

## Take the time to read this article: **It's Your Future**

By the Public Relations Committee

### **A. The Start**

The AOLS Council has recognized an urgent need for a public relations program for the surveying profession and earlier this year it put in place a Public Relations Committee made up of: two members of Council, namely Vice-President, Drew Annable and councillor, Charles Chamberlain; two members from the AOLS membership, John Barber and Ron Emo; and the Executive Director, Carl Rooth. The committee was given the task of preparing a public relations program and presenting it to Council.

An outline of a program was presented to Council at its July meeting and endorsed. Council then further instructed the committee to proceed with an action plan to put the program in place.

### **B. Input Required from the Membership**

The first phase of the program requires the Committee to seek input from the membership. This is being done by first, presenting the program outline in this article and second, by a further presentation of the program at the fall meeting of the Regional Groups. The Committee asks the membership to send comments back to the AOLS office by November 25 so that suggestions can be reviewed at our next meeting.

### **C. The Need**

The AOLS has not had a formal public relations program for some time. Public Relations items and ideas have been tried on a reactionary basis for many years now and, while some of these have been quite successful, much more needs to be done.

Never before has there been such a need for the public at large to be aware of the services that a surveyor can pro-

vide. Our very future depends on it. Without a concerted effort to implement a continuing public relations program our spot in the marketplace will surely dwindle. The competitiveness of the 90's has jolted us awake to this fact.

For years now we have been looking at each other as our own major source of competition. For the first time ever, for many of us, we are collectively experiencing that our biggest source of competition is not coming from fellow members but from beyond.

*"... never before has there been such an urgent need for our profession to blow its horn ....  
We need to make noise  
.....NOW!!!"*

What are these sources of competition?

The following are three major sources that the Committee has identified.

- \* The title insurance industry threatens a major portion of the work that many of the cadastral members do. If it is left unchecked, it will do irreparable damage.
- \* The shrinking public dollar as well as the shrinking dollar in the hands of the private sector threatens to squeeze out surveyors' services.
- \* Advancing technology is being taken advantage of by surveyors but, unfortunately, it is putting traditional survey tools and skills in the hands of others as well. This leaves them with the impression that they can replace the services that used to be the domain of the surveyor.

To repeat, never before has there been such an urgent need for our profession to blow its horn -- to get out and tell the

public at large and, specifically, the traditional users of surveys services, how valuable those services really are. *We need to make noise.....NOW!!!!*

The whole membership has to pitch in. The presentation that follows may be viewed by some to be targeted towards the private practicing cadastral surveyor. But this could not be further from the truth.

With much of the need for survey services, both cadastral and technical, coming from government institution and regulation, the registered members and those employed by government need to work within the government structure to make officials aware of the detriment of cutting funds for survey needs.

To address two needs, one being a current pent-up demand from the membership to develop something quickly and the other being to organize a long term plan for public relations, the Committee has identified two tasks that need to be accomplished. The first task is to develop a short term plan that can be presented to the membership and implemented immediately. The other task is to develop a long term plan for public relations and marketing (i.e. three to five years). This article will focus on the short term plan.

First, however, a few comments will be made on an approach the committee hopes to adopt for a long term plan.

### **D. Long Term Plan**

Charles Chamberlain, who has just completed his MBA degree from the University of Ottawa, has suggested that, perhaps, we could take advantage of an Executive MBA program where study groups, of about 5 persons in size, are formed to research an organization and prepare a marketing (public relations) plan for it as part of the study group's course work. This marketing plan could

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then form the basis of our long term program.

The marketing project accounts for 50% of the course mark and is a major undertaking. Most projects are 100 pages or more of report after exhaustive research on the chosen topic. The project team consists of 5 people, generally senior persons in their organizations from diverse backgrounds and would bring a wide range of ideas to the project. The only cost associated with the project would, perhaps, be travel expenses.

These study groups are formulated in the early fall classes so work is currently being done to find one that is interested in taking on the AOLS as a project.

## E. What Is Public Relations

Public Relations has six main tasks:

- \* Assist in the launch of new products,
- \* Assist in the repositioning of new products,
- \* Build up interest in a product category,
- \* Influence specific target groups,
- \* Defend products that have encountered public problems, and
- \* Build the corporate image in a way that projects favourably on its products.

How does this apply to the AOLS? Very well. These tasks contribute both to the protection of the public by informing them of our societal obligations and enhancing the image of our members by providing a clear understanding of the products and services provided by our members. The mechanics of preparing a marketing/public relations plan forces us to identify our products and services, identify our competitors, identify opportunities and risks to our profession, and to take specific actions to either benefit from the opportunities or protect ourselves from the risks.

*"The basic concept ... is for the Association to develop a public relations program and then provide it to surveyors to implement locally ..."*

Five major tools are used for public relations:

- \* Publications,
- \* Events,
- \* News,
- \* Speeches, and
- \* Public service activities.

