

P.Ag.

THE ONTARIO AGROLOGIST

A conversation with Terry Kingsmill, P.Ag., Registrar, of the Ontario Institute of Agrologists. The OIA serves to protect the public by certifying the competence of educated and trained specialists and to build public confidence in Ontario's agriculture, agri-food, agri-environmental and agri-business sectors.

How does the OIA ensure the competency of qualified practitioners in Ontario?

First of all, professional Agrology licensure/accreditation exists throughout Canada and internationally. Professional licensure (P.Ag. or T.Ag.) legitimizes formal agriculture or environmental education and experience just as the P.Eng. title recognizes those that meet the rigour of certification by the Professional Engineers of Ontario. The role of a provincial Agrology Institute, like any independent regulatory body, is to apply public interest third party assessment of capacity to practice under provincial Statute. Ontario is one of the few provinces without mandatory licensure in Agrology. But that does not stop the OIA from applying national standards of competency to join the profession and national requirements to maintain accreditation. Only OIA members can achieve national labour mobility due to harmonized standards amongst the 10 provincial Agrology Institutes. OIA registered P.Ags and T.Ags serve society through member adherence to integrity within professional standards of practice, rigorous competency and educational entrance requirements, and on-going continuous learning and competency enhancement. Further, they must utilize sound scientific methods and principles that represent the foundation of agricultural and natural science, practice ethical business approaches, as well as

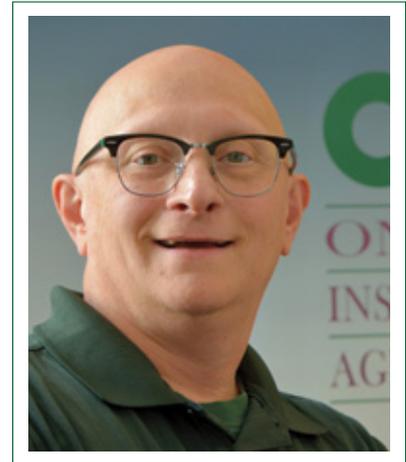
maintain public accountability. Through provincial Statute, OIA members lead the advancement of Agrology practice in Ontario in a way that reflects the public interest in agricultural and environmental quality, resource stewardship, nutrient management, reclamation and food quality.

How has the OIA responded to unauthorized usage of professional designations in Ontario?

Our 2013 Act was unsuccessfully challenged at provincial legislative committee. I am happy to say that due to the new Act we have stopped non-members from misrepresenting themselves to the public as OIA accredited. We have acted on many individuals using our protected designations unlawfully. We always appreciate learning about anyone using one of our protected designations that is not listed on the OIA public database.

The OIA has been utilizing Country Guide to highlight accredited practitioners for over a year now. What has been the response?

I can say that the OIA Board of Directors and I have been thrilled. From a public interest perspective, we are seeing more young people choosing to practice within a Statute-based code of ethics and national competency to practice measurement stick. Labour mobility is a reality today. We are seeing many firms based outside of Ontario coming into the province. These companies are accustomed to their staff being licensed and accountable so are demanding that of their new



Ontario employees. Quite frankly, it is proof that OIA accreditation is good for a practitioner to distinguish themselves in the Ontario marketplace and is good for employers to similarly distinguish themselves from competitors. The articles are leading to Country Guide readers looking for our members. The OIA accreditations are highly valued.

I suppose growth is also coming from recognition of the major trends within the agriculture, environmental and ag business sectors. We are a global marketplace, so third party independent assessed education and current competency, as well as accountability, is highly sought. Going forward it may not be enough in Ontario to have a job title, a long ago achieved education, a certificate or a trust me approach. If Ontario fails to recognize the marketplace in which we operate and fails to respond to that consumer demand for third party independent assessment, I fear our competitiveness will suffer.

For more information, a current listing of OIA Members, to contact Terry or to follow us on Twitter and Facebook, please visit www.oia.on.ca.