Building on the literature and the IOG's own experience working with boards of not-for-profit organizations, the following are the IOG's suggested characteristics of high-performing governing boards:

1. They develop & **maintain a longer-term vision and clear sense of direction** through mission and vision statements, a longer-term strategic plan and clear priorities.



2. They ensure **the prevalence of high ethical standards and understand their legal obligations**, including transparency and openness in what they do, respect for their legal and contractual obligations, ensuring the voices of stakeholders are heard, and appointing and overseeing the work of the senior staff person (if the organization has staff). Board members will fulfill their obligations to the organization as a whole, including the **duty of care** (demonstrating both competence and diligence in their work as Board members) and their **duty of loyalty** to the organization's best interests.
3. They **ensure effective performance** through sound information. They focus on strategy, results or outcomes and have a good sense of their information needs.
4. They **ensure the financial & organizational health of the organization** by focusing on long-term sustainability and demonstrating a macro-level concern with the quality of management of the organization.
5. They ensure **sound relationships with their key external bodies and stakeholders**, including funders, sponsors and other partners.
6. They **ensure sound relationships with their organization's members** and others to whom they provide services, and create opportunities for them to influence key initiatives.
7. They **ensure the effective management of risk** by identifying, assessing, mitigating and monitoring critical developments that have uncertain outcomes.
8. They **are accountable through publicly available information** (for example, financial and results achieved) through audits & evaluations, outreach activities, public engagement practices, and redress mechanisms.
9. They ensure **the soundness of the governance system** by having effective relationships with senior staff, evaluating Board performance (individually and collectively), and adopting an ethic of continuous improvement. They also ensure a sound governance system through effective development and implementation of by-laws and policies, and through sound Board recruitment and training.
10. They **recruit, set objectives and evaluate the performance of the Executive Director**.

The results of good governance are trust, credibility, legitimacy, results that matter, the ability to weather crises, and good relationships with funders and other stakeholders.



The ramifications of inadequate governance can be equally great. If an organization fails to carry out this role effectively, it stands to lose credibility with its members, stakeholders and the public at large, to damage its ability to carry out policies or deliver services, and ultimately to fail at its primary mission or objectives.

Part II: Findings

Interviewees revealed that CMOS members are passionate about the organization, feel strongly about the positive role it plays within the atmospheric and oceanographic community in Canada and are committed to its success. The results of the interviews and document review revealed strengths in CMOS governance, but also some areas for governance improvement in order for CMOS to fully achieve its potential in the 21st century.

This section of the report is organized according to key topic areas and provides a summary of “what we heard,” i.e., feedback from the CMOS interviewees, and IOG analysis of governance strengths and challenges. In some cases, the IOG has offered good practices to consider. Specific recommendations for governance improvement are provided in the final section of the report.

Overall Perspectives

While interviewees believe that CMOS governance is generally sound there seems to be strong support for a “modernization” or “professionalization” of many aspects of the organization’s governance and operations. CMOS exhibits many of the characteristics of a traditional scientific learned society based on volunteers serving in roles such as Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, etc. One interviewee suggested a need for CMOS to “future-proof” itself and many interviews, especially among younger members, suggested an overall feeling of CMOS as “old-fashioned,” “a bit dated” and “bureaucratic.” To ensure CMOS continues to be relevant to the next generation of scientists and practitioners in meteorology and oceanography, some refreshing may be needed.

Among the strengths identified by interviewees are a strong commitment to CMOS’ mandate as a scientific society, generally effective meeting processes, a variety of perspectives and skills at the leadership level, reasonably effective by-laws, an effective part-time Executive Director, and a recognition of the importance of members, volunteers and the regional centres in achieving CMOS’ mandate.

