



Chuck Salmon



From Pens to Pixels: Legal Professionals *and* Surveyors Go Electronic!

British Columbia land surveyors have a close affiliation with legal professionals in BC through the work that the professions undertake.

This close link goes back to the implementation of the Torrens system of land title with its reliance upon an accurate title to land. In the past, these cooperative efforts have traditionally seen land surveyors performing surveys for their clients with the final survey, in some cases, being passed to a legal professional for the preparation of the necessary documentation to support registration of the entire package.

There are also situations where legal professionals will hire land surveyors to survey areas to be covered by rights of way, easements, or covenants and to prepare the required survey plan to accompany the documents they are preparing. All of these surveys have been traditionally prepared,

using linen or mylar hardcopy media, and stored in the vaults of the various registries such as the Land Title Offices and the Crown Land Registry.

The Digital Survey Plan Project or e-Survey Project when implemented will allow surveyors or legal professionals to file plans electronically.

Recently, the Land Title Division of the Land Title and Survey Authority of BC (LTSA) implemented the Electronic Filing System (EFS) for the filing of documents in the land title system using electronic forms. This project has been implemented and legal professionals are slowly migrating to this system. At first glance, there may not be a lot of time or cost savings for the legal community. In the long term, however, there will be significant cost savings not only for the legal community

but their clients and the Land Title and Survey Authority of BC.

The Surveyor General Division is currently working on a project that will see survey plans deposited in the appropriate registry in an electronic format in a manner similar to documents submitted through EFS. The Digital Survey Plan Project or e-Survey Project when implemented will allow surveyors or legal professionals to file plans electronically. The Association of BC Land Surveyors is currently working with the Law Society to allow land surveyors to obtain a digital signature through Juricert.

Once this is in place and the project is up and running, surveyors will be able to provide their plans as electronic PDF documents, thereby eliminating the need for scanning plans when they are deposited in the Land Title Office or the Crown Land Registry.

To provide the best possible service to clients, the Association of BC Land Surveyors and the legal professionals need to work together to develop professional education workshops for members of the Law Society, the Notaries, land

surveyors, land title agents, and various municipal, city, regional, district, and government signing officers regarding the harmonization of the electronic documents and electronic data delivery.

E-Survey will be a huge saving for clients, legal professionals, and surveyors in both time and cost because it will no longer be necessary for signatories to physically sign a hardcopy plan, thus avoiding the cost of shipping plans around for signature. Where it might take a week or more to courier a plan for signature and get it back, the same work will now be done in a much shortened timeframe, if the recipients are online.

If the recipients are not online, it will still save significant costs by couriering a one-page document for signature rather than a roll of plans. If it has to go to Europe or Asia or both and back, the time savings will even be greater. In addition, it will save the client a significant amount by not having to pay the cost of production of the original and duplicate mylars as well as the paper prints.

The one requirement being stipulated at this time is that EFS will only accept electronic plans when the documents are also being filed electronically. This will require close cooperation between the surveyors and legal professionals if the legal professionals are filing the documentation. This may also encourage those in the legal community who are not currently using EFS to switch over and start using the system.

After 150 years of hard-copy plan submissions, many of us who have been involved in the development of these changes look forward to the implementation of this exciting project...

The Land Title and Survey Authority will also begin seeing cost savings as these electronic documents and plans begin to

reduce handling, scanning, and storage costs. Considering the very large numbers of plans and documents currently being stored in the various vaults at both the Crown and Land Title registries, the future savings will be substantial.

Over the next few months, there will be lots of discussion on the issues that might develop through the implementation of e-Survey; the benefits, however, appear to significantly outweigh the old method of hard-copy plans.

After 150 years of hard-copy plan submissions, many of us who have been involved in the development of these changes are looking forward to the implementation of this exciting project and cooperatively working with legal professionals to provide electronic documents for their clients. ▲

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