

THE ONTARIO AGROLOGIST

First of a series outlining the role of the Ontario Institute of Agrologists in providing quality service to the industry

The Ontario Institute of Agrologists represents nearly 500 Professional (P.Ag.), Technical (T.Ag.) and Articling (A.Ag.) Agrologists in Ontario. In December 2013 the Ontario Legislature passed Bill Pr15, which updated the previous act from 1960.



In a recent conversation OIA Registrar Terry Kingsmill, P.Ag. discussed the new Act and its value to members.

Q: How does this new Agrologist Act affect the OIA, its membership and the public?

Terry: I'd say that the OIA is, in some ways, a new organization through this new act. It's an important evolution

for this organization in its capacity to serve a mission to build public confidence in agriculture, agri-food, the agri-environment and agribusiness in Ontario. Our 1960 legislation could not even allow this institute, or me as its registrar, to stop anyone from identifying himself a P.Ag., or to stop putting the P.Ag. decal on her pickup or business card.

The second issue dealt with Professional and Technical Agrologists and an enforced requirement for ongoing learning, practical competency and professional development. So, the new act gives us the ability to begin to be a quasi-regulatory college for individuals who want to be part of our high standards for professional and public accountability.

Q: What government body supervises OIA?

Terry: The OIA is not a government agency. We're not tied to or connected to any government entity, and that includes OMAFRA. We don't report to them, we don't file anything with them — and this is a rather different situation with OIA than exists between other provincial Institutes of Agrology and their respective governments.

Q: What other member-based entities are structured like the OIA model?

Terry: I'll give an example of an organization that is also non-mandatory in Ontario, and that's Human Resource Professionals. It's not mandatory that they be licensed, but there are over 20,000 individuals who are. That's a pretty healthy number of individuals who have decided that "it

means something to me, and it means something to my employer that I'm making decisions that could leave my employer liable to be sued." Having that certification helps to ensure professionalism, and those licensed HR professionals act independent of government involvement.

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**— TERRY KINGSMILL,
P.Ag., AND ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF AGROLOGISTS REGISTRAR**

It's been proven in Canada, and in other democratic countries, that creating a regulatory body that operates at arm's-length, or farther, from government is a very effective way of ensuring quality service for the public interest.

The safety net that government can provide is a broader public good, and the rationale for achieving that broader public good. So through an act of the legislature, government can create a "college" or an institute that has specific jurisdictional powers and authorities to serve in that "complementary" public good. That's an important element in determining that someone has met entry-level requirements for a specific area of service to the public, and requirements maintaining a professional status in that area.

If the public has any questions as to whether someone is, in fact, a registered member of the OIA they can simply go into our website, www.oia.on.ca and under the Find a Member tab, you can enter the name, and see if that person is "a member in good standing" with the Ontario Institute of Agrologists.

The complete 2013 legislation is posted on the OIA website under Standards and Regulations.

Upcoming Country Guide issues will feature interviews from the Ontario Agrologist with individual OIA members practising across the diverse Ontario agricultural, agri-food and agribusiness value spectrum.