However, there are also some areas of governance challenge for CMOS that if addressed may, among other benefits, help CMOS improve its reach to younger, early-career scientists and practitioners. Among the challenges identified are:



- A lack of a clear action plan to support implementation of organizational strategy;
- A lack of a clear understanding of the delineation of roles and responsibilities between the Council and the Executive;
- By-laws that in part are overly prescriptive (e.g., regarding scholarships) which impedes flexibility for the Council and Executive to make program changes without submission to the membership at the Annual General Meeting (AGM);
- A dated reliance on volunteers for roles better suited to staff in a modern organization;
- A workload for the Executive Director that exceeds his part-time status, and an inconsistent approach to paid versus volunteer staffing of other vital functions, including communications and outreach;
- A lack of a clear performance accountability framework for the Council to effectively oversee the work of the Executive Director;
- Limited to non-existent orientation or other learning and professional development opportunities for new members of Council, the Executive, and Committee and Centre Chairs;
- A confusing approach to strategic communications given a variety of players responsible for various channels and a lack of consistent messaging; and,
- A lack of diversity in membership and leadership roles.

Going forward, CMOS needs to reflect modern good practices and continue to focus its governance on alignment with its mandate and its strategic priorities.

Mandate and Strategy

According to the CMOS website, “the Society exists for the advancement of meteorology and oceanography in Canada.” Interviewees had varying degrees of familiarity with CMOS’ stated mandate but most offered that its purpose is the promotion of atmospheric and oceanographic science, and related scientific areas such as hydrology and climate science.

Most viewed CMOS as a scientific learned society or national professional organization that represents atmospheric scientists and oceanographers that, as with other scientific societies, advances research in its disciplines, runs an annual conference, publishes a scientific journal and awards prizes. Others stressed that education and outreach are also important activities, including at the secondary school level and on topics of general interest to the public. A few noted that CMOS’ mandate includes the influencing of government and the provision of advice on broad policy related to its areas of focus.

While interviewees felt that CMOS’ mandate was appropriate, there are strong concerns about the organization’s ability to develop, implement and oversee strategic priorities. In 2017 CMOS developed a Strategic Plan for 2018-20 which was the first such plan for the organization, at least in the memory of the interviewees. Prior to this,



strategy largely reflected the objectives of the president at the time, aided by the Executive Director who provides some degree of continuity between Executives.

The Strategic Plan was generally well received, but it is acknowledged that the Plan must now be renewed and be accompanied by an annual work plan with concrete actions to ensure implementation of the priorities. It is felt that the Council needs to provide more oversight, identify clear metrics and track progress against the plan. More than one interviewee noted that implementation and oversight is made more difficult by the fast turnover of the Executive and that longer terms may aid with sustainability of new initiatives. Also, multiple interviewees suggested that more concrete action-oriented objectives could help with the challenge of recruiting younger members to step up and serve.

Interviewees not linked to the Executive or Council had limited to no familiarity with the Strategic Plan or of the strategic development process within CMOS. Some noted that members are able to provide input at the AGM and that the Centres provide recommendations and feedback through their meetings with the Vice President. It was noted that Centres have different perspectives than the national-level organization as they try to deal with activities at the local level; hence, the Strategic Plan does not dominate their discussions suggesting a degree of strategic disconnect between the national and the regional centres.

Governing Documents

The IOG team reviewed the CMOS letters patent, by-laws and organizational policies. The letters patent confirm the overall objective of CMOS is “to promote interest in and the advancement of Meteorology and Oceanography.”

Most interviewees feel the by-laws work well and provide a useful reference point for organizational governance. One interviewee admitted he does not really use them but feels they become important in times of crisis to resolve issues. The by-laws are reviewed and can be amended annually – last year a Code of Conduct was added – although some felt that the amendment process could be made more clear. One noted experience was that members at an AGM changed wording that had been prepared by the organization lawyers – this was seen as problematic.

Some interviewees feel, and the IOG team agrees, that the by-laws contain too much detail including some operational content that might better be managed as policy by the Executive. For example, the by-laws provide details on the scholarships and prizes offered by CMOS which means changes need to be put before members at the AGM. It was felt that this unnecessarily constrains the Executive and should be pulled out of the by-laws into a CMOS policy.

Others felt that some of the by-laws are “antiquated” and need to be reviewed, updated (e.g., language is currently gendered) and made “future-proof.” One interviewee



suggested that the website could be used to make the by-laws easy to access and understand.

