

Leadership

Chuck Salmon



Leadership in Electronic Plan Examination

The election of the Liberal government two years ago started a process of change that has impacted the province quite significantly. For the Corporation of Land Surveyors, this change has been a welcome breath of fresh air, providing easier access to government than was available with previous administrations.

The biggest change for land surveyors has come from the consolidation of registries into the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management. For the first time, responsibility for survey has been aligned with the responsibility for title. Through the consolidation process, there has been a workforce adjustment. As the registries have faced these cutbacks and recognized a need to cut services, the land surveying profession has stepped forward to work with government to minimize the effect on the public and ensure the quality of the surveys on which title is based.

This leadership by the profession has been well received by both the members and government. The reduction in government workforce left the Land Title Offices and the Surveyor General's office with a need to drastically reduce the survey plan examination function. This reduction is based on the philosophy that the professional surveyor is responsible for the accuracy and completeness of his or her work, including the plan that represents the survey. For the past 35 years, the registries have been undertaking more and more checking of these survey plans. This allowed the surveying profession to rely more on the plan examination by the government employees, thereby reducing the workload in their offices.

The Board of Management structured a task force about a year-and-a-half ago that has been meeting consistently with government to partner on issues of mutual interest. Government's concern over the reduction in the plan examination function seemed like a good pilot; the task force conceived a project that would enable surveyors to efficiently manage the examination of their plans and show government that the profession could take back the responsibility for plan examination.

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The task force developed a project charter that clearly defined the concept of electronic plan examination. This charter was reviewed by government, who considered it to be a worthwhile mechanism to support. With the government support, the Corporation contracted a consultant, ParComputer Services Inc., to design and develop the system.

Due to the need to obtain support from many groups, the task force did not obtain the green light to build the system until the beginning of February 2003. Because government financial support was involved, the system had to be up and running by their fiscal year ending March 31, 2003. Both the consultant and the work group, set up as part of the Government Task Force, had to go flat out for the two months required to design and develop the system.

To the credit of both, the system went live on April 1, and it was not an April Fool. Although there was the odd glitch, the system functions well and has been received positively by the profession. Most members find the system very useful in their ongoing effort to ensure accuracy and completeness of their work.

The system functions as a database registry that is accessed through a Web browser. Every page is a simple Web page; there is no additional software to learn. The professional surveyor works through a series of Web pages, answering questions about the preparation of a survey plan. Each answer is stored in the registry for access in the future, as required. The Corporation has received requests for viewing the system from some of the professional survey associations across Canada. The first of its kind, this system will be reviewed over the next few months with a view to improving and enhancing the system based upon comments received from our members.

The government looked to the profession to provide leadership in plan examination and the Corporation met the challenge. This change in the working relationship with government is a start in the right direction in which the profession will benefit greatly. It is now time to look to other areas for enhancement and to show leadership by the profession. ▲

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

Voice: 250 656-9862
 chuck.salmon@telus.net