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Agrologists Institutes of Canada et l'Ordre des agronomes du Québec

The Montréal Accord: Moving Towards Mutual Recognition for April 2009

Report on Phase II: National Standardization for a Professional Agrologist



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Preamble

The Montreal Accord developed by the Agrologists Institutes of Canada and l'Ordre des agronomes du Québec summarizes the discussions and the decisions agreed upon by each individual institute and l'Ordre to achieve mutual recognition of professional agrologists between provinces and meet the obligations of Chapter VII in the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT).

In October 2008, the proposed changes to Chapter VII were not signed off by the Forum of Labour Mobility Market Ministers (FLMM). Yet it is expected that those changes would be in force on April 1st 2009. The consortia representing professional agrologists in all ten provinces agreed to strive for mutual recognition of existing licensed professional agrologists (P.Ags) by April 2009 and in the longer term, to enhance labour mobility for new P.Ags by continuing the work on the harmonization and standardization of licensing requirements.

CONTEXT

The meeting was held on October 20th to 22nd in Montreal. All Institutes and l'Ordre were represented by an elected official and a staff member. This workshop is the fourth meeting of the consortia to finalize the Phase II project on a National Standard for the professional agrologist. The goals of this workshop were to make decisions on:

1. Remaining gaps in labour mobility to address the existing situation and achieve mutual recognition;
2. Means and solutions to move forward in the long term– towards a national standard for the agrologist profession;
3. Lessons learned and opportunities to share resources in the future.

The changes to the approach in the implementation of Chapter VII obligations have resulted in two significant changes in the original outcomes of the project.

1. Since the FLMM is no longer requiring the signature of a Mutual Recognition Agreement, this document represents the terms of agreement on labour mobility between the Agrologists Institutes and l'Ordre des agronomes.
2. Each institute is now accountable to find solutions to remaining barriers at the provincial level, in collaboration with their provincial government and with the support of the provincial Labour Mobility coordinator.

Guiding Principles

The decisions made were based on the following guiding principles. All representatives and Institutes have ***the will to maintain and enhance the professional standard of agrologists in Canada.***

1. The need for labour mobility

All Institutes recognize the right for all professional agrologists to be able to practice in any province within their scope of practice.

2. The need to protect the public interest

The Institutes have the legal mandate to oversee the profession to protect the public interest and ensure high quality standards and ethics within the professional activities.

3. The need to protect the consumers

The practice of agrology has a direct impact on people's environment (ie: air, water, soil) and on the quality of what they eat. Consumers are an important segment of the Institutes' stakeholders.

4. The need for recognition of the profession

The professional agrologists have to apply due diligence and practice with standards that are comparable to similar professions. As they are liable for professional acts, employers and clients must recognize the value of their expertise based on their professional designation.

Portrait of the Existing Situation

LICENSURE PROCEDURES AND INTER-PROVINCIAL TRANSFERS

The analysis of the existing situation in each province brought to light the real barriers that remain for professional agrologists moving inter-provincially. The membership profile, the initial licensure requirements and the inter-provincial transfer procedure of each institute were analysed and shared. The exercise revealed the following facts.

1. Request / Application for a transfer

All Institutes require documentation from the applicant upon request for transfer. Except for cases below where the education requirements are re-examined, the request for documents/information is for registration purposes and record keeping and does not in itself constitute a barrier. It is clearly an administrative procedure. An application form is filled-out and/or the file is transferred from the original institute. The documentation must prove to the receiving institute that the member is in good standing and of good character.

The development of a transfer form, different from the original application form would be a good practice. It would eliminate ambiguity between the initial licensure requirements and the inter-provincial transfer procedures.

2. BCIA – British Columbia

- If you are a P. Ag in another province, you are immediately accepted as a P. Ag in British Columbia.
- P. Ags with a diploma are not accepted unless they come with a recommendation letter from their provincial institute.

3. AIA – Alberta

- A P. Ag with a diploma would not be accepted as P. Ag in Alberta. They would receive the Technical Agrologist (T. Ag) designation.
- Junior P. Ag with less than 3 years experience (coming from Québec) would not be accepted. They would receive provisional membership.
- An English language test is required if the degree was not completed in English.

