



Study of Registration Practices of the

**ONTARIO PROFESSIONAL FORESTERS
ASSOCIATION, 2007**

This study was prepared by the Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC). We encourage its citation and distribution for non-commercial purposes, provided full credit is given. Please contact the OFC for permission to reproduce this study for commercial purposes.

© **Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2008**

ISBN 978-1-4249-6497-0 (PDF)

Disponible en français

Office of the Fairness Commissioner

595 Bay Street, Suite 1201

Toronto ON M7A 2B4

Canada

416 325-9380 or 1 877 727-5365

ofc@ontario.ca

www.fairnesscommissioner.ca

The Office of the Fairness Commissioner is an arm's-length agency of the Ontario government, established under the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006. Its mandate is to ensure that certain regulated professions have registration practices that are transparent, objective, impartial and fair.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Background of the Regulatory Body.....	3
A. Legislation	3
B. Protected Titles	3
C. Definition of the Profession	3
D. Labour Market/Economic Trends	5
E. New Developments Within the Profession	5
F. Staffing	5
3. Registration Practices.....	6
A. Registration Requirements and Application Process.....	6
B. Documentation Required from Internationally Trained Individuals.....	8
C. Credential Assessment (Third Party and/or Internal).....	9
D. Academic/Program Requirements	9
E. Work Experience Requirements.....	10
F. Examinations	10
G. Language Requirements	12
H. Fees	12
I. Third Parties	12
J. Typical Length of the Registration Process	12
K. Accredited Programs.....	13
L. Internal Review/Appeal Process	14
4. Bridging Programs	15
5. Mutual Recognition Agreements.....	15

6. Applicants' Interactions with Regulatory Body	16
A. Nature and Frequency of Communication	16
B. Backlogs	16
C. Complaints Regarding the Registration Process	16
7. Changes Since the 2005 Survey	16
8. Registration Information and Statistics.....	16
9. Sources	22

1. INTRODUCTION

The Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC) undertook a study of registration practices of Ontario’s regulated professions during the fall and winter of 2007–2008. The purpose of the study was to understand each regulated profession’s 2007 registration practices and to establish baseline data and information to enable the OFC to measure progress as it fulfills its mandate under the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006.

This report reflects the registration practices of the Ontario Professional Foresters Association, as of December 31, 2007. Information in this report was gathered from:

- face-to-face meetings with registration staff of the regulatory body
- additional documentation provided by the regulatory body
- relevant websites
- career maps for the profession posted on the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration’s website (where applicable).

The Ontario Professional Foresters Association also provided registration information and statistics for 2005, 2006 and 2007 through a standard spreadsheet designed by the OFC.

An analysis and summary of the findings for all of the regulated professions is contained in the OFC’s *Ontario’s Regulated Professions: Report on the 2007 Study of Registration Practices*.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE REGULATORY BODY

A. Legislation

The Ontario Professional Foresters Association (OPFA) governs its members in accordance with the Ontario Professional Foresters Act, 2000.

B. Protected Titles

The OPFA protects and regulates the title “registered professional forester” (RPF).

C. Definition of the Profession

Professional forestry is a “right to practise” profession: only certified members of the profession may legally practise. The practice of professional forestry is the provision of services related to the

development, management, conservation and sustainability of forests and urban forests where those services require knowledge, training and experience equivalent to that required to become a member of the profession. This practice includes (but is not limited to):

- The designing, specifying or approving of silviculture¹ prescriptions and treatments, including timber harvesting
- The appraisal, evaluation and certification of forests and urban forests
- The auditing of forest management practices
- The assessment of impacts from planned activities on forests and urban forests
- The classification, inventory and mapping of forests and urban forests
- The planning and locating of forest transportation systems, including forest roads.

In Ontario, the law establishing professional forestry as a “right to practise” profession specifically includes urban forestry; that is, the practices above on tree-dominated vegetation and related features found within an urban area, including woodlots, plantations, shade trees, fields in various stages of succession, and wetland and riverbank areas.

The vast majority of the forest in Ontario, and in Canada, is owned by the Crown (the provincial government on behalf of the citizens). The laws and policies governing forests and forestry vary significantly between provinces. Forest conditions (soils, climate, etc.) also vary. While much science is transferable, knowledge of local administration is crucial.