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of Council are well laid out in the by-laws, and Council members are generally seen to fulfill their obligations, at least “as well as any group of volunteers do.” Many interviewees stressed the need for greater communication from and to the Council with one interviewee stating that Council “tends to be a highly naval-gazing group who do not build strong relationships with Centres.”

Regarding the Executive, the standard practice is for the Vice President to become the President and then Past President, with one year in each role. There was consistent concern expressed about a lack of continuity due to these short terms for officers. One-year terms are seen as a weakness of CMOS by many interviewees and there was support to extend the terms of principal officers from one year to two years (providing an overall commitment of 6 years). One former member of the Executive felt extending the terms could make it even more daunting for individuals, making it harder to find volunteers. This person would not have wanted a second year as president. On the other hand, a major risk for CMOS identified by multiple interviewees is the loss of continuity, program sustainability and institutional memory.

In recent years, Presidents have tended to be drawn from academe with strong research records in the core disciplines of atmosphere and ocean science and with leadership/administrative experience.

The Director of Publications had traditionally been part of Council but due to a term limit in the by-laws had to be removed. He has subsequently been named to the Executive, but this by-law limitation should be corrected.

There was strong support for allowing staff to be more heavily involved in supporting Council and Executive meetings, including developing agendas and minutes, supporting work of committees and in delivering Congress (discussed further below) which is currently delegated to a local organizing committee, separate from the national staff.

The Question of Delineation

There was considerable confusion among interviewees about the division of roles and responsibilities between Council and the Executive, with many indicating they saw no difference. Some feel the delineation is important in principle but that in practice there is not much difference between Council and Executive meetings -- agendas are very similar to the point that one interviewee said meetings feel like the movie *Groundhog Day*, in which the main character repeats the same day in a recurring loop. Others felt strongly the need to better differentiate the two bodies.



There seems to be scope for either collapsing the two entities into one, or ensuring Council focuses more on the bigger picture items that would affect the organization overall, while leaving management details to the Executive and Executive Director. To facilitate this differentiation, the frequency of Council meetings could be reduced to quarterly meetings, with less agenda time allocated to responsibilities that should be delegated to the Executive.

In addition, it was felt that with additional paid time, the Executive Director could take on some of the roles currently performed by volunteers including, e.g., that of Corresponding Secretary who is responsible for developing the agendas of Council meetings and the Recording Secretary who is responsible for taking minutes. Many interviewees noted that modern organizations have staff perform these roles.

Council Composition, Recruitment, Orientation, Meetings and Culture

Composition: The Council currently consists of 12 individuals. In the past, the Council included all 14 Centres chairs in addition to the 6 Executive positions and three Councillors-at-large, which proved unwieldy. Now, the Council includes some Centres representatives as Councillors-at-large, although interviewees noted that these have increased over time so that the Council is again quite large. There were some complaints that the Centres are not now fully represented on Council although most are satisfied by the institution of all-Centres meetings with the Vice President (see below).

Interviewees overwhelmingly find the members knowledgeable and highly competent with strong science backgrounds. Being good team players was cited as important for ensuring effective discussions and inclusion during meetings. The Council seeks balanced representation from various stakeholder groups (government, academe, and private sector) and across the two core disciplines, more than particular skill sets or competencies regarding, for example, governance.

Almost all interviewees placed strong emphasis on increasing diversity of Council, including Indigenous members and representation from the North. A couple of interviewees noted that Council tends to have more representation from the meteorological side of CMOS, although this may merely reflect the wider membership. There was also a desire for Council to include a student voice, a private sector voice and more representation from early-career individuals and from operational meteorology.

Recruitment: The most common concerns raised with regard to recruitment were attracting people to serve (“We don’t have people clamouring to take positions,” remarked one interviewee) and the lack of diversity (“We’re mostly older, white males,” observed another). It was widely noted that it is difficult to find people willing to serve. Recruitment is mostly ad hoc with informal calls for new members of Council. Some interviewees suggested formalizing this through a regular call for nominations.