4. SIA – Saskatchewan

- All applications are reviewed by the admissions committee to evaluate mainly the education equivalency with the BSc in Agrology from the University of Saskatchewan (U of S.).
- P. Ags with degrees in environmental sciences or related sciences (ex: biology) would have to complete agrology courses related to the agriculture reality in western Canada before being accepted as P.Ags. in Saskatchewan
- P. Ag with a diploma has to prove equivalency with the 4 year degree in agrology out of U of S.

5. MIA – Manitoba

- If you are a P. Ag in another province, you are immediately accepted as a P. Ag in Manitoba.
- P. Ag with an equivalent diploma would be able to practice agrology under the Tech. Ag designation.
- An English language competency is required for the international bridging program supported by the MIA.

6. OIA – Ontario

- If you are a P. Ag in another province, you are immediately accepted as a P. Ag in Ontario.
- Non-Canadian P.Ag require a work permit to be given the professional designation.
- An English language test is required if the degree was not completed in English.

7. OAQ – Québec

- All applicants must be fluent in French (possible legitimate objective)
- All applications are re-examined to evaluate education equivalency with BSc in Agrology from Laval or McGill
- All applicants have to pass an oral exam
- BSc in related sciences (ex: biology or environmental) are not accepted as P.Ags.

8. NBIA – New Brunswick

- If you are a P. Ag in another province, you are immediately accepted as a P. Ag in New Brunswick.
- P. Ag with a diploma would not be accepted

9. NSIA – Nova Scotia

- We accept all P. Ags and P. Ags with diploma are grandfathered

10. PEIIA – Prince Edward Island

- All P. Ags with a degree in agrology or related sciences are accepted and receive the P. Ag title
- P. Ag with diploma receives a permit to practice, not the P.Ag title. This permit is renewed yearly with mandatory declaration of scope of practice.

11. NLIA – Newfound Land and Labrador

- If you are a P. Ag in another province, you are immediately accepted as a P. Ag in NLIA.

12. Suggested mechanisms to allow transfers without the need for re-examination

The barrier exists in this case with P. Ags with a diploma or education level considered less than the BSc in agrology from recognised universities.

The rationale for not accepting a diploma as an adequate education credential refers to the Institute's due diligence in protecting the safety and security of the public. The Institute may be liable. A province or some provinces could consider it as a legitimate objective.

When an Institute allows a diploma graduate to receive the P. Ag designation in their province, the acceptance letter should state that they are restricted and may face refusal of their status in other provinces.

Agreement and Decisions to Remove Remaining Barriers

1. Re-examination and oral exam / OAQ – Québec

Le Code des professions now allows regulatory bodies (l'Ordre) to deliver a permit-on permit to P. Ags (or groups of professionals) that already have a permit outside of Québec. The bylaw needs to be written, accepted by members of l'Ordre and then published in the Gazette and approved by the National Assembly (parliament). This process will take up to a year and half. Until the new by-law is in place and in force, a barrier remains because all P. Ags from other provinces have to show education equivalency and pass the oral exam. Discussions will have to occur at the provincial level in Québec to deal with this remaining barrier (potential legitimate objective to allow for legislative changes to occur).

This permit will give all the rights (to title and practice) of the "agronome" as stated in Article 42. of Le Code des professions du Québec and removes the need for oral exams for inter-provincial transfers. Only an exam for French language will be required. Consequently transfers will be automatically accepted regarding credentials etc. OAQ will also be able to give temporary or restrictive practice if the transferring P.Ag. have a restrictive license on their permit as well.

2. Education requirements / Meeting with the Deans

Each institute is accountable to meet their respective Deans and engage a discussion on the proposed new education standard.

At the July meeting, the group agreed on a standard that could be implemented to achieve consistency and meet the basic knowledge of science and agronomy required.

Proposed education standard	
A Degree from a recognized University (need the official paper)	120 credits in fundamental and applied sciences
Plus professional and ethics, legislation, and practice under supervision	These can be part of the university program/courses or from other recognized sources

Suggested Courses breakdown*	Number of credits
Fundamental Science	15 credits
Specialty courses in 3 different Agrology applied science field. Field related to scope of practice or specialization; Credits do not have to be equally weighted between the 3 fields	60 credits
300/400 level courses	33 credits(minimum 24 credits in Agrology)
P&E / legislation / Practice / others	12 credits (if available)

*More details on the suggested courses are described on page 11 of this document

CONCLUSION AT THE JULY MEETING

While all Institutes have set the baseline at the Bachelor of Science degree level, there are existing differences in the number of required credits directly related to Agrology Sciences. Some provinces do not have easy access to those specialty courses when there is no Agriculture Faculty at the nearest institution. Assessment of domestic university programs needs to be done with rigueur, comparability and consistency. An independent body could act as a neutral third party to assess the programs on a cyclical basis (as it is done with International academic programs).

