

WEAO Forum Operator Certification & Training

January 20, 2011



Wastewater Operator Certification

- Water/wastewater certification initiated in 1987 with common standards/qualifications
 - Based on Association of Boards of Certification model
- In 2004 in wake of Walkerton Inquiry, drinking water standards strengthened resulting in different qualification requirements for water/ wastewater operators
 - Drinking water meets new ABC, US-EPA and Canadian provincial Best Practices for operator certification



Agreement on Internal Trade

- On January 1, 2011 O. Reg. 129/04 was amended
 - Addresses labour mobility requirements set out in the Agreement on Internal Trade
 - Allows operators in all provinces (except Quebec) easy transferability of certificates/licences
- Agreement encourages inter-provincial harmonization of standards
 - Canadian provinces have developed “Best Practices” (draft) for operator certification programs
 - Currently provincial programs are closely aligned, however, specific interpretations of certification criteria can differ

Canadian Standardized Exams

- Ontario is adopting Canadian Standardized Exams
 - Current exams are developed in Ontario using ABC questions
 - Canadian standardized exams would be developed in Canada using ABC questions
 - Certain questions will remain Ontario specific
 - Will allow easier maintenance and updating of exams and reduce costs
 - Content and difficulty level will remain the same
- Wastewater Collection exams will be the first to be switched starting in Spring 2011
 - MOE will monitor results and work on WWT exams in Fall of 2011

Overall Responsible Operator (ORO)

- Concerns raised by RPWCO and OWWA concerning qualifications required to become an ORO
 - Operating experience requirement perceived as a barrier for senior level positions
 - Succession planning implications
- Operator Certification Working Group has reviewed options around ORO issues
- MOE is assessing options and determining if short term non-regulatory measures available

Administrative Program Improvements

- On-line exams to be introduced in February 2011
 - Initially only OIT exams
 - Logistical and cost issues for Class 1-4 exams
- Streamline operator renewals (drinking water)
- E-Bulletins to be issued to operators twice a year
- Guidance on how to fill out forms to be developed by OWWCO

Finding the Next Generation of Operators

- ECO Canada, WEF and AWWA have identified operator shortages/succession as a critical concern (slightly lessen by economic downturn)
 - Demographics of industry (many Ontario municipalities report potential 50% turnover in next 10 yrs)
 - Workforce demographics (aging population)
 - Qualified/trained operators especially at Class III and IV level is greatest concern
- MOE has provided funding to OMWA to help encourage youth to explore water as a career