Traditional professional forestry careers include forest management and planning for the production of timber, pulp and paper and other wood products, and overseeing timber harvesting and planting and seeding operations. Increasingly, professional forestry careers are focused on the following:

- Developing, supporting and enhancing:
 - other values such as aesthetics, wildlife and recreation
 - water regimes
 - other products that may grow in forests
- Reclaiming lands that have previously been deforested.

¹ *Silviculture* is the art and science of controlling the establishment, growth, composition, health and quality of forests to meet diverse needs and values of landowners, societies and cultures.

In the course of their work, foresters must consider wildlife, fires, insect and disease reduction, aesthetics, recreation, water protection and the environment.

D. Labour Market/Economic Trends

Currently, about 700 professional foresters are practising in Ontario. Most are employed by private companies or the province. With the downturn in the pulp and paper and softwood lumber industry in Ontario in recent years, the labour market has become more saturated. However, some foresters are employed in other private industry, governments at other levels or environmental organizations. A number of professional foresters are consultants to industry, governments or private landowners, either as members of small firms or as self-employed practitioners. A few own and/or run forest-related firms (providing tree nursery or other services) or work in other areas such as education, research or investment.

There is a significant level of labour mobility of foresters across Canada. The various provincial regulators recognize each other's membership processes, facilitating transfers from one province to another and requiring only an exam to confirm necessary local knowledge.

E. New Developments Within the Profession

The forestry-related industries have undergone major changes in recent years, with large mills shutting down, causing the loss of approximately 10,000 jobs. As a result, many RPFs have opened their own small-to-medium-sized businesses. The nature of the work has also moved more toward contracted labour. The loss of relevant jobs in commercial "fibre" forestry and its oversight has been somewhat offset by increasing work in non-commercial forestry activities and in non-timber commercial businesses.

F. Staffing

The OPFA staff consists of five part-time people, two of whom are involved in the registration process. However, as many as 80 member volunteers make it possible to carry out the work of the OPFA.

3. REGISTRATION PRACTICES

A. Registration Requirements and Application Process

i. Basic Registration Requirements

All applicants must begin the registration process by sending in a completed OPFA application form (or by using the OPFA's online application process at <http://www.opfa.ca/join/application-forms.php>) and submitting the \$200 application fee.

The following documentation is required for all applicants seeking registration with the OPFA:

- Certified copies of university transcripts sent directly from the graduating institution, and thorough course descriptions if the applicant is not from an accredited program (these should be in English or translated into English)
- A resumé
- A detailed description of relevant professional forestry work experience
- Two (or more) sponsor forms filled in and submitted directly by two (or more) sponsors, who must have been RPFs in good standing with the OPFA for at least two years, and who are familiar with the professional work of the applicant. (The Registration Committee may accept the recommendation of sponsors from a professional foresters association in another jurisdiction, in which the applicant practised relevant professional forestry.)

In order to become RPFs with the OPFA, applicants must meet the following registration requirements:

- A four-year science-based degree from an accredited university program, or an equivalent satisfactory to the Registration Committee
- At least 18 months of professional forestry work experience in Ontario after graduation, or an equivalent satisfactory to the Registration Committee
- Successful passing of an Ontario Forest Policy and Administration Exam — unless the applicant is a graduate of a program that includes such material or (with the prior approval of the Registration Committee) the applicant can show other proof of such knowledge
- Payment of the registration fee (due upon acceptance, pro-rated for the part of the fiscal year remaining when the applicant is accepted).

