

# Ontario's Surveyors are Plotting a New Course

Presented by the AOLS Public Awareness Committee

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***The profession is going through change and is poised to break into a new era of surveying.***

As a leader of professionals, surveyor and engineer, Willis Chipman would be proud of the debate, that has fully engaged the professional surveyors of the province over the past few years. The profession is going through change and is poised to break into a new era of surveying. The foundation for this transition was set more than a hundred years ago through the energy and foresight of Willis Chipman, who was a founding member of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors, the Engineering Institute of Canada and the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario. He holds the distinction of being remembered as the province's first consulting engineer.

Chipman played a leading role in establishing the Association of Provincial Land Surveyors of Ontario (APLSO) in 1886, later incorporated in 1892. The APLSO went on to become the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors (AOLS). When it was established in 1886, the association included many engineers, as it does today.

At the time of establishing the association, he set up standing committees in preparation for incorporation and presentation to the Legislature. One of those committees was the committee on land drainage, established to examine the problems inherent in the existing Municipal Act, and Drainage and

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Watercourses Act. Sewerage, water supply, street paving, roads and bridges all fell within the interest of that committee. Even today, surveyors and engineers work together to build, and rebuild, these infrastructure systems.

Since the early years of establishing the framework for governing professional surveyors and engineers in Ontario, engineers and surveyors have tended to establish their own fields of expertise and practice, even with frequent common interest on public works and private sector projects. With the establishment and development of new technology for mapping and assessments for construction projects, the distinctions between engineering and surveying sometimes is not so clear. New technology has challenged the accountability of practitioners in certain fields of surveying, or geodata mapping to the public.

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This is especially becoming evident in the areas of geographic information system development for municipalities, and construction surveying. Licenced members of the AOLS hold a clear responsibility for carrying out cadastral surveys for real estate transactions and civil works. But other fields of surveying, encompassed in the broader definition of geomatics, often attract specialists who are not professional surveyors. They hold no legal responsibility to the public for the work they do. The AOLS is working to expand its membership to

include specialists from these related disciplines. These people are generally referred to as geographic information managers.

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Existing legislation of the AOLS permits the addition of a new professional designation surrounding geographic information activities. Experienced individuals directly involved with geodata or with information technology related to geography and land management (but focusing on geodata) could be eligible for professional designation under the Geographic Information Management. The expertise of the GIM Professional, along with the professionalism of AOLS members will help move the Association forward as leaders in the Land Information Management field. Professional designation of geographic information management specialists will re-establish the practice of regulating professional geodata surveying to serve and protect the public interest.

Chipman pioneered the establishment of the professional surveyor and engineer. As an engineer, he drew upon the knowledge of physicians, chemists, biologists and civil engineers, and contributed to the establishment of municipal sanitary engineers who designed public water and sewage treatment works. Other sanitary engineers supervised sewerage programs, designed local plumbing regulations and licensed plumbers. He foresaw the need to draw upon various disciplines to make safer places for people to live. In much the same way, the AOLS is now taking the initiative to create a new profession that will contribute to the orderly development of our economy and environments in which we live.

