

Office of the Surveyor General Crown Land Surveys

Who we are and what we do

By Susan MacGregor, O.L.S., O.L.I.P. and Eric Ansell, O.L.S., O.L.I.P.

Preamble: During the Fall of 2008 and the Spring of 2009, Sue MacGregor and Eric Ansell from the Ministry of Natural Resources, Crown Land Surveys unit, made presentations to the Regional Groups on the various roles and functions of the Unit as well as useful sources of information that can be easily accessed by surveyors. The presentations were very informal with questions and comments from the groups determining the direction of the discussion. While the sessions were well attended, we are pleased to submit the following article for those members unable to attend. Members are encouraged to contact Crown Land Surveys if they have any question or comments regarding services or mandate. Crown Survey Records are available by emailing your request to surveyrecords@ontario.ca

The Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for managing Ontario's Crown Land in a way that balances social, economic and environmental interests. Crown Land makes up about 87% or 937,000 square kilometers of the provincial land mass, including approximately 164,000 square kilometres of beds of navigable waters but excepting lands under the jurisdiction of Canada; namely Indian Reserves, National Parks and some harbours and canals.

The Crown Land Surveys unit primarily provides professional cadastral assistance to the Ministry's District Offices which have the responsibility of managing the Crown Land base on behalf of the Province. This includes providing assis-

tance to District lands staff, Crown Land Registry (Patent Office), other Ministries, Ontario Land Surveyors and the general public and we also have the mandate to support and assist with the various initiatives of the government. Our unit also assumes those duties as directed by the Surveyor General.

Crown Land Surveys Unit is part of Geographic Information Ontario, Geographic Information Branch of the Science and Information Resources Division within the Ministry of Natural Resources. The unit is currently comprised of;

