

Developing a New Strategic Plan

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The Association of Ontario Land Surveyors (AOLS) has developed several Strategic Plans over the last 15 years. The most recent one was prepared in 2005 and is posted on the member's side of the AOLS Website. Our previous Strategic Plans were prepared in house without any external assistance.

Your Council has decided that it is time to update the Strategic Plan and this time has hired Peter Richardson, Queen's School of Business Strategic Planning Professor, to lead us in the endeavour. Many will remember Peter leading seminars on Strategic Planning for the AOLS. Assisting Peter, will be Erik Lockhart of the Queen's Executive Decision Centre. Erik has developed a focus group workshop methodology that is used by the Queen's School of Business. The objective of our planning will be the development of a focused and growth-oriented strategy that provides a clear, a concrete 5-year Vision for the Association. Prioritized objectives will be created that will address the issues that we are facing today.

Many are wary of Strategic Planning because they have found that it requires a tremendous effort and often languishes on someone's bookshelf once it is completed. Peter's methodology includes what he calls "rolling 100 day action plans". Every 100 days a check-in is required to see what progress has been made and to determine if small changes in direction are required.

The Strategic Planning process we are going through is a staged process. We are currently working on the first stage that includes informal pre-work such as an online questionnaire, telephone interviews, focus group sessions and individual meetings with Peter and his colleagues. This stage is part of the creation of a "fact book" that will be used as input for the other stages of the process.

Part of the methodology that Peter will use includes getting input from those within the Association (all members will be welcome to participate in one way or another) and from many stakeholders from outside the Association. The outside stakeholders include government organizations, sister organizations from across the country, clients such as developers and lawyers, utility companies and Industry associations such as URISA.

One of Peter's initial observations is that the committee structure of the AOLS is huge with several committees being repetitive. This observation has been made by several of our members and most recently by the Professional Integration Committee (PIC). There was an initiative that started at the last AGM in Deerhurst to look at the committee structure and

try to use that to understand how we can improve efficiency. That initiative has morphed into this Strategic Planning, part of which will be an examination of the effectiveness of the current committee structure.

The initial pre-work stage mentioned above will lead to subsequent stages that include a size-up workshop and strategic issues analysis all leading to the September Council meeting that will be a full on Strategic Planning workshop. The workshop will include Council, Regional Group Chairs, key Committee Chairs, representative members and AOLS Professional Staff. This session will identify what the AOLS has to become over the next 5 to 10 years. Part of the process will be an identification of gaps between where we need to go and where we are today. Short term objectives that we need to implement will be formulated and prioritized.

After the September workshop, Peter will craft the Strategic Plan that will be presented to Council for their endorsement at the November Council meeting. The plan will contain a blueprint for our future with concrete initiatives and actions to get us there. Resources may need to be re-focused and there will likely be some things that we need to stop doing.

Deployment of the plan will occur in December of 2010 with full communication of the Strategic Plan to the membership taking place at the AGM in London in February 2011. By that time there should be no surprises because all Association members should have a good idea of what the plan contains.

One of the key things in this endeavour is the implementation of the strategic plan once it is complete. Already mentioned is the "rolling 100 day" check-in and that is one of the key differences between this plan and our previous ones. This is a formalized approach that will ensure that the effort expended will bear fruit and not languish on the bookshelf.

Success of our Strategic Planning process requires that all of our members be involved. As a first step, a questionnaire is posted on the AOLS website and you are urged to complete it. Focus groups are also underway in various areas (we are trying to use some of Regional Group meetings for this purpose) and if you get a call to join one, please participate fully.

We are thrilled to have Peter Richardson lead us in this initiative and at the completion of the Strategic Planning Process we will have a living breathing document that will be a map to the AOLS future.