The Past President chairs the Nominations committee which prepares a list of candidates. Members vote on candidates at the AGM, although this is traditionally by acclamation as candidates have always been unopposed. There is some recognition of the need to develop a competencies matrix to maintain a balanced composition on Council. As one interviewee pointed out, the Treasurer needs to understand finances so must be recruited carefully.

It is recognized by many interviewees that this ad hoc approach to recruitment is not conducive to ensuring diversity, including diversity of regional representation, career stages, gender and minority status. Many want to see a more purposeful approach. One interviewee thought that the American Meteorological Society (AMS) uses elections well for some of their roles and thinks this could be adopted by CMOS.

Orientation and Learning: There is no formalized on-boarding of new Council members (or Committee members) and most interviewees felt the organization could do better in this regard. Some ad hoc orientation occurs informally as new members have conversations with their predecessors. One suggestion was to develop a manual (and/or a Powerpoint if one does not exist) so new members have a primer on the CMOS structure and understand their roles and responsibilities; this could help with recruitment as well. Also, there is no ongoing learning/development opportunities provided to Council members. Interviewees suggested that occasional offerings in topic areas such as board governance, science policy, and science communications, would be helpful.

Meetings: The Council meets every other month while the Executive, involving 6-7 people, also meets in the intervening months (at least one interviewee felt Executive meets too often, could be more action-oriented and could function bimonthly). Interviewees familiar with Council felt the current schedule was not an ideal format as it muddies the delineation between Council and the Executive. Solutions proposed involved collapsing the two bodies into one or having the Council meet less often, perhaps quarterly, and having it more focused on high-level science strategy and legal fiduciary responsibilities (e.g., budget oversight) while the Executive focuses more on policy, finance and operations. In this manner, day-to-day management would be left to the Executive Director and staff, with check-ins between the President and the ED.

While one interviewee noted that there is room for improvement in how Council meetings are run, generally Council meetings and meeting support were viewed favourably. Meetings are used to vote on motions and track action items, and minutes are kept. Each executive officer must report at every meeting although one interviewee questioned whether this was truly necessary. According to one interviewee, CMOS finances are in good shape and Council should not be guided by myths regarding the budget.



Members typically receive materials about one week in advance but, for decision items, multiple interviewees felt that related materials should be made available earlier, at least two weeks in advance.

It was noted that attendance is usually strong but that many – especially the Councillors-at-large -- remain very quiet at meetings. Silence is usually interpreted as acceptance, but this practice was viewed as a weakness by one interviewee. There was some concern that it remains too easy for members to “hijack” the agenda and that meetings need to be more decision-focused and business-like (e.g., fixed times for agenda items). There was also support for reducing the procedural formality, following a past experience with heavy adherence to Roberts’ Rules of Order.

The ED is usually the only staff member who attends Council meetings and there are rarely, if ever, *in camera* sessions where staff are excused for the Council to meet in closed session (i.e., to consider personnel-related matters).

Culture: The current culture of Council is very collegial as members respect each other’s time and points of view. Interviewees believe members have genuine interest in seeing CMOS succeed in its mandate.

There is some concern that Council represents an ageing demographic and is not sufficiently renewing itself. It was recognized that the organization has attempted to engage younger people but with limited success to date.

Committees and Regional Centres

CMOS has many committees including those mentioned by interviewees with responsibilities for students, publications, communications, science, broadcast, education, the website, aviation and many more. As with other voluntary scientific organizations, their effectiveness varies with the chair and membership – some committees are essentially one-person shows, some are largely dormant, while other committees are active and effective.

One interviewee commented that volunteer service is still not rewarded within academe and some members join committees to boost their *curricula vitae* but without the necessary commitment to action. Many interviewees felt that the committee structure should be reviewed and dormant committees should not be maintained. The CMOS Vice President has the role of ensuring there is a current chair and that the committees’ terms of reference are up to date. One interviewee felt this could be an additional role for a full-time Executive Director.

Committees do not typically have a separate budget and there is no known cross-committee communication other than through the annual report. There was support for the idea of a regular teleconference for Committee chairs, perhaps in the Fall (since Congress is in the Spring).