- Surveyor General
- Co-ordinator

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

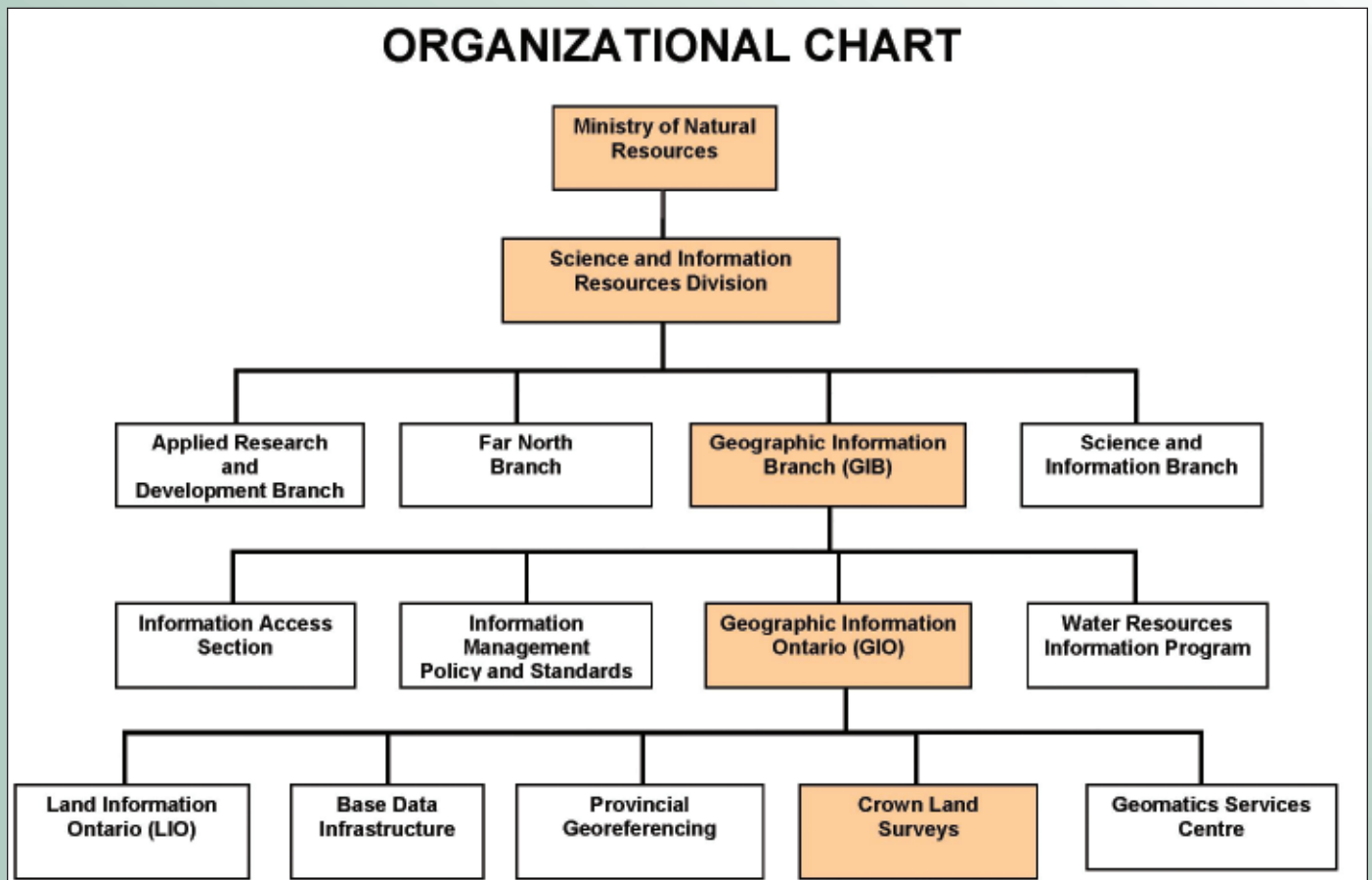


Figure 1

- 4 Crown Surveyors
- 3 Legal Survey Plan Examiners
- 5 Data Support Officers, and
- 2 Survey Records Clerks

The Surveyor General is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council under Section 5 of the Ministry of Natural Resources Act. The Act requires that he or she perform such duties in connection with the surveying of lands, investigation of water powers, engineering, inspection, research and such other matters as are assigned by the Lieutenant Governor or by the Minister. As part of the Geographic Information Branch, the Office of the Surveyor General carries out seven main commitments;

1. Researching and preparing professional opinions in regards to the extent of Crown lands, survey fabric and navigability,
2. Reviewing Crown plans and preparing legal descriptions, both written and graphical, for use in Minister's Orders, Orders in Council, Regulations, Settlement Agreements and land dispositions,
3. Issuing specific survey instructions for surveys of Crown Land including Crown locations, Mining Claims and Aboriginal Claims,
4. Protecting the Crown's and public's interest including the review of Land Titles Act and Boundaries Act applications and participating in court proceedings and hearings,
5. Maintaining the boundaries of the Province of Ontario and the provincial cadastre,
6. Providing administrative oversight for the Surveys Act and the Surveyors Act,
7. Administering the Crown Survey Records.

Members would be quite familiar with some of these roles but may be surprised at the scope of others. Often requests are made by the public to identify the extent of their private land. Our usual response to most public inquiries is for the person to contact a local surveyor in private practice. We become involved and offer survey advice where Ontario Crown Land interests are concerned. This can take the form of liaising with Canada to determine Provincial/Federal land transfers, supporting other ministries of the Provincial government such as Municipal Affairs and Housing, Aboriginal Affairs or assisting with preparations for litigation.



Figure 2

Recently, a good deal of our effort has been focused on preparing graphical representations that can be referenced in regulations or other unregistered legal agreements. These include Provincial Park Plans which govern the limits of Provincial Parks, Wild Life Management Unit Plans, Fish Management Zones which govern hunting and fishing areas, plans to assist the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs during the negotiation of land claims and plans that portray the limits of the Green Belt, just to name a few. These graphical descriptions or descriptive plans allow users to understand and

visualize the limits of various parcels or units of land and the restrictions or controls placed on those lands.

An excellent example of the benefit of a descriptive plan can be seen in the maps prepared to regulate the Wildlife Management Units (WMU) of Ontario. The plan shown in Figure 3 represents multiple pages of a metes and bounds description. The descriptive map becomes a plan of record with the Office of the Surveyor General and is referenced in a Regulation passed by the Lieutenant Governor, replacing the more cumbersome metes and bounds description. These graphical descriptions are easily understood by the public making it much easier to determine where and when they can hunt and fish. They are also an invaluable tool for a Conservation Officer to determine if an infraction has incurred within the Wildlife Unit and more importantly, making it much easier to prove to a judge that the offence was truly within the restricted area, resulting in the conviction of the offender.

