

## THE ONTARIO AGROLOGIST

A conversation with Tony Morris P.Ag., Senior Relationship Manager, Agriculture, Meridian Credit Union, and a former president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture

### **OIA's longstanding mission statement:**

To protect the public by certifying the competence of qualified practitioners and to build public confidence in Ontario's agriculture, agri-food and environmental sector.

### **Q: As an Agrologist and an OIA member, do you think this mission statement has relevance today?**

**Tony:** Yes, as a member of the Institute, I believe that mission is still valid and relevant for the Institute, itself. From my own standpoint as a practicing agrologist working in an ag related industry and deals directly with clients every day, I prefer to think in more concise terms. For me, it all comes down to three things: Trust, Transparency and Authenticity.

### **Q: Can you put those three attributes into context?**

**Tony:** Let's take them one at a time. First, trust. Just about everything in life revolves around people and relationships. There can be no strong foundation for a relationship in business, professionally, or on a personal level, if that trust factor is missing. Second, transparency in what you're doing is really the only way to build a solid, trust-based relationship. And finally authenticity, largely the 'professional' part of the equation, and in how you are perceived by others. Essentially, it's putting your best foot forward.

### **Q: And how do you think the profession of agrology presents itself?**

**Tony:** I'll take that a bit broader. Quite frankly, people across this industry,

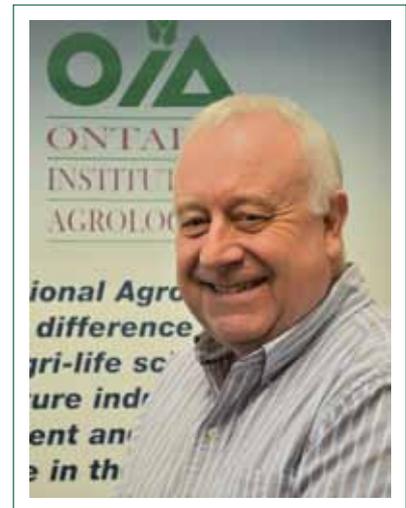
including some Agrologists, have always tended to sell themselves short. Many people in agriculture, for some reason, find it hard to present themselves as being a credentialed professional, while they are directly involved in an extremely important industry for our economy and for society. I can say that I'm not shy about putting P.Ag. on my name tag at ag related meetings, and I make sure it's on all of my business correspondence.

### **Q: Do you think this 'understated' presence is having a direct impact on the agricultural industry?**

**Tony:** Yes, it's damaging this industry. I go to a lot of Ag industry meetings, especially at this time of the year, with grain processors, agribusiness people, even research scientists. And at every single meeting I hear the same thing: 'We cannot find technically qualified people to work in our industry.' I'm hearing it everywhere and I have to ask myself: Why are we having such trouble attracting qualified people into this industry?

### **Q: Care to speculate why that might be?**

**Tony:** I think some of it has to do with how my generation presented ourselves to our own kids, and to society in general. Back in the 1980s, the 1990s and in the early 2000's when we had all of the livestock sector problems and the low commodity prices, we spent a lot of time complaining to just about anyone who'd listen. About how bad this industry was. How hard it was to



make a go of it. Is that something an industry should be saying, while taking for granted that a next generation will want to carry on? I can't think of another industry where people involved have spent so much time talking about how hard things are, and how tough this work is. That does not put this industry in a good light.

If you work in an Industry, you're a spokesperson for it. If you're going to attract good people into the agricultural industry, you, as an individual, have to project a positive, professional image. That's where it starts.

*The Ontario Institute of Agrologists represents nearly 500 Professional (P.Ag.), Technical (T.Ag.), and Articling (A.Ag.) Agrologist members across Ontario's diverse agricultural industry. The OIA is based in Guelph. For a current listing of OIA Members, events and information go to the website shown below.*