Applicants who are required to write any OPFA challenge exams may begin the examination process once their educational credentials have been assessed and they have been granted provisional

membership in the OPFA. (There is a nominal fee for provisional membership, which is necessary in order to write the challenge exams.) Applicants may choose when to write these exams. Normally, it is expected that individuals will hold provisional membership for only five years and will have successfully written all required challenge exams in that time. The Registrar may grant extensions for satisfactory cause.

ii. Out-of-Province RPFs Seeking Registration in Ontario

Where an applicant for membership with the OPFA is already a registered professional forester in good standing with another Canadian provincial forestry association, the only requirements for membership in the OPFA are:

- A letter from the Registrar of that association confirming that the applicant is an RPF in good standing
- Successfully passing the Ontario Forest Policy and Administration Exam (to be written within a six-month grace period).

iii. Out-of-Province RPFs Seeking Temporary Status

Registered professional foresters from other jurisdictions who in the course of their employment are required to practise professional forestry in Ontario will require a practice permit issued by the OPFA. This permit will be in the form of a letter from the Registrar providing the authority for the forester to work in Ontario for the duration of the contract. Permits will be issued for three-month increments, with a fee of \$105 per increment. Practice permits may be issued for a maximum period of one year, beyond which full membership in the OPFA is required.

iv. Applicants for Associate Membership

The OPFA will accept applications for associate membership from candidates whose academic standing is not accredited by the Canadian Forestry Accreditation Board (CFAB) or equivalent, but who have achieved and can provide proof of professional-level competence in some aspect(s) of professional forestry.

Associate members are certified to practise in Ontario within a restricted scope of practice reflecting their demonstrated competence. That scope is defined functionally and geographically for each associate member. Within associate members' limited scope, the OPFA views them as having the same authority as an RPF. However, associate members do not have the right to use the title "registered professional forester."

Associate membership in the OPFA is unique to this province and is not recognized by professional forestry associations in other provinces.

It is normally expected that an applicant for associate membership will have needed at least 10 years of work experience to develop competence within the relevant area of practice. Four sponsors are required, at least two being RPFs in good standing

Applicants for associate membership may be required to pass examinations in specific subject areas as determined by the Registration Committee.

Some individuals who are not qualified to become RPFs have successfully applied for associate status, allowing them to work as professionals while writing a series of challenge exams to become RPFs.

B. Documentation Required from Internationally Trained Individuals

i. Standard Documentation

Internationally trained applicants must arrange to have their degrees assessed for equivalency with Canadian universities. For this credential assessment, the OPFA refers applicants to Comparative Education Services (CES) at the University of Toronto. This assessment relates to the stature of the degree and not to the content.

Like domestic applicants who are not graduates of accredited programs, internationally trained applicants must submit a full course-by-course description of their course of study so the OPFA can measure their education against the core subject areas required to practise forestry in Ontario. The applicant is responsible for any translation costs.

ii. Options for Applicants with Unavailable/Destroyed Documents

For those internationally trained applicants who are truly unable to submit all required supporting documentation, the OPFA's registration requirements allow for alternative methods for applicants to demonstrate their competency and knowledge, such as OPFA's challenge exams.

The OPFA Registration Committee and staff are willing to work with candidates to help them meet the requirements.

C. Credential Assessment (Third Party and/or Internal)

The OPFA will perform a course-by-course assessment of the education credentials of all applicants from non-accredited universities, to measure their academic background against the core subject areas required to practise forestry in Ontario.

Internationally trained applicants must also have their degrees assessed for equivalency with Canadian universities. For this credential assessment, the OPFA refers applicants to CES. The OPFA also accepts World Education Services (WES) assessments.

D. Academic/Program Requirements

The following subject areas, at the level equivalent to a four-year science-based degree, are required by the OPFA as minimum academic requirements for full membership:

1. Dendrology
2. Forest Ecology
3. Silvics
4. Forest Pathology
5. Forest Entomology
6. Forest Fire Ecology and Management
7. Forest Hydrology
8. Forest Measuring, Monitoring and Forecasting
9. Forest Operations
10. Wood Science and Utilization
11. Forest Soils
12. Silviculture
13. Tree Morphology and Physiology
14. Forest Economics and Finance
15. Forest Management
16. Forest Policy and Administration in Ontario

University programs accredited by the Canadian Forestry Accreditation Board cover the full scope of these subject areas.

Applicants whose degrees are from non-accredited programs may still meet the minimum academic requirements through a series of challenge exams.

E. Work Experience Requirements

All applicants require forestry work experience in Ontario, as discussed in the following three sub-sections. Professional forestry work experience from outside of Ontario is acceptable if the OPFA considers the experience to be relevant to the practice of forestry in Ontario.