CMOS also has regional Centres which tend to be very active with highly-involved Chairs. As one interviewee put it, “The Centres are where the rubber hits the road.” In rotation, a Centre hosts the annual Congress and delivers other activities such as regional science fairs, public outreach, etc.

The Vice President chairs quarterly all-Centres meetings that are felt to be quite effective and at the right frequency. These meetings allow input from the Centres and there is good communication in both directions. Meetings are well-run with good agendas and members receive information sufficiently in advance. Staff support is provided by the Executive Director. Nonetheless, many interviewees pointed to some tension or “turf protection” between the national organization and the Centres, and a need for better communication and more communication channels to manage strategic initiatives and ensure the whole organization is “on the same page.”

CMOS Staff and Council/Executive/Staff Relations

Although CMOS relies heavily on volunteers, it also has a small staff consisting of an Executive Director at 2 days/week, a full-time office manager who reports to the ED, and several other people involved in various support roles related to the CMOS website, social media (including different people for different platforms), the Journal, *Bulletin* and scholarships. There is a confusing mix of arrangements for these services including paid (by honoraria or contracts) or voluntary, and no clear responsibility center for communications. While CMOS has made this situation work, including by relying on the institutional memory of many volunteers, many felt that the organization would now benefit from a more coherent staff structure, including a full-time ED, a single, dedicated communications officer and other staff as required.

Generally, interviewees felt that the Council and Executive are well-served by the staff and that relationships with the staff are very good, although most were only personally familiar with the Executive Director. Interviewees who were familiar with the Executive Director generally expressed positive views of his performance, noting particularly his strong communications and willingness to answer questions from committees or Centres. In terms of concerns, one interviewee would prefer that the ED and staff come from CMOS’ disciplinary community and a couple noted that some staff hold strong opinions that may represent a barrier to organizational change.

Many interviewees noted that the ED is overworked and agreed with the sentiment expressed by one that “it is fairly obvious that there is far too much work for the Executive Director to do part time.” This particular interviewee also commented that the organization is going backward fairly quickly due to the lack of continuity between presidents and the fact that the ED does not have the time to fully develop their continuity role. There was generally strong support for increasing the ED’s role, to full-time or at least more days per week, although some expressed concerns about whether CMOS has the budget to support this.



Currently, the Council has no formal objective-setting and performance evaluation practices for the ED although he meets regularly with the President and often the Vice President. Given the ED's part-time status, one interviewee felt such practices might be unnecessarily bureaucratic but agreed that should the position be made full-time, such practices would be appropriate. It was felt that the ED should also provide formal annual performance evaluations of the staff that report to him, which currently does not happen.

Communications and Outreach

Communications and Outreach: One interviewee noted that there are 4-5 people involved with communications but without effective coordination. Another went so far as to say that “the underlying problem is CMOS needs to have a message.” Multiple interviewees thought it would be better to have a single individual serve as communications director/officer to manage and ensure consistent messaging across all CMOS communications. This is a long-standing plan for CMOS and should happen, according to another interviewee. A consolidated role would also help CMOS respond to media requests in a timely manner and provide for a coordinated all-channel communications plan for Congress.

Most felt that outreach is good and it was acknowledged that many CMOS members perform informal outreach. Interviewees noted that the Centres do many wonderful outreach activities, including to local schools and other stakeholders.

Bulletin: The *Bulletin*, CMOS' now fully-online newsletter, was viewed quite favourably as filling an important role in highlighting events, policy developments, and sharing what colleagues are doing across Canada. As one interviewee put it, the *Bulletin* provides “the glue that cements the community.” There was a suggestion that, in comparison with the AMS, the CMOS *Bulletin* could be made more attractive. Another interviewee suggested it could be used as a teaser for non-scientific audiences and for outreach to secondary school students.

Website and social media: Although work has been done to upgrade the CMOS website, some interviewees felt more needs to be done. One interviewee felt there was still too much text and an imbalance between the past and future, with too much emphasis on the organization's history. The early career section of the website is still under construction and one young interviewee looks instead to the website of the AMS for career opportunities. It seems the organization has different individuals responsible for different social media platforms and, according to one interviewee, there is a need for more at CMOS to learn how to use these media.

