

[Enlarge this image](#)

Canada's bean counters get into a brouhaha

JEFF GRAY

From Saturday's Globe and Mail

Published Friday, Feb. 24, 2012 6:35PM EST

59 comments



Print/License



chrome

[Download Google Chrome](#)

Rod Barr, president and CEO of the ICAO, declined requests for an interview. But in an e-mailed response from a spokesman to questions submitted by The Globe, Mr. Barr said his organization had not intimidated anyone.

"We have no idea what is being referred to in that quote," his e-mail reads. "The ICAO has gone out of its way to talk to this group and any other interested members on numerous occasions."

The e-mail said that if the organization's vote fails, the institute would still consider going ahead only if a majority of other provinces proceed with the merger, or if turnout was very low.

Anthony Ariganello, president and CEO of the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada, gives the latest merger plan "better than a 50-per-cent chance" of working out: "We're hopeful that we can get it over the hurdle this time."

U.S., U.K. ACCOUNTANTS BACK NEW DESIGNATION

Canada's accounting profession, wrestling with a plan to merge its three different designations into one, is also looking over its shoulder as foreign competitors come calling.

At the moment, a long-running feud with Britain's Association of Chartered Certified Accountants is in federal court. The foreign body and Canada's chartered accounting profession are doing battle over the trademark to the very letters CA. The fight is cited by merger proponents as another reason Canada's profession needs to unite.

Meanwhile, earlier this month, two of the world's largest accounting organizations joined forces to launch a new global designation for accounting professionals.

At a recent reception hosted by Britain's Consul-General in Toronto, representatives of the London-based Chartered Institute of Management Accounts (CIMA) toasted their new joint venture with the massive U.S.-based American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), the largest grouping of accountants in the world.

As though there were not enough acronyms involved, the two bodies launched a new designation, the CGMA, or Chartered Global Management Accountant. It's a credential they hope their management accountant members the world over – and in Canada – will start using.

The question of what letters an accountant can put after their name remains controversial.

By law in Ontario and some other provinces, foreign-accredited accountants are forbidden from using their own acronyms on their business cards. The rule was reconfirmed in revised legislation passed in Ontario in 2010, over cries of protectionism.

Those behind the British-American joint venture say Canada should loosen its rules.

"I think one of the first challenges is to make people understand that healthy competition is a good thing," said George Glass, the past president of CIMA. "A monopoly is not going to give you the best result, we always know that."

His American counterpart, Paul Stahlin, who also addressed the Toronto reception, said there was room in the world for all sorts of accountants: "There's enough room for many accounting associations, as long as they all have got the mission to raise standards ... That's what we're all about."

But the leaders of Canada's accounting professions clearly see foreigners as a problem. They warn that if a foreign-designated accountant does something unethical, he or she is not subject to the profession's domestic discipline procedures. (CIMA counters that it operates around the world and can easily investigate complaints from its London headquarters.) "If you're dealing with an accountant from some other non-Canadian body, there's no real regulatory process in Canada," said Kevin Dancey, president and CEO of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. "We don't really think that's in the public interest."