Our unit also supports various program initiatives of the Branch. When we examine the extent of information that the Geographic Information Branch manages and consider that much of this information is georeferenced to a common framework, it becomes apparent why there is a need to move toward integrated surveys. By integrating Crown Plans, the lot and concession fabric of the Province improves in spatial accuracy thereby improving associated Provincial data sets such as,

- Ontario Roads Network - common reference frame for all roads in the province
- Ontario Parcel - private land holding in the province
- Township Improvement Project – improved geographic fabric based on Crown field notes and survey evidence from private surveyors' files
- Land Tenure Information Integration Project – public land holding in the province
- Ontario Trails Network – a common reference frame for most organized trails in the province

Many of these data sets are available through Land Information Ontario.

The Surveyor General's Office was historically, and is today, a registry office for Crown dispositions of land. Historically the Surveyor General's Office provided the instructions for the first surveys of townships and received and examined the survey returns (plans & field notes) from the provincial surveyors. These surveys created and identified lots which were later sold by the Crown. We continue to maintain, preserve and disseminate all Crown Survey Records.

Our index system comprises 47 different survey record types with a total of 206,031 records. These records are stored in an environmentally controlled room and date back to the late 1700's preceding the formation of the Province of Ontario. We are currently scanning all records into a digital format, primarily to provide better quality images to our clients in a faster and more cost effective manner.

Some of our plans on record include original plans and field notes and instructions for subdivided and unsubdivided

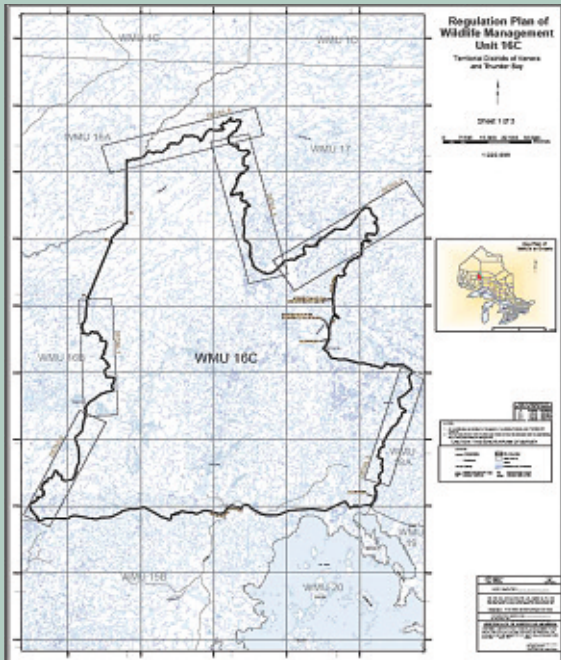


Figure 3

Townships, Townsites, Townplots, Summer Resort Locations, Mining Locations and Claims, Municipal Surveys, Township Boundary Resurveys and Retracements, Township Corner and Crown Restoration points, Base and Meridian Plans, First Nations Lands, Colonization Roads, Quarter Sessions Roads, Improved Road Surveys, Provincial Park Plans, Ontario Living Legacy Plans, Wildlife Management Units, Forest Management Zones, Fire Management Zones, Greenbelt Plans, and Local Service Board Plans.



Below are some useful websites to review prior to performing a Crown Survey:

CLAIMaps III

http://www.mndm.gov.on.ca/mines/lands/claimap3/disclaimer_e.asp

MNR Lands Policies

http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/CrownLand/2ColumnSubPage/STEL02_165785.html

Land Information Ontario

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/LIO/index.html>

COSINE

www.cosine.mnr.gov.on.ca

NRCAN Plan Search

<http://clss.nrcan.gc.ca/plansearch-rechercheplan-eng.php>

Ontario Archives

[http://ao.minisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll?get&file=\[ARCHON\]search.htm](http://ao.minisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll?get&file=[ARCHON]search.htm)

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Audrey with President Al Worobec at her retirement luncheon.

After 18 years working tirelessly for the benefit of our Association, Audrey Maxwell has retired. We wish her all the best.