Annual Congress: Interviewees were unanimous in stressing the essential centrality of the annual Congress to CMOS' mission and its 700-900 attendees. As one interviewee put it, “For many, CMOS is the Congress.” Another remarked that attending Congress “is like coming home.” The Congress brings together the Canadian community in a



unique way, supports the ongoing learning of professionals in the fields it represents, and provides key exposure and networking for graduate students and early-career researchers.

Given this, it is notable that interviewees identified some major concerns about Congress. First, some highlighted that Congress is very heavily research-oriented and questioned what impact this has for the more operational members of CMOS. Another interviewee wished Congress could better address non-scientific audiences including secondary school students, the media and the general public.

Another major concern expressed is that younger members suggest it feels like an “old boys club” and that they may not feel welcome. An interviewee asked, “Are we doing enough to satisfy the next generation of CMOS members?” There is a recognition that with social media and other developments, science is changing. There may be a need to re-evaluate the fundamental purpose and format of Congress.

A key development was the move to a virtual Congress in 2020 due to the pandemic. On the one hand, virtual delivery allows more participation from smaller Centres and of government scientists. On the other hand, it is not yet clear what the impact of virtual delivery is on professional interactions. As one interviewee put it, “The professional and personal exchanges that occur at an in-person Congress are priceless.” There were multiple suggestions in the interviews that, post-pandemic, CMOS may wish to alternate between in-person and virtual delivery of Congress or provide a hybrid of the two.

Journal: Views of the society’s *Atmosphere-Ocean* journal, published by Taylor & Francis, were quite mixed with opinions ranging from “excellent” and “a very good journal” to “a dumping ground for otherwise non-publishable articles.” Most interviewees view it as a solid journal, well-edited with high quality peer reviews but under-utilized by the membership; others see it as low-prestige, low-impact and at best a regional journal that provides an entry point for first publications of early-career researchers and first-time international authors.

One interviewee was disappointed the last time she published in the journal by the time lag between manuscript acceptance and publication. Some interviewees admitted they had never sought to publish in the journal. They feel it is not as respected as would be desired but interviewees were unclear how to improve the situation. One suggestion was to have the President launch a campaign with universities to ensure they are aware of the journal and that support is provided to students who wish to publish in it. The President has written to presenters at Congress inviting them to submit to *Atmosphere-Ocean* but it is too soon to know whether that effort will bear fruit.

Many noted that the current editors are doing a great job to promote the status of the journal but that the push (from Taylor & Francis) to go more international has not worked out well as the journal has been flooded with low-quality submissions.



One interviewee noted that some scientific societies have more than one journal and multiple interviewees suggested that a journal trying to span both ocean and atmospheric sciences is too broad; alternatively, others saw this as an advantage with Canada ahead of the curve in linking these domains, especially with respect to climate change. There was a suggestion that the journal should, first and foremost, serve Canadian science, either by exploring Canada-specific phenomena or datasets. Special issues are being used to try to invite top Canadian authors to publish in *A-O*, with the hope that higher prestige authors generate a virtuous circle of additional high-prestige submissions.

Relationships with Stakeholders and Members

When discussing CMOS' stakeholders, most interviewees pointed to academe, the federal government and the private sector. While some interviewees felt these relationships were good, many felt they could be stronger.

Academe: Most recent Presidents have come from academe and CMOS enjoys a great rapport with the academic sector. Relations are with individual faculty members, more than institutions, who among other activities publish their research in *Atmosphere-Ocean*. One interviewee noted a disconnect between members at different career stages. Researchers and post-docs form the bulk of membership although CMOS is making strides but needs to continue to do more with respect to attracting more graduate students.

Government: In the past, liaison with the federal government was close and effective although it is generally felt that this relationship has suffered in the last decade or so as government policy has made participation difficult for government scientists. Interviewees lament the decreased involvement of government scientists.