We must use **all** of these tools in our public relations activities. Specific examples are seen in the plan that follows.

Through the enhancement of our public image, members benefit as a group from public relations. However, public relations is not a replacement for individual members marketing of their own products and services. We must all remember that public relations is a joint effort of the Association and its members.

## F. Short Term Plan

The basic concept of the short term plan is for the Association to develop a public relations program and then provide it to surveyors to implement locally in their own area of practice.

By using surveyors, acting either individually or in a local mini-group, to implement the program, we can realize a number of accomplishments.

First, it makes a program affordable for the Association. Presentations made by the Association, by staff, or by a hired consultant, can be kept to a minimum.

Second, the local surveyor will know the target groups better. They will have natural contacts from within a target group where an opportunity to organize a presentation will be realized and the opportunity for continual updating of members of the target group will naturally occur.

Third, by encouraging surveyors to make presentations together, as a group of local surveyors, better fellowship relations will occur and surveyors will have an opportunity to learn from each other. By keeping the preparation aspect of a topic in the Association's hands, but the presentation in the local surveyor's hands, the Association can be assured that the proper and consistent message on a topic is being spread across the Province, while at the same time being understood by the surveyor. It will also help the

Association in fostering good communication with its members.

## Plan Outline

The following is a detailed explanation of each program step. A number of these tasks have already been completed by the committee or, at least, started.

### 1. Topics

Prepare a list of topics to be addressed. Below is a list of the topics the Committee felt should be addressed by the Association. The list is by no means complete and should be continuously updated.

#### a. Title Insurance

The Committee identified this as the number one priority as it is believed that the application of Title Insurance to the real estate transaction will have a profound effect on the public. Consultant John Middleton, O.L.S., has been engaged to prepare a manual and presentation package to inform members, lawyers, lenders and the public on the positive aspects of having a survey completed on a property rather than taking out Title Insurance.

#### b. Update Current Handout Material

The three speaker's kits that the AOLS currently has available for students, lawyers and real estate agents need to be updated.

The student speaker's kit needs to be updated with the following:

- new course outline for the U of T, Erindale program;
- Ryerson's course outline and what status graduates have with the AOLS;
- surveying as a career publications reviewed and updated;
- Community College programs currently being offered in the province and what they offer and the status these graduates have;
- ISTO - an explanation of what ISTO is and the various categories of classification (i.e. - job descriptions for non-OLS careers).

The lawyer's package will contain material produced from other topics but the material contained within it should be reviewed to ensure that it is current.

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The real estate package should be re-done with material specifically aimed at real estate agents who may not appreciate the detail and case law references presented in other papers.

## c. *Discussion Kit on How to Read a Survey Plan.*

This kit will include a mock plan that will lead the lay person through a typical survey plan, explaining to them the information that it contains and how to read the information on the plan. The kit will also include a written presentation on surveys.

## d. *Discussion Kit for First Time Home Buyers*

Surveyors should be taking advantage of local real estate news columns and possible free seminars to first time home buyers. In order to accomplish this, the Association offices should have a discussion kit for the local OLS member to explain the surveyor and real estate transaction in terms that the home buyer will understand.

## e. *Talks to Lenders*

Even though the Association has been speaking to lenders across the Province, it is felt that we need to speak directly to the head offices of lending institutions.

## f. *How to Shop for an Ontario Land Surveyor*

This presentation should stress the various areas of expertise for Land Surveyors and their qualifications. It should outline the information that one needs to provide a surveyor with when engaging his/her services. It should explain that a surveyor's fees are based on the time and expenses involved in performing the survey and that the surveyor will be pleased to estimate the level of fee that the client should expect.

## g. *Municipal Officials*

The preparation of papers to explain to municipal officials the benefits of having the Ontario Land Surveyor preparing sketches for land division, zoning sketches, lot grading plans, road widenings and road extent identification, etc.

## h. *Engineering Companies*

The preparation of packages for our members to present to engineering companies outlining the total spectrum of surveying that the Ontario Land Surveyor has to offer. i.e. G.I.S., topographic work, photogrammetric work, planning, hydrographic mapping, and geodetic work and the like.

The preparation of these packages should be done in cooperation with other AOLS Committees, in particular, the Geodetic, Photogrammetric and Hydrographic Committees.

All presentations should be prepared keeping the understanding of the target group in mind. Perhaps, friendly members of the target group should be asked to vet the presentation for honest feedback.

All presentations should also be prepared stressing the positive aspects of the land surveyor's services.

The value of the work should be emphasized so that the public can get past the view that a surveyor's services are a "necessary evil", - something that they reluctantly have to acquire.

