



**FAIRNESS COMMISSIONER**

COMMISSAIRE À L'ÉQUITÉ

# THE OFC NEWSLETTER

## OCTOBER 2024

### INNOVATIVE PATHWAYS

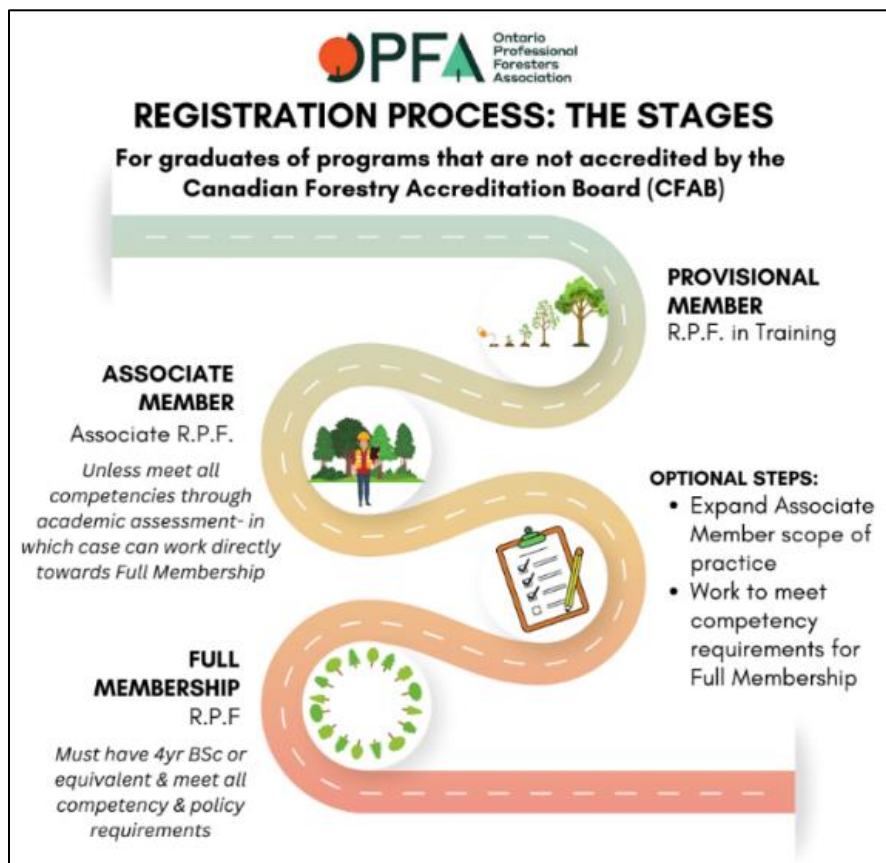
#### **The OPFA's Role in Fostering a Vibrant Profession**

Periodically, the Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC) highlights regulators that have adopted innovative approaches to improve their fair registration practices. This October, we wish to spotlight the Ontario Professional Foresters Association (the OPFA or association), which has introduced alternative licensure classes to create faster pathways to registration and employment, particularly for mid-career professionals. The OFC wishes to congratulate OPFA for its proactive efforts.

As a small regulator in an expanding and economically critical profession, the OPFA must often think outside the box. With 65% of applicants holding credentials from non-accredited programs, both domestic and international, the association has needed to rely on its limited license category, and an innovative mentoring program, to capture this diverse talent.

The OPFA has found that many graduates of non-accredited programs are missing certain required competencies and need to pursue bridge training to become eligible for full licensure. Significantly, many of these applicants have specialized expertise in specific areas of professional forestry.

In 2023, the OPFA restructured its registration process to encourage applications for a limited license, authorizing practice in a focused area of forestry, under the title of Associate Registered Professional Forester (Associate R.P.F.). This approach, described in the following diagram, has been well received by applicants and employers.



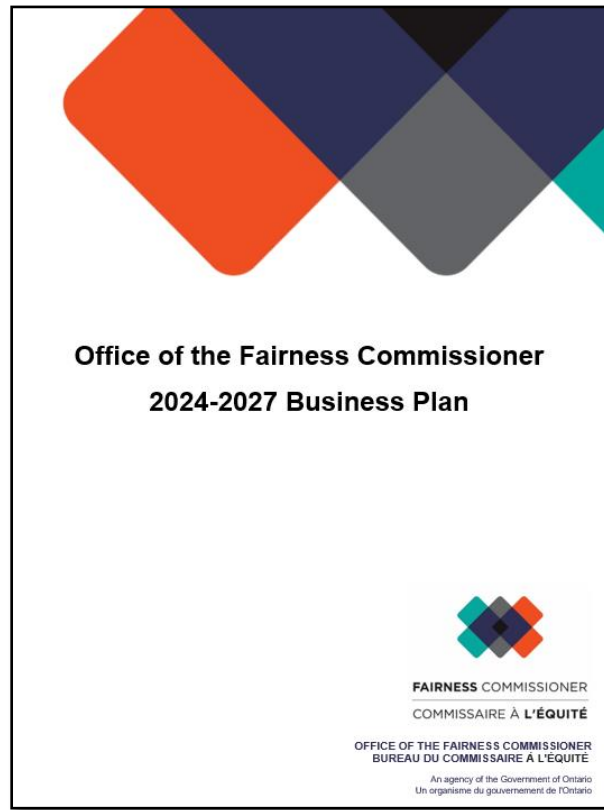
It allows qualified applicants from varied backgrounds to enter the workforce in a shorter timeframe, while also creating the flexibility to work towards expanding their scope of practice and becoming fully licensed if they choose to do so. This flexibility, in turn, benefits the employer community.

The OPFA has put into place a robust communications strategy to raise awareness of this licensure category and to reinforce that Associate R.P.F.s are as competent as fully licenced members in their areas of expertise. Through this and related initiatives, the association has reported an increase in Associate R.P.F.s for the first time in over a decade. In addition, employers have increasingly encouraged their staff to pursue this pathway.

In addition, to address barriers to professional networking, the association has developed the “Shadow a Forester” program. Through this initiative, Student Members and R.P. F.s in Training can engage in onsite and virtual job shadowing with professional foresters who offer them exposure to different facets of forestry. In 2023, the program helped connect 20 individuals with 38 professional forester volunteers across 18 different branches of the profession.

For more information on the OPFA, please visit [Ontario Professional Foresters Association \(opfa.ca\)](https://www.opfa.ca)

## OFC BUSINESS PLAN 2024-2027



The OFC is pleased to announce that our latest business plan has been published on our website. As a government agency, the OFC is required to publish a business plan each year. This plan provides information regarding our strategic priorities over the next three years, along with associated key activities.

For more details and to view the entire report, please click on [OFC Business Plan 2024-2027](#).

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