Sometimes it is good to circle back to the basics. Here is a question asked in a recent webinar: “I don’t understand why HRPA is so determined to have a mandate to serve public and not the members - Why is it so important - what does it accomplish - and why should I care?”

Here is my answer.

For decades, the Human Resources profession had set for itself the objective of being considered a true profession—like lawyers, physicians, accountants, engineers, teachers, nurses, and so on. One thing that all these professions have in common is that they all have a professional regulatory body with a mandate to protect the public interest.

The Ontario Legislature cannot and will not delegate regulatory powers to any organization that does not at the same time accept a public protection mandate. If HRPA had said to the Ontario Legislature “we want recognition as a true profession, but we don’t want to be bothered with setting up a professional regulatory body with a public protection mandate,” the Ontario Legislature would have said something like “give your head a shake.”

Establishing and maintaining a professional regulatory body with a public protection mandate is the price of admission to the regulated profession club. The alternative would have been to let go of the decades-old ambition to become a true profession. The reason it was important to establish and maintain a professional regulatory body with a mandate to promote and protect the public interest is
that it was the only way to fulfill the objective of becoming a true profession like lawyers, physicians, accountants, engineers, teachers, nurses, and so on.

What establishing and maintaining a professional regulatory body with a public protection mandate accomplishes is that it puts human resources in the same club as lawyers, physicians, accountants, engineers, teachers, nurses, and so on.

Why should I care?

Being a member of a professional regulatory body is the only way of being a member of a true profession (with emphasis on the true). There are a lot of occupations that claim to be professions, but there are considerably fewer that are ‘the real thing.’ Statutory self-regulation is seen as the line between occupations that claim to be professions and the true professions.

The reason why all members should care is that in the same way that establishing and maintaining a professional regulatory body with a public protection mandate is the price of admission to the regulated profession club at the profession level; accepting the duties and obligations of true professionhood that come from membership in a professional regulatory body is the price of admission for individual professionals. Professional regulatory bodies cannot exist without the financial and moral support of their members. That also in an inherent aspect of self-regulation. In exchange for the privilege of self-regulation members agree to support their professional regulatory body.