To complete the project on labour mobility, Institutes will produce a list of accepted University programs with courses details. This will help to further identify areas where P.Ags do not meet existing standards about education qualification.

In October 08, it was suggested that the consortia organizes a 2 days work session with the Deans in July 09 to study and develop further the proposed education standard in agrology.

3. Re-examination of education requirements / SIA – Saskatchewan

Representatives from SIA feel that they now have a strong case to bring back to their admissions committee to review their interpretation of the Act regarding education requirements. The proposal will be made to change the procedures regarding the education requirements and remove the barrier of re-examination. If the committee/council does not make the necessary changes, then a legitimate objective will have to be applied to the province. A decision will have to be made by January 2009.

4. Experience requirements / AIA – Alberta

At the July meeting, the group agreed on two criteria for a uniform approach to the experience requirements.

1. During the training or articling period prior to obtaining full licensing, the applicant should be in a supervised or coaching relationship with a PAg
2. 3-4 years experience is required in order to ensure that candidates are able to go up the learning curve (as it relates to the complexity and the cyclical aspects of the professional activities)

Before implementing a standard across the country on experience requirements, Institutes need to study the level of experience required in relation to the complexity and comparability of the profession, refine the criteria drafted above and identify the means to acquire and measure the experience.

FINAL CONCLUSION/DECISION

All institutes and l'Ordre agreed that a minimum of experience is required before being allowed to fully practice agrology as a P. Ag. The minimum was set at 1 year but the consortia could not agree on the maximum number of years required.

AIA did extensive research on the issue before establishing their standard at 3 years of experience. AIA will provide the research document to other institutes by January 09. AIA will also look at the possibility of developing a legitimate objective for this requirement by April 09 (it is closely related to the specific environmental aspect of the practice of agrology in Alberta).

If an Institute sets the experience standard to less than 3 years, they need to research information and develop a strong justification for the proposed length of their program. Each province's justifications or study to be sent out to other institutes by April 09.

5. Technologists designation (T. Ags) / SIA-Saskatchewan

All institutes agreed that the T. Ags would not be part of this round of agreement for labour mobility objectives. SIA requested that the T. Ag designation be studied and put as a priority on the agenda for the next meeting of the ten institutes.

6. Future of the Consortia / Ten Institutes

It was decided that the steering committee will remain in place as a coordinating body for future requirements under the Labour Mobility initiative.

The steering committee will be responsible to develop (as required) a Phase III Action Plan based on the revised AIT-Chapter VII and the report from the Labour Mobility Coordinating Committee (LMCG) representative.

The steering committee will develop a business case for the creation of a national body responsible to pursue progress towards the development of a national standard for the profession.

Progress Made on Specific Requirements

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

Scope of practice refers to the range of activities that a qualified practitioner can practice in their respective province. It may vary from province to province.

An Individual (P. Ag) scope of practice or areas of practice or expertise will not be criteria for refusal of a P.Ag in good standing.

“Agrology is the practice of Bioresource and Economics sciences to provide advice to the Agriculture, Agri-food and Natural Resources Sector and contribute to the health of Society, Environment and Economy”

The ten provincial definitions of agrology (scope of practice) are accepted and should “fit” in the national definition of agrology, even if the provincial definitions may be different. The proposed national definition will evolve with the development of the national standard. As the standard is developed, we need a specific description of the professional activities included in the practice of agrology.

The combination of the words “professional” and “agrology” (as expressed in the Québec definition) would help to differentiate P. Ags from other similar professions or trades (ex: technologists)

EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

The institutes focussed their discussion on the knowledge, abilities and skills that a new graduate should have acquired at the completion of a university degree in agrology. The competencies were divided into four main categories, as described in the table below.

