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## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

We have just finished the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The media, for want of a better description, have called this the decade of the 'aughts'. During this time, particularly in the last five years, there were significant changes for OIA. For many of our members, these changes were viewed in a negative light and this was reflected in a significant decline in membership. For OIA, this period may be better referred to as the decade of the 'nots'. This became very evident to me when I moved to Ontario in 2007 and became a member of OIA. Until then, my observation was that of an Agrologist in Saskatchewan and everything here in Ontario had seemed just fine. I wouldn't say that all what happened was negative. The implementation of the Internationally Educated Agrologist Program is one activity of which the Institute should be surely proud. What we have been able to accomplish should be a model for other Institutes of Agrologists to emulate. And during this past year, the effort by the Board and the Registrar to regenerate the Branch structure was one of our priorities.

As a result of the many changes, the previous and current Boards have made it their mission to address some key concerns and have acted to correct them. Personally, I feel that we are on the right course of action and this will guide the OIA as we move forward.

So what do I see do for 2010? The Board wants to continue on growing the Branches. A Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted between the Branches and the OIA Office and this MOU has already been signed by some of the Branches. We hope that the Guelph Branch gets its operation going forward now that it has constituted a new Executive. A vibrant Guelph Branch is critical to liaising with the OAC and the student body.

Membership numbers continue to be of some concern. An increased number of Agrologists is key to the sustainable operation of the Institute. I hope that our positive efforts will generate reinstatements among those who had chosen to leave the Institute over the past couple of years and that more new members will be attracted to the profession.


The Board wants the membership to know that it is working on seeking continuing support from the provincial Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration regarding the Internationally Educated Agrologist Program. We believe that the positive results this past year should warrant favorable consideration from the Ministry to continue this very worthwhile program.

I am pleased that the Niagara Branch has agreed to act as the host branch for the 2010 Conference and Annual General Meeting that will be held as a two-day event in mid-April

in Niagara-on-the-Lake. We want to reconstitute an event that brings us together to learn, to network, and to promote the profession of Agrology. The host committee is working hard to make the program timely and meaningful to us as Agrologists. I hope to see you there. More information is available in this newsletter as well as on our web site. The final program and registration information will be available by the end of January.

Finally, on behalf of the Board of Directors and our Staff, I want to wish you all a very happy and prosperous New Year.

Kindest Regards,



Bruce Hobin, M.Sc., P.Ag.  
President

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## **BRANCH REVITALIZATION HAS BEGUN**

As we begin 2010 it is becoming recognized that economic insecurity and workplace uncertainty has led people to focus on building their sector contacts, networking and seeking ways to advance their careers. AgCareers.com recently released their "7 New Year's Resolutions for Your Career". The number one suggestion was to join and be active in an association. Most joining the OIA in 2009 already determined the value in association membership given the networking advantage as well as the business value associated with professional licensure. More than ever, success in this competitive marketplace is tied to meeting new people and learning new things.

Renewed support for our branch structure will facilitate the influence of professionals throughout the province. Active branches will also facilitate valuable networking for today's agrology professional. At a recent Guelph Branch Meeting it was suggested that OIA members could benefit with a review of our mission, strategic objectives, values statement and why licensure is important. It was acknowledged that if OIA branches are to be healthy, energetic, promote the profession to the public, and provide a valued network then we all need to be able to communicate positively about ourselves, the work we do and the benefits of licensure.

### **OIA Mission Statement**

The Mission of the Ontario Institute of Agrologists is to protect the public by licensing and safe guarding competence of Agrologists in Ontario and to build public confidence in Ontario's agriculture and agri-food system.

### **OIA's Five Strategic Objectives**

There are five key strategic objectives of the OIA:

1. Enhance the P.Ag. brand through enhanced recognition of licensed professionals who meet eligibility criteria of the OIA versus those who practice unlicensed and unregulated;
2. Promote the work and expertise of professional Agrologists;
3. Increase OIA membership;
4. Provide peer network/mentorship opportunities; and
5. Pursue legislative reform.

## **OIA Vision**

The Ontario Institute of Agrologists will advance the professionalism of Agrologists serving society through adherence to a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, as well as through the provision of quality advice and public accountability.

The foundation of the practice of agrology is no different than that of any other professionally designated person, including physicians, lawyers, teachers, health care professions, engineers or accountants. The foundation of any profession includes technical competence, integrity, objectivity and of course, due diligence in their application. The OIA serves to assure the public that through licensure its members are technically competent, that they practice with integrity and objectivity, and that they practice due diligence in the opinions/expertise they provide.

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## **PROFESSIONALISM AND CORE VALUES**

Professionals are individuals that have gone beyond specialized educational training and are a member of a particular vocation. A lot of people call themselves agricultural specialists. But only licensed professionals can prove that they conform to the rules or standards of a profession, possess professional knowledge and practice within standards of professional conduct. In carrying out our professional activities we do so within a superior standard of ethics. As a result, it can be identified that professionalism practiced by OIA members embraces a set of attitudes, behaviours, skills, attributes and values that are expected by the public.

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## **COMPETENCE AND CONTINUING COMPETENCE**

It is often said by non members that they graduated from agriculture college decades ago and do not need a commitment to on going learning or prove competence to their clients and customers. However, there have been major advances within all scopes of practice in agrology. New products are in use including new seeds that provide larger yields while reducing fertilizer used. Farmers who attended a recent conference in Ridgeway learned this and are now asking more questions about the products and services they receive. Following a visit to the OIA trade show booth they also know to ask their ag specialist why their sales agents and advisers are not licensed professionals.