## 2. Organizations To Target

The organizations that the various topic presentations should be targeted to are as follows:

- a. General Public
- b. Lawyers
- c. Real Estate Agents
- d. Lenders at both the Local and Head Office Level
- e. Educational Institutions
- f. Government organizations at all three levels, Federal, Provincial and Municipal, including elected officials
- g. Developers, Builders, Contractors
- h. Home Owners
- i. Engineers, Architects, Planners, Etc.
- j.

*"... so that the public can get past the view that a surveyor's services are a "necessary evil" ...*

## 3. Priority Of Topics

Prioritize a list of topics and prepare a presentation on each topic which may include:

- a speech
- basic information to update the surveyor on the topic
- overhead slides
- brochure or other handout information

The topics in item 1 have not been prioritized. However, as mentioned earlier, the Committee has already proceeded with the preparation of a manual and presentation package on Title Insurance. A budget is being prepared for the balance of the items. The Committee is currently reviewing a priority for each item and looking at various methods of funding their preparation.

## 4. Advertising

Investigate which type of publication or media forum is the most beneficial for surveyors to advertise. Also, what style is the most effective? (i.e., business card ads vs. full page ads)

Other professional organizations have chosen to spend huge amounts of money advertising their members' services. The AOLS does not have the budget for this nor is it the Committee's opinion that the AOLS should be spending money on this type of advertising.

Rather, it is felt that the members themselves should be advertising their specific services in trying to attract work to their firm. The biggest advantage gained from a specific ad will be to the member or his/her firm. However, the Association gains in that it is an opportunity for surveying services as a whole to be viewed by the public and as well the public gains because they become more aware of surveyors and their services.

## 5. Trade Shows

Upgrade Trade Show presentation kit. Trade shows are an excellent way for a group of surveyors to work together on a public relations project. Trade shows are also a very effective way of addressing a large group of members from a specific target group. Again, there are tremendous exposure advantages to be gained

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by a local member's firm but the Association and the public also gain from the experience as well.

The Association already has a display booth that members can borrow for this use but, as well, the Association should maintain current display photos for specific topics that can be used to "dress up" the booth. The Association should also take on the responsibility to prepare and maintain current brochures and other handout material on the various public relations topics. Caution should be exercised, however, because handout material can be expensive to produce.

## 6. Marketing Ideas

Produce ideas for marketing a surveyor's services. As an aid to Association members and their businesses, various marketing ideas of a surveyor's services can be presented to the membership by way of articles in the Quarterly magazine. The first of these articles was prepared by Committee member, Ron Emo, and appeared in the summer issue. The Committee should solicit ideas from the membership that have been found to be successful (i.e. - newsletters, presentation packages, etc.) and share them with the rest of the membership through the Quarterly.

## 7. Being Positive

Stress the positive in everything that is prepared and done. One of the basics of marketing is to stress the positive. People are not attracted to whining. Everything that we produce should be

upbeat and positive. It should tell a clear message of how a specific service will improve an individual's situation. It should clearly show the individual the value of the service and the potential pitfalls of doing without it.

*"Do not sit back and tell yourself 'someone else can do it'. That someone else is you."*

## G. Implementation of Short Term Program

The use of local surveyors to present the topics has already been outlined earlier in this article. Local surveyors are a vital link to the success of our public relations program. The Regional Groups are encouraged to get involved by developing local mini-groups to be utilized for the presentations. A leader should be identified from the Regional Group to oversee the development of the mini-groups. Each mini-group, in turn, should identify a leader to be the contact person with the Association.

It has been suggested that the Committee consider offering a "presentation" workshop to members who are prepared to take on the public relation task in their own local area. The workshop will help them in honing their presentation skills and learn how to answer those "tough" questions.

Currently, it is hoped that such a presentation can be put on at the Annual Meeting.

## H. Appeal To Get Involved

Fellow members of the AOLS, it is your future that is at hand. Do not sit back and tell yourself "someone else can do it". That someone else is you.

If one thinks of public relations as marketing or sales, the first rule of sales is to "believe in your product". The products and services that surveyors provide are a definite benefit to society. The public have much to lose without the services that a surveyor provides. It is our job to get out and inform them of that fact. No one else is going to do it for us.

Don't think of your services as merely a means to make a living. Instead, think of them in terms of services that will provide an improvement ---- an improvement to an individual, an organization and to an orderly system of land development and land tenure.



The Committee Members wish to extend special thanks to members who have already made suggestions and, in particular, to Anne Cole for her written suggestions that the Committee made full use of. We would like to remind others to forward your suggestions or comments to the Committee in time for our next meeting.

## Public Relations Committee

Drew Annable

Charlie Chamberlain

John Barber

Ron Emo

Special appearances by  
Willie Nelson, Madonna, Diana Ross  
and the Keith Burton Band

The President's Banquet and Party  
103rd Annual Meeting  
February 24th, 1995