

# National body for HR still needed: CCHRA

*Independent moves by provinces, loss of Quebec raise questions about national council's role*

BY SARAH DOBSON

ONTARIO'S HR association is lobbying the provincial government to pass a private member's bill to regulate the profession. British Columbia took the initiative to develop an HR metrics service. And Quebec is no longer a member of Canada's national HR association. Canada's HR associations come in all shapes and sizes, with varying levels of resources and memberships. So what exactly is the role of the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations (CCHRA)? With so much variation among the provinces, is a national body workable? Yes, according to members and non-members alike.

The council continues to develop and grow as provincial associations do the same, said Bill Palamar, executive director of CCHRA. With more professionals joining provincial HR associations, and the continued growth of the Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP)

designation, there's more revenue, which increases services and boosts innovation that can be shared among provinces, he said.

The B.C. Human Resources Management Association's (BC HRMA's) metrics service is a good example of the benefits of provincial initiatives, said Palamar.

"A lot of the innovation happens at the provincial level and then is shared at the national level," he said. "At the end of the day, it's all about provisions of services."

CCHRA was founded on provincial independencies, said Charlotte Bouchard, president of the Human Resources Institute of Alberta (HRIA) and a member of CCHRA's board of directors.

The role of the national body continues to be the development of a common national certification process and being a communication link for all provinces, she said.

"No matter which province, the one commonality among CCHRA members is the belief that the road to providing a better understanding of the value of HR and the profession is more effectively travelled together."

Diversity is a positive thing, with the provinces being able to focus nationally and provincially, said Bob Bayles, president of the Saskatchewan Association of Human Resource Professionals (SAHRP). For example, Bayles was on the task force to look at the senior HR professional designation (SHRP), which is now offered in four provinces.

"It allows us to act locally but think nationally," he said, adding SAHRP has never felt slighted as a member of the CCHRA, despite its smaller membership numbers.

There are advantages to the varying levels of resources among the associations, said

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# Federated model, new rules

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Bill Greenhalgh, CEO of Ontario's Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA). The bigger provinces can move ahead with certain initiatives that can be picked up by the smaller associations and the smaller provinces, because of their limited resources, can focus on "frugal innovation" that can also be picked up by the larger associations, he said.

There is no one province dominating the council — all show up as equals, said Keith Davis, past president of SAHRP and a member of CCHRA's board of directors. Being on a national body or committee, you put on your national hat, said Bayles, and consider what's best for the HR associations across Canada.

## Renewed focus for CCHRA

The council has put an invigorated focus on promoting the HR profession and the value of the CHRP designation, along

with greater collaboration among the provinces. In recognition of being a federated model, the council brought in new decision rules meant to ensure agreement among the collective group on issues such as strategy, policy, program, budget and operations.

"We came up with a provincial consensus agreement and decision rules that we, basically, follow through all of our board meetings and decision-making process," said Palamar. "We almost consider it a best practice because it ensures we keep our focus on our mandate of collaboration and working together."

The associations are talking more about what's happening in their own provinces and what can be done from a national perspective, said HRIA's Bouchard.

"We're sharing more, with respect to service delivery now — we're expanding on our borders."

The council is still relatively young in comparison to other international associations but is

still on a great path, said Bouchard.

"There's been great value with all the provinces coming together and there's a lot more in terms of a strategic mandate that we have all pulled together and said, 'Yes, this is what we want to do going forward and it's to the benefit of all the provinces,'" she said.

While each provincial association can act independently, the rules emphasize the importance of sharing information among the provinces before making any decisions that could interest or have an impact on the other provinces or CCHRA. But these rules are not related to any recent activities by a particular province, such as the push for legislation in Ontario, said Palamar.

"Not at all. It was really a case of saying, 'How do we keep our focus and how do we keep to our stated purpose?'" he said. "It's a lot easier to work around things than pulling out letters patent each time."

The governance model has

evolved in line with the associations, said Greenhalgh.

"It's a matter of meeting today's needs. The new model we have doesn't change the CCHRA co-ordinating role, it just changes the whole governance model."

The council has always had a consensus-based model but there's a realization the provinces have different needs and priorities at any point in time, he said. Some of the processes in the past led CCHRA to focus more on differences than similarities, said Greenhalgh.

"The new governance model and the decision rules, and we spent a long time working on them, they're absolutely fantastic. They're very simple, very clear and they've made a real difference to how effectively we can collaborate. We could collaborate in the past but it took time, it took a while to get it done."

Having to gain approval from all the members, as a national organization, was unwieldy and "very cumbersome," said Bayles. But the move to a federated model has not been without its battles, said Davis, as a province might bring an initiative forward to the national board and find two or three provinces like the idea, while

the rest are not keen.

"It is a bit of a test because you have to explore common interests among the provinces to find out if there is a commonality in terms of our approach," he said. "We're starting to feel our way through that."

### Quebec bows out

Changes were also made to CCHRA's funding model a while back, to focus more equitably on member services, with fees collected per member instead of being based on the number of exam writers. That move, however, did not sit well with Quebec's HR association since the province's CHRP certification only requires members to write one of the qualifying exams, as long as they have a bachelor degree. That meant CCHRA membership fees were considerably lower before, said Florent Francoeur, president and CEO of the Ordre des conseillers en ressources humaines agréés (CRHA), which is no longer a CCHRA member.

"It was almost a difference for us of more than \$300,000 and we thought it was too much for us, so it was just a question of money," he said.

HR is strongly regulated in Quebec and there are many things CRHA cannot do even if

it wanted to, said Francoeur, such as having members write the two exams or offering a senior HR designation.

"We still are friends but, for the moment, we cannot be in the same system," he said.

Although Quebec is no longer a full partner, there is still a degree of shared activities and collaboration, said Palamar, citing the World Human Resources Congress in September 2010 in Montreal and the annual Excalibur tournament for university students.

Quebec's full participation with CCHRA is now limited, said Palamar.

"They still remain affiliated with CCHRA in areas of designation and whatnot, so it's still a positive for all of us, we still have a positive dialogue."

CCHRA is still a valuable body, said Francoeur, and if the other provinces follow the lead of Quebec — where HR is publicly regulated — Quebec may come back with everyone focused on the same direction, he said.

"We are so different that, for the moment, we have to, we will work alone, but there are still nine provinces that are almost at the same level so they can have a strong value to work together."