Farmers are challenged by economic and market trends. We also have increasing public concern regarding food quality and resource stewardship. These changes have brought the issue of competence of a professional and continuing competence to the forefront. The training and practice of agrologists across Canada have been defined by the professional practitioner's need to meet criteria regarding work performed, documentation and evaluation. Sometimes continuing competency is known as "quality assurance". The fundamental responsibility for ensuring continuing competence rests with the licensed professional. Continuing competency requirements are designed to promote ongoing safe, ethical and competent practice by licensed agrologists to ensure that registered and designated agrologists are prepared to protect public interest and to pursue, and most importantly, achieve on-going professional growth throughout their careers.

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## **WHY SHOULD I BE A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL IN PRACTICE?**

The Profession of Agrology *demands integrity, competence and objectivity in the conduct of its members while fulfilling their professional responsibilities to the Public, their Employer or Client, the Profession, and other Agrologists.* Serving in the public interest means to put the interest of the public, including determining what is best for your customer, ahead of personal interest. We acknowledge that a profession is tied to specialized knowledge and a professional provides services and expertise based on his/her knowledge and skill set. However, the hallmark of a licensed professional, no matter the profession, is that public trust and confidence is connected through licensure. The OIA's ethical code of practice is reflected in all actions and decisions of a licensed professional with regard to an employer, client, with other professionals and the public. Not only are professionals accountable for their own actions they may find themselves accountable for those under their supervision, and to other professionals as part of their professional obligations to the public and in turn society as a whole.

An unlicensed person practicing Agrology is not regulated. As a result, there is no assurance that any "agricultural specialist" practices within standards of competence or a code of ethical conduct. Further, they are not held to any standard of public accountability. The unlicensed has no obligation to practice basic stewardship principles or protect the public interest. It is hard to image that we would choose a physician that is not certified and regulated by the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons. Who would want a dentist that graduated 10 years ago and has not stayed current; or an accountant that is out of date in terms of taxation policy; or seek the advice of a lawyer that does not possess proven current competencies as regulated by the Law Society of Upper Canada?

There seems to be an underlying assumption that our sector is regulated, a trust that our food is safe, that the advice and product purchased by a farmer is the best available. In the majority of Canadian provinces, adequate consumer and public health protection made it unthinkable for those who practice agrology to do so unlicensed and unaccountable. The rationale for the creation of the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists to oversee the profession in the late 1940's was to ensure farmers were getting quality advice and product. As professionals we need to be able to communicate to the public, our employer and the ag sector the value of serving in an accountable and ethical fashion complemented by current and proven competencies to practice.

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## **AGM AND A CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

The 51<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting of the OIA will be held April 16 and 17 at the Hilton Garden Inn, Niagara-on-the-Lake. While planning for the AGM/Conference is progressing all OIA members should consider standing for election to the OIA Board of Directors. Branches may choose to nominate an individual to stand for election to the OIA Board.

To be an OIA Board member is to be a champion and be willing to develop and implement a vision for the OIA to move forward. You must serve to represent the collective interest of OIA members in a fiduciary capacity; providing direction and guidance in a manner that supports the protection of the public interest; to promote and advance the interests of the Institute and the professional designation; to maintain standards of transparency and fairness with staff and OIA members; as well as to provide direction that supports the long-term sustainability of the OIA. For a complete job description or for more information please contact the Registrar.

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## CREATING VALUE FOR OIA MEMBERS

Members should be aware that we continue to offer discounted auto and home insurance premiums through RBC. Information on how to receive a no obligation quote is provided on the front page of the OIA web site.

In terms of professional errors and omission coverage OIA members have access to discounted high quality professional liability insurance. Information to receive a no obligation quote is also provided on the front page of the OIA web site.

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## OFFICIAL OIA PINS, STAMPS AND CLOTHES AVAILABLE

Members are reminded that OIA lapel pins are available for purchase. The "OIA Member" and the "P.Ag." pins can be bought separately or as a set for \$25.00 plus shipping.



In response to your requests OIA members now have the ability to order your own official OIA Stamp. Add professional authenticity to your contracts, documents and reports. The stamp will come with your name and membership number for \$45 plus shipping.

And with spring on the horizon the OIA has golf shirts (\$45 plus tax and shipping) and vests (\$55 plus tax and shipping) available. For more information on OIA products available and sizing please contact the OIA office for more information.



## **CONGRATULATIONS**

Terry Thompson, P.Ag., has been named Interim Executive Director of the Agricultural Adaptation Council. Situated in Guelph, the Agricultural Adaptation Council is a non-profit, grass roots coalition of 73 agricultural, agribusiness and rural organizations dedicated to providing financial resources to help Ontario's agriculture and agri-food industry remain profitable, grow and maintain its economic strength.

Board of Directors of ACC Farmers' Financial (ACC) recently announced that Don LeDrew, P.Ag., was appointed President and Chief Operating Officer. Brian Hughes, P.Ag., retains the Chief Executive Officer position, with additional responsibility for special projects, while Don becomes responsible for the day-to-day operations of ACC. ACC Farmers' Financial is a not-for-profit that was founded in 1992 by a coalition of 17 farm organizations. Since its inception, ACC has loaned over \$2 billion to Canadian farmers.

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## **IN MEMORIAM**

George Atkins, P.Ag. (Dist.), passed away in his 93<sup>rd</sup> year in November. A retired farm broadcaster George will be remembered for his role in the creation of Farm Radio International. In operation for over 30 years it has over 250 participating radio partners in over 35 African countries ensuring that farmers receive practical information they can use.

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