

THE CANADIAN COUNCIL OF LAND SURVEYORS



... a national consensus based enabling forum providing proactive leadership to its member associations. Its prime objectives are to provide national strategies, and national and international representation, for land surveyors within the geomatics profession.

By Sarah J. Cornett, O.L.S., O.L.I.P.

The Canadian Council of Land Surveyors (CCLS) is a council created by the surveying associations themselves to provide a means to interact at a national level. In the mid-70's, a group of association president's wanted a structured way to follow-up on the initiatives discussed at the informal gatherings that took place as they visited each others' annual meetings throughout the year, and CCLS was created. It began with a group of volunteer directors and a volunteer secretariat, and five primary objectives. Today CCLS has a permanent office in Ottawa, two staff members, and 15 national initiatives on its current agenda. Each initiative has a strategy in place and is being worked on by a group of volunteers from the member associations. Some initiatives, such as governance, communication, and strategic planning, are ongoing processes. Other initiatives involve current national issues defined as priorities by the associations through the CCLS forum.

This article will describe the focus and structure of CCLS and present a few of the initiatives as examples of how CCLS works for surveyors on a national level. I hope this will help you understand CCLS, how its mandate differs from the association's mandate and how you can become involved if you have an interest in the surveying community at a national level.

I know everyone groans at mission statements and I do as well, but I'm beginning to understand how a good

mission statement can be used to keep an organization on track and in focus. The CCLS mission statement is shown at the top of this article. Embedded in the statement is a clear picture of what CCLS is. CCLS is national. CCLS is consensus based. CCLS is a forum. The vision is also clear on who CCLS is for, the member associations, and on what CCLS does. CCLS leads, provides strategies, and represents its members' associations nationally and internationally. When CCLS rewrote its Vision Statement it asked the questions: Who are CCLS's clients? What should CCLS be doing for them and how can CCLS realistically do that within its resources? The main objective was to improve CCLS's effectiveness.

Reviewing the CCLS vision was a year and a half's work, and I'm not going to describe it here, but we came up with a set of well-defined key roles for all of the players in CCLS, a set of integrated communication plans, a process for mapping out the national agenda and setting priorities, and a process for building consensus around the issues on that agenda. All the details were contained in the CCLS Guide to Governance Policy and Processes which is a concise, ten-page document, posted on the CCLS website for any of those process people out there.

The surveyors associations are set up to serve their individual member surveyors. The associations themselves are the members of CCLS. In fact, the associations as a group *are*

CCLS. Through the CCLS forum they provide the issues. They develop the strategies to tackle the issues. They build consensus around these strategies. They support CCLS's initiatives and implement the strategies which they helped define in the best way that they can within their own organizational structure.

Building consensus is an iterative process and success depends on two-way communication, active participation of association volunteers, and timely, considered and comprehensive feedback from the association councils. Consensus is needed in order to have the buy-in of the associations which will implement the strategies. There must be consensus in setting the priorities in developing the strategies, in funding the implementation and in the implementation itself. It is understood that strategies will be implemented by the member associations after a consensus has been reached by those associations at the CCLS forum. The strategies developed through CCLS are based on this premise and developed with association implementation in mind. Consensus does not have to mean hundred per cent agreement or participation by all eleven member associations. If consensus is not reached then an initiative is not necessarily a failure. The process of discussion at a national level and identifying a lack of consensus at a particular time is valuable in its own right.

CCLS is not project-oriented for one very real reason. CCLS does not have

the resource base required to implement projects at a national level. To put that in real terms, CCLS's annual revenue is about \$170,000, less than 5% of the combined annual revenue of our member associations.

The next few paragraphs highlight some current initiatives to illustrate how CCLS acts as a forum for building consensus and developing national strategies for implementation at the association level.

Public Awareness has been a priority issue for the associations for many years. It is also an issue which is difficult to tackle with limited resources and with the huge scale of the topic itself. CCLS has set a specific target of developing a web-based resource for teachers and career councillors to encourage high school and junior college aged students to consider surveying as a career. It will be a catalogue and access point for existing materials and resources and may pave the way to identifying gaps in those resources and the development of strategies to fill those gaps. The initiative is not a duplication or a replacement of the association based PR work and it's not a national advertising campaign. It will combine information, resources and experts from the associations and provide a national, web-based tool that associations can use in their own local and regional communication and public awareness plans.

The Syllabus Review Initiative is an in-depth review of the core academic syllabus currently used by Canadian Board of Examiners for Professional Surveyors (providing academic review of candidates for ABCLS, ALSA, SLSA, AMLS and ACLS) and Atlantic Boards of Examiners (providing academic review of candidates for ANLS, ANSLs, APEILs, and ANBLs), and a direct comparison to the Ontario and Quebec requirements. It's the first of several steps in increasing the harmonization of standards for entry to the survey profession. Representatives

of all the regions are working on reviewing the academic requirements for relevance, clarity and transparency and especially for commonality. CCLS is providing a forum to build consensus-based national academic syllabus. The Associations have the legislative mandate to set their own requirements. CCLS is providing leadership to build on the commonalities. It will work to provide flexibility, to accommodate regional differences required by the associations without maintaining the variations that have built up over time and do not represent real differences in entry requirements. The more we accomplish in this regard the easier it will be to attract candidates to the profession and to increase mobility of both students and professionals.

The CCLS **Expanded Profession Task Force** researched how the expanded profession has been dealt with across the country. The detailed report produced by that Task Force includes a description of the various models that are in place or being developed by Associations as well as other organizations. There are six Associations who currently have an expanded profession model in place. All of them are different. The conclusions of that report give recommendations for follow-up work for a more coordinated approach to the issue. The next step is to receive feedback about the findings and possible directions from the associations and to discuss the development of a national strategy to take us into the future.

The New Brunswick Association reported to the CCLS Board that railways in that province are restricting access to their lands by requiring their personnel to accompany anyone entering railway lands and charging a significant fee. There are safety issues to be considered but there are also issues of restriction for the survey profession in accessing the information they require to complete their

work. CCLS communicated with all associations to determine the current scope of this issue and has published a report based on the findings. CCLS will facilitate a discussion of strategies and recommendations based on association input.

We have two other longstanding programs at CCLS that are very active. The CCLS Professional Liability Insurance Program is tailored specifically to Canadian surveyors and overseen by a committee of surveyors. It's available to any Canadian surveyor and is particularly valuable to surveyors outside of Ontario and Quebec where the demographics will not support provincial programs. Without this program surveyors in other regions would have to look to general, engineering-based programs for their professional liability insurance. The CCLS Board of Examiners Coordinating Committee, as the name implies, works to coordinate the efforts of the Boards of Examiners across Canada, including the AERC. These groups are brought together under CCLS and provide a coordinated approach to academic standards and qualification.

I hope this article has provided you with some idea of how CCLS works for and with your association. If you are interested in any of the issues outlined here or national issues in general, please let me know. We have been working hard to make sure that our volunteers on task forces and committees don't get over-worked and burnt out and we'd love to have more involvement through the associations. For those of you with such programs, it also looks great on your continuing education reporting form.



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