

CHRP becomes CPHR – outside of Ontario

CCHRA now CPHR Canada

BY SARAH DOBSON

LAUNCHED more than 20 years ago, the Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation held great promise for Canada and the HR profession. But as of this fall, the name is no longer being used by much of Canada — aside from Ontario.

That's because the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations (CCHRA) and the eight provincial associations that make up the national body are aligning under the name and designation CPHR — Chartered Professionals in Human Resources — or CPHR Canada.

The change further unites and strengthens the organization, according to Shannon Railton, vice-chair of the CPHR Canada, whose member associations include British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Quebec.

"The human resources role continues to become more critical in accelerating economic growth through business success and in improving the lives of employees. Our strong, single CPHR designation showcases the unique experience and expertise CPHRs bring to the workplace," said Railton.

One designation

The change also came about after Ontario's HR association decided in 2014 to launch a three-tiered designation, consisting of the CHRP, the Certified Human Resources Leader (CHRL) and Certified Human Resources Executive (CHRE).

"We would have proceeded with aligning our associations nationally under the previous CHRP banner," said Railton. "However, the Human Resources Professional Association (HRPA) of Ontario opted to create

a three-tiered designation for their province and defined CHRP, which was shared across the country, as their entry-level designation. So the rest of Canada was required to either accept the tiered model or make this change. We collectively determined that it was in our members' best interests to proceed with one designation."

One designation

There was market misunderstanding in Canada with the three-tiered approach, said Tony Ariganello, president and CEO of the Human Resources Management Association (HRMA) in Vancouver and CEO of CPHR Canada.

"It causes confusion with members, with stakeholders, universities, government — everyone's confused and I don't think that does a favour to the profession because we're here to represent the profession of HR and the members. How does this help? It does not."

To protect the public and for greater clarity, Les conseillers en ressources humaines agréés (CRHA) in Quebec believes having one designation minimizes stakeholder confusion and is in the best interest of the HR profession, said Manon Poirier, executive director.

"We think that the value of a designation becomes hampered by having a three-tier designation," she said. "One designation is consistent with other international partners; and one designation helps us establish and share a strong and cohesive brand, without confusion."

The important part about a designation is the understanding of the community at large, not necessarily the HR community, said Debby Carreau, CEO and founder of Inspired HR in Calgary.

"The average business owner is

not going to understand three tiers of an HR designation, nor do they care — they want to know that it's going to be someone that's professional, that's skilled in their trade, that's held to the highest standards, that relates to their profession, and that they're up to speed. That's really what's important is the credibility externally."

For Kristie Searle, it's not about the letters after the name but the designation itself.

"When you start getting into different levels of one designation, to me it devalues the designation — you either have it or you don't because it's really my years of experience that's a separate thing," said the proprietor and certified HR business strategist at Peoplebiz Consulting in Vancouver.

Wendy MacIntyre, principal of ResolveHR in Charlottetown, P.E.I., said she agrees.

"It's the same as other chartered professionals and, honestly, Ontario may have the critical mass to do that, whereas other places don't. I don't see other chartered professionals, which is what we're moving to... having different tiers of designations."

Ontario's decision to take a divergent path from the rest of Canada has created market confusion and devalued the old CHRP, said TJ Schmaltz, vice-president of HR at Impark in Vancouver.

"We've still got a way to go for a single HR designation to really make sure it resonates with the public and the business community, so add three and that certainly didn't help."

Entry-level concerns

In addition, the rest of Canada does not consider the CHRP an entry level designation, he said.

"Because there's a difference,

there was a need to really distinguish," said Schmaltz. "And for the last little while, it was a little difficult to tell our story because there were two designations with the same name but with very different qualifications and meaning — and we've clarified that."

The change makes a lot of sense, according to Poirier.

"The three-tier designation model initiated by Ontario a few years ago for their province made CHRP, which was shared across the country, the entry-level designation, therefore affecting the perceived value and competence of all other CHRP professionals in the rest of Canada," she said.

"This change aligns all member associations to be stronger together, as the human resources role continues to become more critical to accelerating economic growth through business success, and improving the lives of employees."

Ontario 'surprised'

However, recent changes to the CHRP pathways in the other provinces has seen a lifting of the degree requirement, said Claude Balthazard, vice-president of regulatory affairs and registrar at HRPA in Toronto.

"Some of the changes that some or most of all of the provinces have done to the then-CHRP, this summer, was to bring it even lower, as I understand it."

And the CHRL, for example, is a notch above the other designations, he said.

"By the time it's all said and done, it's going to be a much more vigorous or demanding certification process than the CHRP"

The Ontario association is also a bit surprised the other provinces would "jettison" the CHRP name,

said Balthazard, because it has such a recognition attached to it. When HRPA was trying to decide on the names of its new designations, “our members were quite adamant that somewhere in the scheme, the ‘CHRP’ had to remain, so there was lot of value in the name,” he said.

Considering the CHRP has brand recognition that the other designations don’t yet have, HRPA is thinking of having a grandfathering period, said Balthazard, “where members... who have their CHRP from other provinces and who want to keep that designation, the CHRP... we would grandfather them into our CHRP. So people who are attached to the CHRP designation can maintain that designation.”

New beginnings

But name recognition of the CHRP

was not particularly high in the public and business community, and only a small number of people know what CCHRA stands for, said Schmaltz.

“The two (new) names speak a little bit more clearly to who we are and what we do. Try and go to another country to talk about CCHRA and have to explain what it is, versus really talking about our designation and then our national body that oversees the designation — it’s very clear.”

Because HR is becoming so important for businesses and people are recognizing just how critical human capital management is, having a consistent designation is important, said Carreau.

“It’s unfortunate about the Ontario piece of it but for credibility, I’d love to see it expand beyond Can-

ada and actually align with SHRM (the Society for Human Resource Management) in the U.S. — because I know we have a partnership there as well — so that the designation not only crosses provincial boundaries but also it’ll be great when it’s north-south as well. It’s a profession whose time has come, from a self-regulation standpoint and also just from a professional standards (standpoint) that the average business person will understand, so that means that they’re getting a quality HR professional that truly knows their trade.”

But there’s still a lot of work to be done, said MacIntyre, such as standardizing the designation logs.

“Right now, it almost seems like it’s based on people’s judgment, so it’s fairly subjective... when you’re putting in your hours and your

information and then you wait to find out if you’re actually going to be approved or not. So, with this change, they’re going to be working more with educational institutions to say, ‘If you take this course, it’s going to be worth this many points.’ So that’s going to be a really nice change.”

And the push for self-regulation will also be welcome, said MacIntyre.

“I don’t get a strong feeling that they really monitor the HR practices of people with the designation, so it’s a move in the right direction — but perhaps the change in the title is a bit premature. But I can see where they’re going.”

The new CPHR brand and new certificates for designated professionals are expected to roll out in the coming months.