Up to one third of an applicant's post-university studies may count toward his or her professional work experience.

i. Graduates from Accredited Programs

Applicants for registration with the OPFA who are graduates of an accredited forestry program must have at least 18 months of post-graduation professional forestry work experience in Ontario, within the five years preceding the application for registration, in work directly related to one or more of the core subject areas listed in section 3.d.

ii. Graduates from Non-Accredited Programs

Graduates from non-accredited university programs or foreign universities must have at least three years of post-graduation professional forestry work experience in Ontario, within the five years preceding the application for registration, in work directly related to one or more of the core subject areas listed in section 3.d.

iii. Applicants Without Full University Education

Applicants who lack full university education will be considered for *associate* registration if they have at least five years of professional forestry work experience in Ontario, within the five years preceding the application for registration, in work directly related to one or more of the core subject areas listed in section 3.d. (However, it is normally expected that applicants for associate membership will have needed at least 10 years of work experience to develop competence within their relevant area of practice.)

F. Examinations

i. Requirements for Examinations

Applicants from non-accredited universities do not necessarily have to write OPFA challenge exams in all of the subject areas listed in section 3.d. The OPFA conducts a full academic and OPFA core-subject assessment of each applicant's credentials. If these assessments recognize a deficiency in one

or more specific subject areas — particularly for subject areas 1–14 — then the OPFA requires the applicant to write one or more challenge exams.

If applicants are deficient in subject area 15 (Forest Management), they will be assigned a major research paper instead of an examination.

All applicants who did not graduate from Lakehead University’s Forestry Program — currently Ontario’s only accredited forestry program — will be required to cover subject area 16 (Forest Policy and Administration in Ontario) through the means prescribed by the OPFA. This usually requires taking an oral or written exam. However, occasionally, with the prior approval of the Registration Committee and the examiner, applicants needing to satisfy subject area 16 may be allowed to prepare a major broad policy paper rather than take a written or oral exam.

ii. Methodology and Format

The OPFA challenge exams are set by university professors who are experts in their field or subject. Each professor is entitled to set the exam in any format he or she sees fit. In most cases the exam is a set of three to five questions to be answered in essay form. Exams are generally three hours long, but may be anywhere from two to four hours long.

Each professor prepares a reading list of materials suitable for his or her exam. The reading list is provided to the applicant, who then has six months to study. The applicant must make arrangements to take the exam within six months of receiving the reading list.

The applicant (with the help of OPFA staff or a mentor) is responsible for finding a current RPF or employment supervisor to invigilate (oversee) the exam. The applicant and the invigilator arrange a date, time and place for the applicant to take the exam. An electronic version of the exam is e-mailed to the invigilator the day before the agreed date.

The invigilator sends completed exams to the OPFA office, which then forwards the exams to the professor for marking. An applicant must achieve at least 60 per cent in each subject area in which he or she is examined.

After receiving a passing mark, the applicant is said to have fulfilled the requirements of that subject.

An applicant who does not pass an exam may retake it within six months. However, the professor will set a different exam.

G. Language Requirements

The OPFA does not currently have specific language requirements for registration. However, applicants will need a certain proficiency in English to pass the challenge exams. It is also worth noting that adequate language skills and relevant vocabulary are critical in obtaining employment, particularly in times of job shortage.

Recently, the professional forestry associations have discussed setting language requirements.

H. Fees

Fee	
Application fee	\$200
Challenge examination fee (per exam written)	\$75
Provisional membership (one-time fee)	\$25
RPF membership dues (annual)	\$450
Associate membership (annual)	\$450

I. Third Parties

Name of Third Party	Relationship to Regulatory Body
Canadian Forestry Accreditation Board	Reviews and accredits forestry programs. (This board is made up of the provincial regulatory bodies.)
Comparative Education Services (CES) (University of Toronto)	Assesses the degrees of internationally trained applicants.
World Education Services (WES)	Assesses the degrees of internationally trained applicants.

J. Typical Length of the Registration Process

The length of the registration process depends on how many of the academic requirements an applicant has to fulfill. An applicant who begins as a student may take as long as five years.

