Many don’t quite know what to make of professional regulation at HRPA. It has been described as an agenda, as an initiative, as a focus, and as a role—none of these are wrong, but then again none of these are quite right either. The best term to describe what professional regulation is to HRPA is mandate. Professional regulation is HRPA’s mandate—and not only is professional regulation HRPA’s mandate, it is HRPA’s only mandate.

The Oxford dictionary defines mandate as “an official order or commission to do something.” In HRPA’s case, the official order came from the Ontario Legislature in the form of HRPA’s enabling legislation, and the something refers to the objects as set out in section 4 of the Act. But it is also an exclusive mandate, meaning that HRPA has no other mandate. Here is a quotation from an interesting article on the meaning of objects for not-for-profit corporations written by Carter and Bussey of Carters:

“the corporation can do anything to achieve its objects that a natural person could do in order to achieve its objects. Activities that are not related to, or further, the objects of the corporation are not permitted.”

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Just to be clear, HRPA is not permitted to conduct activities that are not related to, or further the objects of the Association.

Words like agenda, focus, initiative, and role all suggest that there is no exclusivity. Organizations can have multiple agendas, more than one focus, many initiatives, or play multiple roles... but we have one and only one mandate, and that is the one given to HRPA by the Ontario Legislature. HRPA cannot add to, subtract from, or modify its objects, only the Ontario Legislature can do that.

Now the objects are not simple, but they are meant to be interpreted holistically. The best phrase to describe HRPA’s mandate as defined by its objects is ‘professional regulation.’

Some members equate *regulation* with policing, others with the designations. This is too narrow. In fact, we can look at HRPA’s objects as a definition of professional regulation—the definition of professional regulation provided by the Ontario Legislature. Although the objects refer to different facets of professional regulation, it is important to notice that there is nothing in the objects that doesn’t fit under the mandate of ‘professional regulation.’

The Ontario Legislature’s definition of professional regulation refers to:

- Setting and enforcing standards of qualification, standards of practice, standards of professional ethics, and standards of knowledge, skill and proficiency,
- Regulating the practice, competence and professional conduct of members and firms,
- Promoting and increasing the knowledge, skill and proficiency of members, firms and students,
- Maintaining a professional regulatory body that has the confidence of all stakeholders, and
- Establishing relations with other professional bodies which are in furtherance of the objects.

There is also a ‘basket clause’—“to address any other matter that relates to the regulation of its members that the Board considers appropriate”—which implies that the matters before all related to the professional regulation.

In short, HRPA’s objects are a definition of professional regulation. This definition of professional regulation given by the Ontario Legislature is multi-dimensional and not unidimensional. The Ontario Legislature does not think of professional regulation as being simply policing or granting designations.

But equally important is that HRPA has no objects which fall outside the ambit of professional regulation. There are no objects which enable HRPA to serve the interests of the members, firms and students it regulates. As noted above, HRPA does not have the authority to modify its objects. HRPA cannot add to its list of objects. The objects given to HRPA by the Ontario Legislature are it, and not-for-profit corporations are not permitted to engage in activities that are not related to, or further, the objects of the corporation.

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2 https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/13r06
HRPA is all about professional regulation, and nothing else. Professional regulation is not something HRPA does on top of all sorts of other things. Professional regulation is the only thing HRPA is mandated to do.

For some this is shocking—that HRPA would have agreed to be exclusively a professional regulatory body. But should it be that shocking? If we look at the objects of HRPA’s predecessor organizations\(^3\) we can make two important observations: (1) serving the public interest was there and central from the very start, and (2) with each successive iteration there was an incremental step up in the degree to which the Association would manage the conduct of its members. From this perspective, the latest iteration in HRPA’s objects as set out in the *Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, 2013*, appears to be much more evolution than revolution. In other words, we were never the member-benefit organization that some think we are or should be.

In regards to HRPA’s professional regulation mandate, words such as *agenda, initiative, focus,* and *role* don’t quite cut it. They don’t convey that professional regulations isn’t just something we do, it is actually our sole mandate under law.

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