

The Case for a National Home for Land Information Professionals

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Canada is relatively unique in the world with its system of provincial and federal regulation of property systems and of the self-regulating profession of land surveying.

Government initiatives such as the national Agreement on Internal Trade; the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) between British Columbia and Alberta and the Ontario / Quebec labour mobility initiative are attempting to effect common standards in the regulated professions through the requirement of professional mobility. This is long overdue and necessary for Canada's role in the global economy of the 21st Century.

Within the professions of surveying / geomatics / land information there have been similar steps. In 2001 the eleven regulating associations signed a Mutual Recognition Agreement which required all signatories to recognize and accept the professional status of applicants from other Canadian jurisdictions. Allowance was made for a demonstration or testing of local knowledge by applicants but the lack of a clear and consistent process led to differences in the testing by various regulators.

In 2005, the Western Board of Examiners and the Association of Canada Lands Surveyors created the Canadian Board of Examiners for Professional Surveyors (CBEPS) as the evaluation and testing agency for their associations with respect to applications to article. The Canadian Council of Land Surveyors (CCLS) subsequently prepared a recommended harmonized syllabus for acceptance to articles focussed on the national scene and aimed at strengthening the basis of the MRA. By 2008 all jurisdictions except Quebec, PEI and Newfoundland and Labrador had accepted the harmonized syllabus and were or had applied to become shareholders and active members of CBEPS.

However, all of these steps have been focussed on the regulated area of the profession, that is, on cadastral surveying.

The non-regulated or non-exclusive disciplines of geomatics exist throughout Canada but some of these are only recognized in legislation in Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan and the federal jurisdiction of Canada Lands. There is no national system to address issues of professional interest in these disciplines and little interaction amongst the four associations that do some level of certification.

So, in the global context, we do not have a consistent national property framework nor do we have a consistent national profession encompassing all related disciplines in the realm of land information or geomatics.

In 2006 the President's Forum, an advisory group within the CCLS organization, agreed that the CCLS itself must evolve or be replaced to better address issues of national mobility and fair access for foreign trained professionals and students and to ensure the future viability of the profession in Canada. Over the next two years representatives of the regulating associations, other geomatics groups, academia and individual members of the profession met to discuss and formulate a solution to these issues.

It was unanimously agreed that the solution must be national, must address all geomatics disciplines, must involve all levels of membership and must be governed by the individual professional members.

The exponential increase in the number of disciplines which are now aligning under the 'geomatics' umbrella further demands a distinct professional home focussed clearly on the land information profession.

In short, we need what we have never had – **a national home for land information professionals.**

The proposed route to achieve this goal is the re-organization of CCLS from an association of regulating associations to an association of individual members in the profession but including related associations, academia, para-professionals and students. It would not be a regulating body by legislation but would provide a level of regulation and certification by choice. It would advocate for the professional, it would promote for the profession and it would align the Canadian profession with corresponding organizations across the globe.

The new association would also carry on and expand on certain activities of CCLS which benefitted all professionals and related associations including communications, public awareness, availability of professional liability insurance, continuing education and ongoing support to continue to move toward common standards and certifications.

The land information profession has tremendous potential if thought of as more than cadastral surveying with its restrictive focus on municipal, regional or even provincial boundaries. We cannot let provincial legislation based on 19th Century needs define the limits of the now multi-disciplined profession of the 21st century.

Over the next year it is expected that details of the new association will be communicated to all potential members but success will be solely dependent on all of us to adhere to the PIC principle – **participation, involvement, commitment.**