There was confirmation of the following education standard (as developed in July):

1. Fundamental/foundational science: 15 credits
2. Applied science: 60 credits in specialty courses in 3 different fields of agrology (plants, soils, animals, hydrology, economics)
3. 300/400 level courses: 33 credits (minimum of 24 in agrology)
4. P & E / Legislation / practice: 12 credits

Education – Agrology Knowledge Required		
Knowledge Categories	Description	Example of a course or activity in the curriculum
1. Fundamental/ foundational science	The core to acquire the knowledge; Core sciences; biology, chemistry, math related (stats, calculus, physics), economics; Essential basic knowledge in language, communication, computer skill (as a tool)	A botany course
2. Applied Science	Application of fundamental science; Applies to what a person will do in the field of agrology; Basic principles in soils, plants, animals, water (hydrology), economics	Vegetable physiology course (300 level)
3. Application in agrology discipline/practice	Specialization in applied areas related to agrology; Special application of knowledge; Integration of fundamental knowledge using critical thinking, higher rigor, deeper level	Courses and study application in a greenhouse (300 level)
4. Real interventions / professional recommendations	Knowledge and Technology transfer: ability to analyze and communicate science; link between the science and the client needs in agrology Hands-on experience Knowledge of specific legislation/provincial requirements Code of ethics of the profession Application of scientific research results to agrology practice	3 rd or 4 th year projects (acid test): making recommendations to a client in an agrology field (400 level)

EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENT

Experience is an essential requirement as it brings credibility to the agrology profession and comparability with other professions. It raises the level of confidence for the junior P. Ag in practicing within their scope of practice and with due diligence. There is also a liability/insurance issue: some insurance companies may not want to insure P. Ags that have no experience.

During the training period, the institutes have to exercise due diligence in protecting the public while allowing junior agrologists to gain experience. It is difficult to ensure an adequate level of supervision (costs, remote locations, employer is not a P. Ag, etc...)

It was agreed that one year of experience in the practice of agrology (training in, articling or working in) after the completion of a BSc in agrology, is the minimum acceptable requirement. There is still no agreement on the total number of years, or maximum requirement.

Institutes agreed to study their training/articling program or approach and develop their justification.

CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

The analysis and sharing of information between institutes confirmed that CPD requirements are not a barrier to labour mobility.

All institutes recognize the need to raise the level of rigor in the CPD procedures across the country, again to ensure credibility of the profession and comparability with others.

CPD will be on the agenda of future meetings of the consortia to discuss the need and feasibility of a national CPD program, uniform across Canada.

TEMPORARY PERMITS

No new information was gathered on temporary permits since the last meeting in July. The provision for and utilization of temporary permits is an exception, not a regular procedure in most institutes. In many cases, it is done on a very informal basis.

The consortia need to better understand the needs (reasons/purpose) for temporary permits and the legal implications for the institute. Institutes also need a process to issue / handle temporary permits.

Conclusion

Agrologists' institutes and l'Ordre des agronomes have made tremendous progress in identifying labour mobility barriers and mostly, in providing direction on how to resolve them. As of April 2009, licensed professional agrologists can be reassured as to the possibility of practicing their profession anywhere in Canada, as long as they are members in good standing with their respective institutes.

During the next six months, institutes will communicate the results of this agreement with members and councils. They will ensure that the changes required to legislation or by-laws are activated in order to meet Chapter VII obligations and the terms of this agreement. Remaining issues or barriers that may arise or new situations that were not foreseen will be dealt with initially at the provincial level with the support of the provincial labour mobility coordinators.

Finally, the consortia provided a continued mandate for the steering committee. The committee is responsible to develop an action plan for Phase III of this initiative and coordinate the activities occurring under the development of a national standard for the profession. The main items remaining for future agendas are: the education standard, the experience requirements, a uniform approach to continuous professional education and the technologist designation.

HRSDC and the labour mobility coordinator (LMCG) will keep the committee informed on developments regarding the implementation of Chapter VII and stay abreast of progress made by the institutes. HRSDC and LMCG will provide advice and support to the steering committee and consortia in the development and implementation of the next phase(s).

Signatures

Institute	Representative	Signature
		
 <p>ALBERTA INSTITUTE OF AGROLOGISTS</p>		
		
		
		
 <p>Ordre des agronomes du Québec</p>		
		
		
 <p>PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND INSTITUTE of AGROLOGISTS</p>		
 <p>N.I. Institute of Agrologists ETHICAL CREDIBLE PROFESSIONAL</p>		