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# BC LAND SURVEYORS: Leaders *in* Self-Regulation *for* 102 Years!

The Association of British Columbia Land Surveyors (Association) was incorporated as a self-regulating profession with the enactment of the *Land Surveyors Act* in 1905.

This meant all land surveyors conducting legal surveys in British Columbia, in 1905 and after, had to be members of the Association.

Before I discuss what self-regulation meant for the Association, I would like to explain the difference between legal surveys and other types of land surveying.

- A **legal survey** is one that is required by statute, hence legal survey; it determines the location of property boundaries on land. It is also often called cadastral surveying.

The word *cadastral* comes from the term *cadastre*, which is a comprehensive register of the real property of a country; it commonly includes details of the ownership, the tenure, the precise location, the dimensions (and area), and the value of individual parcels of land. Cadastral surveys are used

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to document land ownership by the production of documents, diagrams, sketches, plans (plats, in USA), charts, and maps.

- In addition to legal or cadastral surveys, it is also common to hear about **construction surveying**, which includes building layout and topographic and control surveys. These types of surveys are performed by all British Columbia land surveyors but, because these surveys are not controlled by statute and they do not determine property boundaries, it is not necessary for surveyors conducting them to be members of the Association. As a result, only the surveys registered by practising land surveyors within the Association are under the self-regulation umbrella.

Prior to incorporation in 1905, two bodies of land surveyors were already somewhat self-regulated by the enactment of the *Provincial Land Surveyors Act* of 1891,

- the Land Surveyors Group, which comprised all the land surveyors grandfathered as working in the profession prior to 1891; and
- the Provincial Land Surveyors Group—the land surveyors admitted into the profession from 1891 to 1905.

The *Land Surveyors Act* of 1905 established the title British Columbia Land Surveyor (BCLS), which has been the title for all professional land surveyors in BC since that time.

### What Does Self-Regulation Mean to the Profession?

The Association is responsible for ensuring that all individuals applying for membership as a BCLS meet a certain level of education and be properly trained to conduct legal surveys for British Columbians.

The preprofessional level of competence is adjudicated by the Canadian Board of Examiners for Professional Surveyors. Once the individual has met these requirements, he or she must apply to the Association and begin the practical training period during which the candidate must pass professional examinations, complete a field project, and be interviewed by a panel of peers, to ensure the candidate understands the responsibility bestowed upon him or her.

Upon successful completion of these requirements, the candidate is sworn in as a BCLS and allowed to conduct legal surveys.

Self-regulation means the Association is responsible for ensuring its members competently provide these services to the people of BC in an ethical manner. This entails appropriate bylaws and a complaint process where the public can raise concerns about the conduct of a member.

Self-regulation requires that the Association carry out appropriate administrative duties such as maintaining rosters of members and students, ensuring the membership is apprised of any changes in statute and regulation, and providing appropriate continuing professional education.

Recently, the Association implemented a Practice Review Program—an educational tool to assist members with the ongoing activities of a busy professional business. Practice review provides the tools for a senior member to review a case file with the

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member and discuss all the positive and negative (if any) aspects of that particular file as it relates to the conduct of the survey. This has proven to be a positive and educational program.

The recent government deregulation program provided an opportunity for the Association to take over the management of the General Survey Instructions—formerly government regulation and now survey rules. This transfer of ownership allows the survey profession to manage the rules; final approval for any forthcoming changes to the rules is under the close scrutiny of the Surveyor General.

The Surveyor General reviews rule changes to ensure

- they are not self-serving;

- they are in the public interest; and
- they have been appropriately reviewed and approved by all parties affected by the change.

Throughout the 102 years of self-regulation, the Association has been managed by a very small complement of staff who are ably assisted by a number of volunteers from the membership.

The Association has a membership of only 300 practising land surveyors to provide the majority of its funding. This results in our dues being significantly higher than other professions. Without the ongoing assistance of dedicated volunteers, our dues likely would be even higher. The Association very much appreciates the work of the volunteers and staff, especially during this property “boom” period in our province. ▲

**Chuck Salmon, BCLS, is the Secretary, Treasurer, and Registrar of the Association of British Columbia Land Surveyors.**