CMOS continues to enjoy generally strong relationships with its two primary federal patrons – Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada. Contribution agreements are being renewed and key decision-makers in both departments are very supportive of CMOS, according to interviewees. The relationship is primarily one-way through the provision of federal funding (DFO also provides some office space for CMOS at its Ottawa headquarters); there is not much in terms of advice flowing from CMOS to policy-makers. CMOS sends letters to federal ministers but it is not clear how much impact they have.

One interviewee noted that government relations are especially strong on the research side, but less so on the operational side where, e.g., operational meteorologists may no longer see themselves a part of CMOS. For example, the journal *Atmosphere-Ocean* may speak more narrowly to researchers than practitioners.

A noted gap is in CMOS' relations with the federal granting councils and there is a desire to see more two-way communications with NSERC, in particular.



Private sector: The private sector is interested in presenting at Congress to showcase what they are doing but only a few large companies have much of a research effort. One interviewee expressed that stakeholder relations need to improve and are not as strong as they should be due to CMOS' vague strategic goals and lack of measurable objectives. Due to CMOS' challenges with communications, many potential stakeholders may not even know about CMOS. Another interviewee felt that it is important that CMOS work hard to define its key stakeholders and its value proposition to them.

Other stakeholders: CMOS participates in the Partnership Group for Science and Engineering (PAGSE) and is part of the Canadian Consortium for Research (CCR). CMOS partners with other scientific societies such as the American Meteorological Society and Canadian Geophysical Union. Interviewees felt these relationships are important and could be expanded to hold joint congresses, other joint events, exchange students, provide mentoring, etc. The regional Centres often work with First Nations, for example to increase awareness of weather in remote areas. The Centres have been raising the issue of the need to improve relations with stakeholders.

Members: Membership in CMOS peaked at about 1,000 a decade ago and has since averaged 700-800. One interviewee, noting that most presenters at Congress are not CMOS members, suggested that to expand membership CMOS should extend one-year membership to anyone who registers for Congress.

The Annual General Meeting is held in conjunction with Congress and is viewed as a key vehicle for society communications, although it is also seen by some as very dull and pro forma. CMOS has an assortment of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) focused on various areas of interest to members (e.g., the Arctic SIG). Interviewees felt that SIGs can serve to foster collaborations across stakeholders.



Part III: Recommendations

Overall, the interviews demonstrated a lot of love for CMOS and its “amazing collection of people.” However, there is also a sense that the organization “must grow up” to face “modern world challenges.”

Governance is a journey, and strong organizations are committed to continuous improvement. The CMOS governance review has identified some areas for improvement, and the Institute on Governance offers the following recommendations as suggested priorities to further strengthen the organization’s governance.

Modernization, Membership and Mandate

Recommendation 1 – Make CMOS “future-ready” by:

- Embracing diversity across all its dimensions and aggressively cultivating the next generation of members;
- Bolstering a renewed and well-communicated Strategic Plan with an annual implementation plan and oversight on follow-through on action items;
- Streamlining by-laws in favour of organizational policies for programmatic aspects.

CMOS, long dominated by a focus on the natural sciences, might also consider how it will connect with the social sciences and Indigenous and other ways of knowing to more fully address societal challenges.

Council, the Executive, Committees and Centres

Recommendation 2 – Improve the strategic delineation of governance roles and responsibilities by:

- Elevating the role of Council to put greater emphasis on strategy and fiduciary oversight, reducing the frequency of Council meetings to quarterly, and focusing meeting agendas on high-level strategy;
- Granting the Executive greater latitude to provide leadership in implementing strategic objectives and policy changes;
- Extending terms of primary officers to two years to support continuity and long-term sustainability of initiatives, and making the Executive Director position full-time (see Recommendation 4);
- Providing orientation and professional development training to members of Council, the Executive, and Committee and Centre Chairs; and,
- Improving communication between Council and Committees through an annual cross-Committee meeting with Council.