However, an individual from an accredited forestry program who has met all the academic requirements will only need to complete his or her 18-month work experience requirements before being eligible for registration.

The Registration Committee meets approximately once every two months, and its members are provided with applicants' packages of materials about 10 days before a meeting. Decisions are usually communicated within three weeks (allowing for approval of minutes and any actions requested of staff, such as clarification of sponsor comments).

If an applicant's file has been dormant for more than 18 months, the OPFA may close his or her file. However, before doing this, the OPFA will try to contact the applicant to confirm his or her intention to graduate.

K. Accredited Programs

The following four-year baccalaureate programs in forestry have been accredited by the Canadian Forestry Accreditation Board.

Lakehead University, Thunder Bay

Forestry

University of Alberta, Edmonton

Forestry

Forest Business Management

University of British Columbia, Vancouver

Forest Operations

Forest Resources Management

Université Laval, Quebec City

Forest Environment and Forest Resources Management

University of Moncton, Moncton

Forest Sciences

University of New Brunswick, Fredericton

Forest Ecosystem Management

Forest Engineering Program (RPF Option)

University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George

Ecosystem Science and Management Program (Forestry Major)

L. Internal Review/Appeal Process

The OPFA Registration Committee has seldom refused an applicant, preferring to defer a formal decision while encouraging and helping the applicant to meet any missing requirements.

i. Reconsideration by Registration Committee

If the Registration Committee refuses to issue a certificate of registration, an applicant may request a reconsideration of the decision. The request for a reconsideration must be:

- Made in writing.
- Received by the Registrar within 60 days after the refusal notice is sent to the applicant. The committee may extend the time for making a request where there are reasonable grounds for granting an extension.
- Accompanied by the fee prescribed by the OPFA bylaws.

The request for a reconsideration may be accompanied by written submissions.

The applicant who requests a reconsideration is given an opportunity to examine and make written submissions on any documents that the committee intends to consider during the process.

Before making a decision, the committee is not required to hold a hearing or provide the applicant with an opportunity to make oral or further written submissions.

After considering the request, the submissions and any document that the committee considers relevant, the committee may direct the Registrar to do one or more of the following:

- To issue a certificate of registration.
- To issue a certificate of registration if the applicant fulfills requirements specified in the bylaws for the issuance of the certificate (that is, giving conditional approval).

- To issue a certificate of registration subject to specified terms, conditions or limitations (a limited licence — probably an associate membership).
- To *not* issue a certificate of registration.

The committee gives its decision in writing, with reasons, and gives the applicant a copy.

ii. Appeal to Executive Committee

Any reconsidered decision made by the Registration Committee can be appealed to the Executive Committee for a final decision. With appropriate modifications, the process is the same as that for reconsideration.

iii. Composition of Committees

The Registration Committee is composed of a minimum of five and a maximum of 10 people. At least one is a member of the Foresters' Council elected by the members of the OPFA, one is a member of the council appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and the rest may be members of the OPFA who are not members of the council.

The Executive Committee is composed of the president, vice-president and immediate past president of the council, one elected member of the council and one member of the council appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

4. BRIDGING PROGRAMS

The OPFA does not currently offer a formal bridging program. However, the OPFA's practice of allowing applicants who are missing certain academic requirements to write challenge exams, and the use of associate memberships where appropriate, provide effective bridges into the profession.

5. MUTUAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENTS

There is currently a mutual recognition agreement in place among all provinces, except for Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and the Territories, where there are no forestry associations.

6. APPLICANTS' INTERACTIONS WITH REGULATORY BODY

A. Nature and Frequency of Communication

Applicants can contact the Registrar and staff as frequently as the need arises. This can be done in person or by phone, fax or e-mail.

B. Backlogs

There are currently no backlogs in the registration process.

C. Complaints Regarding the Registration Process

The OPFA has not received complaints regarding its registration process.

7. CHANGES SINCE THE 2005 SURVEY

The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration conducted a survey in 2005 to collect information about occupational regulatory bodies in Ontario.

Since that time, the OPFA has created an Executive Committee to review appeals of Registration Committee decisions.

