

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR SURVEYS AND MAPPING SERVICES

OTTAWA - The Honourable Gerald Merrithew, Minister of State for Forestry and Mines, announced today that the government has confirmed the objectives and plans of the Surveys and Mapping Branch of Energy, Mines and Resources to lead the branch into a high technology future in close cooperation with the private sector. These plans include the strengthening of the branch's presence in Sherbrooke, Quebec, to that of full, permanent divisional status.

The Sherbrooke Institute of Cartography, first proposed for the region more than ten years ago, will finally become a reality. It will comprise 100 positions and it will be in place by September 1988. The institute will be responsible for revising topographic maps of eastern Canada, and for conducting research and development in geographical data information systems.

Of the 100 positions, 32 currently exist in Sherbrooke, nine positions will be transferred from the Legal Surveys Office in Quebec City, and the remaining 59 will be

loaned to the branch by Treasury Board to allow for quick staffing during the next year. Those 59 positions will be absorbed by the branch through attrition over the course of the next four years. The branch's operations will be unaffected and there will be no layoffs.

In establishing the objectives and plans of the Surveys and Mapping Branch, the government has given it a fresh mandate to pursue a high-technology future in which the branch will work closely with the Canadian private sector. The branch will increase its technical support to industries intent on selling surveys and mapping technology both within Canada and abroad. This cooperation and the synergy created will work very much to the benefit of both the private and public sectors. Discussions to this end are currently taking place with the Canadian Association of Aerial Surveyors, which represents the Canadian surveying and mapping industry, and it is anticipated that an agreement may be finalized early this fall.

"We have achieved a remarkable con-

sensus and gained support from all parties," said Mr. Merrithew. "Sherbrooke will benefit from the immediate strengthening of our operations and the development of an integrated regional centre of excellence. Ottawa operations will experience no disruption of activities, no layoffs, and a minimal reduction in the number of positions through attrition.

"The branch will be able to plan for its future in an atmosphere of certainty, and can move into the technology of the next century with confidence, knowing it will play a vital role. The private sector will benefit, knowing it will be called upon to become a full partner with the federal government in the promotion and use of surveying and mapping technologies in an increasingly competitive world market."

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