Communications, Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement

Recommendation 3 – Improve CMOS’s strategic communications, outreach and stakeholder engagement by:

- Consolidating communications responsibilities in a dedicated Communications Officer responsible for crafting and coordinating consistent messaging across all platforms and channels, including Congress;
- Improving and expanding the CMOS website and use of social media;
- Redoubling efforts to build relationships with federal departments and granting agencies, the private sector, and Indigenous and Northern people;
- Alternating between virtual and face-to-face formats for Congress to bring in smaller Centres and government scientists, or provide a hybrid of the two formats.

Staff

Recommendation 4 – Adopt a more coherent, modern staff structure by:

- Restructuring the Executive Director position as full-time with expanded responsibilities currently handled by the Corresponding and Recording Secretaries, among other additional duties;
- Ensuring effective reporting relationships by having all staff report to the Executive Director and implementing annual performance accords between the Council and the ED and between the ED and all direct reports;
- Hiring a part-time Communications Officer (as described in Recommendation 3); and,
- Rationalizing other support positions as paid part-time positions, as required.



Appendix 1 – List of Interviewees

1. Marek Stastna
2. Bob Jones
3. Kim Strong
4. Gordon Griffith
5. Pat McCarthy
6. Ellen Gute
7. Ann McMillan
8. Louis Lefaivre
9. Susan Allen
10. Karen Smith
11. Peter Jackson
12. Douw Steyn



Appendix 2 – Interview Guide

CMOS – Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society Governance Review -- Interview Guide

Name:

Date:

Introduction

1. Tell us about yourself. How long have you been associated with CMOS and in what roles?

Mandate & Strategy

2. What is your understanding of the mandate of CMOS?
3. What is your understanding of how CMOS provides for strategy development and oversight of its implementation? How well does this work in practice?

Roles and Responsibilities

4. What is your understanding of the governance roles and responsibilities of the CMOS Council?
 - a. How well do Council members fulfill these obligations?
 - b. What gaps or risks (if any) associated with CMOS' current governance approach have been identified by you and/or the Council?
 - c. Is there something more / different / less that the Council should be doing to fulfill its responsibilities and achieve CMOS' mandate and strategic priorities?
5. Given its roles and responsibilities, what competencies are required on the Council?
 - a. How well are these reflected by the current Council composition?
 - b. Is the Council's size appropriate?
6. What is your understanding of the division of roles and responsibilities between the Council and the Executive? Do you view this delineation as important?



7. How well do CMOS' by-laws, rules and policies serve as an effective framework for supporting the work of CMOS? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

Council Recruitment & Orientation

8. How are new Council members recruited? Any suggestions for improvement?
9. What orientation do and should new Council members receive? What opportunities are there for ongoing learning?

Council Operations

10. Please describe the current culture of the Council, its strengths and weaknesses.
11. How effective are Council (or Centre, Committee)* meetings? Please comment on the following aspects:
 - The agenda – are the right topics addressed? Is sufficient time allocated for discussion of each item? Are there agenda items that shouldn't be there?
 - Do members receive the necessary information sufficiently in advance?
 - Council member attendance, meeting length and frequency
 - Meeting roles and responsibilities of Chair, Members, Exec. Dir. and staff
 - Council engagement, decision-making, degree of formality (e.g., Roberts' Rules of Order), *in camera* practices
 - Staff support and engagement

** where interviewees were not familiar with Council meetings, they were invited to respond based on their experiences with Centre or Committee meetings*

Committees

12. How well is CMOS' committee structure functioning?
 - a. Are the committees active and responsive to your aspirations for CMOS?
 - b. Are there any gaps or overlaps that need to be addressed?



Council / Executive / Staff Relations

13. How would you describe the general state of Council/Executive/staff relations? How could the relationship be improved?
14. How effective are the Council's objective-setting and performance evaluation practices for the Executive Director?

Communications, Outreach and Relationship with Key Stakeholders

15. Please describe the current state of CMOS' relationships with key stakeholders.
16. In your view, how central is Congress to delivering on CMOS' mission?
17. What is your view of the CMOS' journal *Atmosphere-Ocean*?

Other

18. Are there any good governance practices that you wish to discuss, or any best practices you are aware of that you recommend CMOS consider? Are there any areas of concern that you'd like to raise?