8. REGISTRATION INFORMATION AND STATISTICS

Definitions used in these tables:

Alternative class of licence: a class of licence that enables its holder to practise with limitations; additional registration requirements must be met in order to be fully licensed. Alternative classes of licence granted by the Ontario Professional Foresters Association are specified under the tables below.

Applicant: a person who has applied to start the process for entry to the profession.

Applicant actively pursuing licensing: an applicant who had some contact with the Ontario Professional Foresters Association within the year specified.

Inactive applicant: an applicant who had no contact with the Ontario Professional Foresters Association within the year specified.

Member: a full or associate member. Full members are able to use the protected title or professional designation “registered professional forester” (RPF). Associate members may not use the title.

Languages in which application information materials were available

Language	2005	2006	2007
English	Yes	Yes	Yes
French	No	No	No
Other(s)			

Countries where internationally educated applicants were initially trained in forestry

Applications Received	2005	2006	2007
Largest number	Germany	Pakistan	India, Nepal, Romania
Second-largest number		Tied ¹	
Third-largest number			
Fourth-largest number			
Fifth-largest number			

¹ Tied among five countries.

Staff employed by the Ontario Professional Foresters Association

Number of Staff	2005	2006	2007
Involved in registration process	2	2	2
Involved in appeals process	1	1	1

Jurisdiction where members were initially trained in forestry (before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario)

Members	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	TOTAL
Total members ¹	573	104	3	5	685
Non-practising members ²	143	39	3	8	193

¹ Full and associate members. Associate members do not have the right to use the protected title.

² Life members and inactive members. This does not include provisional, honorary, student, non-resident or resigned members.

Applicants processed by the Ontario Professional Foresters Association in 2005

Jurisdiction where members were initially trained in forestry (before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario)						
In 2005 (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31)	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	TOTAL	
New applications received	45	7	0	1	53	
Applicants actively pursuing licensing	54	10	1	7	72	
Inactive applicants	1	2	0	1	4	
Applicants who met all requirements and were authorized to become members but did not become members	0	0	0	0	0	
Applicants who became members ¹	40	7	0	0	47	
Applicants who were authorized to receive an alternative class of licence ² but were not issued a licence	0	0	0	0	0	
Applicants who were issued an alternative class of licence ²	6	0	0	0	6	

¹ Full and associate members.

² Associate membership.

Applicants processed by the Ontario Professional Foresters Association in 2006

Jurisdiction where members were initially trained in forestry (before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario)						
In 2006 (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31)	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	TOTAL	
New applications received	29	14	0	7	50	
Applicants actively pursuing licensing	38	17	1	15	71	
Inactive applicants	3	2	0	1	6	
Applicants who met all requirements and were authorized to become members but did not become members	0	0	0	0	0	
Applicants who became members ¹	21	9	0	0	30	
Applicants who were authorized to receive an alternative class of licence ² but were not issued a licence	0	0	0	0	0	
Applicants who were issued an alternative class of licence ²	2	0	0	0	2	

¹ Full and associate members.

² Associate membership.

Applicants processed by the Ontario Professional Foresters Association in 2007

Jurisdiction where members were initially trained in forestry (before they were granted use of the protected title or professional designation in Ontario)						
In 2007 (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31)	Ontario	Other Canadian Provinces	USA	Other International	TOTAL	
New applications received	19	16	1	3	39	
Applicants actively pursuing licensing	32	20	2	12	66	
Inactive applicants	3	0	0	3	6	
Applicants who met all requirements and were authorized to become members but did not become members	0	0	0	0	0	
Applicants who became members ¹	13	10	0	0	23	
Applicants who were authorized to receive an alternative class of licence ² but were not issued a licence	0	0	0	0	0	
Applicants who were issued an alternative class of licence ²	1	0	0	0	1	

¹ Full and associate members.

² Associate membership.

9. SOURCES

Canadian Forestry Accreditation Board website. <http://www.cfab.ca/eng/default.htm>. Last accessed: March 18, 2008.

Ontario Professional Foresters Association website. <http://www.opfa.ca/>. Last accessed: March 18, 2008.

Representatives of the Ontario Professional Foresters Association met with staff of the Office of the Fairness Commissioner on December 13, 2007, to provide further information for this study.

[To Contents](#)

