



Next Steps Following OIA Act Proclamation

Members have expressed unanimous pleasure and support for the OIA's new Act. Your comments received over the holidays were very much appreciated. This spring new by-laws will be presented to the OIA membership to fully implement our new legislation.

During the extensive consultation work the OIA conducted over the past 2 years the number of Agrology-based groups, associations and interests that came to show their understanding of the OIA Bill contributed to our new Act moving forward to Proclamation. Initial opponents soon realized the intent of the Bill, the political support that had been earned, and understood that the OIA's new Act only applied to OIA certified and registered practitioners.

For the most part, the Agrology sector appreciated the OIA's objectives to address matters associated with governance of the Institute, enhanced certification standards required given national labour mobility, the urgent need to formalize disciplinary sanctions, as well as the necessity to legally address misuse of our designations. Constructive feedback was incorporated into our Act.

Despite communication and meetings and providing clarifications to the matters that concerned them, two groups chose to appear before the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills to oppose the OIA. They were joined by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. We had met with senior Ministry staff on two occasions. The full Hansard transcript link is provided on the OIA website for members and the public to evaluate the positions expressed and seek clarification directly with those individuals/organizations cited.

<http://www.oia.on.ca/news/details.aspx?id=3db6a5f4-3f9a-4f1f-93af-8de33c980537>

Moving forward, OIA members must actively commit to communicate our pledge as registered and certified professionals to benefit our customers, clients, industry and employers through our superior capacity for competence and our individual commitment to enhance our skills and knowledge. We cannot continue to keep our professional certification or the value added asset we provide a secret. This includes using your designation on social media such as your LinkedIn profile or allowing your expertise to be found via the OIA website. We also cannot ignore the validation associated with recording professional development.

Other provincial jurisdictions such as Quebec and Saskatchewan are currently moving to further enhance their Agrology Acts. Issues related to ethics, globalization, new technologies and rapidly changing business practices are motivating enhanced mandatory licensure in these provinces.

The public's expectation of sustainability practices, transparency, qualification assurance and competency in practice and within government show no signs of diminishing. The citizens of Ontario would be interested to know that the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture has 125 certified P.Ags registered with the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists while the number of employees with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food that have chosen to have their educational qualifications assessed and meet fitness to practice standards total less than 10.

This past October, Ontario Premier and Minister of Agriculture Kathleen Wynne challenged our province's agriculture and food sector to double its growth rate and create more than 120,000 jobs by 2020. There can be no denial that Agrology practice, jobs and demand for registered and certified professionals is growing most rapidly where qualification and certification is deemed in the consumer interest and a best practice by industry. Most provincial jurisdictions embrace certification and professional designation as a means of business expansion. In 2014 we hope to have constructive dialogue with those who continue to maintain that certification, fitness to practice and commitment to continuous professional development serve no purpose in Ontario.

OIA member practitioners must utilize our new Act to prepare for the day in the not too distant future when OIA's few remaining detractors, and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, can no longer deny that certification and registration in the consumer interest is vital for Ontario's economic growth, contributes to rural development, is positive for Ontario business, and is in harmony with the public interest.

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