April 2016

Report to Membership

What's the latest?

Well the answer to that is a long list. Our board and our committees have been making decisions and working on projects that will have effects on your business, your work and the greater surveying and mapping community. If you haven't read the previous report yet, please review the December 2015 Quarterly Report as topics in that report may not be covered in this one. This report is a briefing, not a detailed dissertation of all the work of your board and committees.

Teleconference meetings are held several times a month by the board or committees. Progress has been made in every area. We are drawing on the expertise of committed land surveyors in all regions of Canada and we are confident that initiatives started are just the beginning of professional surveyors in Canada taking a leadership role on many important issue.

Promoting Professional Surveyors – We are on our way

Since our last report, the board has contracted with Acart a marketing and communications firm in Ottawa. Several meetings and focus understanding sessions were held with Acart and a path forward has been implemented. Substantial financial resources are committed to this ongoing project so getting the message right is very important for each of our members. Anybody can have bad messaging which has been evidenced by previous attempts. We are looking for a successful campaign and the schedule is to start the initial campaign in late May and run till the start of July. Money is important, plain and simple. The marketing will be tailored to the budget and we hope to work with the individual provinces to multiply the effect of our efforts. There will always be floaters in any group; now is not the time for them in your profession.

The changes to the website are being designed to reflect the messaging to come out of the marketing and awareness campaigns. The two initiatives are intricately linked. We hope to have this done by the end of May. It is important for the public and our members that messaging is understood, otherwise the message is not effective. The website will at a minimum be,

1. Be mobile friendly for tablet and phone.
2. Highlight leadership on issues that PSC is taking.
3. Reflect the messages from the marketing and awareness campaign. An example, see the CPA website.
4. Put upfront the most important messages first.
5. Detail the professionalism and importance of our members.
6. Eliminate any superfluous information and "techno-speak"
7. Make easily accessible relevant reports and position papers related to current issues.
8. Allow for payments by VISA and MasterCard.

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Advocate this!

At least once a month PSC gets a request to advocate or take a leadership role in a particular initiative. There are many important issues and we prioritize them as best we can. At times issues come up that need immediate attention and so we deal with them as necessary. Our advocacy starts with the benefits of professional surveyors skills to the public and through that lens how a particular issue affects the public and/or government. This allows lay people to understand the issues without too much effort.

Engagement on issues affecting the public, safety, governance, and the integrity of our land survey systems must be lead with people who understand that complex problems require careful and thoughtful actions. A voiceless vacuum does not serve the public. Recent activities on the advocacy front not directly related to the promotion of land surveyors and their services include:

1. PSC created a position paper regarding the proposed Underground Infrastructure Safety Enhancement Act, Bill S-233. This position paper was done with extensive consultation of professional surveyors across the country. As well, the regulations of the Pipeline Safety Act C-46 are under review and a response was provided to the comment period regarding these regulations. Please review the position paper on our website which explains simple and effective proposals that will enhance the safety of the public and our workers. This is an ongoing issue and changes will be sought to CSA standards and provincial legislation. Working with individual provinces we hope to achieve real progress in bringing to the fore the important issue of worker safety and the infringement of the rights of landowners. Going forward position papers and initiatives will be finalized on Underground Infrastructure, CSA standards, and related provincial acts and regulations.
2. PSC is creating and continues to improve a position paper on coordinated infrastructure. There were discussions on this issue at the Geo Alliance meetings in Calgary March 15th and 16th. (See below for details) There are many special interests, but the public is not served by having them all talk amongst themselves. Certainly the federal government is putting resources to breaking down silos that affect the public the most negatively, like not knowing where underground infrastructure is. Much of the focus coming from narrowly focused governmental departments deal with coordinated cadastre without the consideration to things that actually affect the health and safety of the public. Lack of a credible leadership and systems are being observed and a new path forward will require leadership.
3. Quebec professional surveyors have created a position paper on UAV integration into the professional surveyor's standards and practice. The goal of this position paper is that with some effort, changes can be made on how Transport Canada allows professional surveyors to use this developing toolset. PSC is working with land surveyors across the country to formulate a position on UAV use and regulatory compliance.
4. A digital pamphlet has been created about survey monuments and evidence protection. The digital pamphlet has been widely distributed and PSC has received a lot of feedback on its form and content. We hope that by working together we can make the digital pamphlet better and tailor it to each jurisdiction. A position paper related to the pamphlet and explaining the importance of the protection of boundary evidence will be formulated to support this initiative.

Geo Alliance

Geo Alliance held a teleconference of several groups on January 25th. They included but were not limited to the;

Canadian Remote Sensing Society	Canadian Institute of Geomatics	Royal Geographical Society
Canadian Cartographic Association	Canadian Association of Geographers	Professional Surveyors Canada
Association of Canada Lands Surveyors	Assoc. of Canadian Map Libraries & Archives	

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Some groups are very academically skewed and as part of academia, need a group to assist in promotion and collaboration in specific fields or projects. Thus, there are specific interests that may be on importance to one group, but completely foreign to another. Most of the groups have small membership. Commonality was the focus of the discussion. With shrinking resources, voices are not being heard in the government and public about important issues to each participant. Common purpose items were more centred on dollars or lack thereof. These really are special interest groups, with a common theme. Only PSC and ACLS represent members who are licensed in a regulatory schema, and this is somewhat different than the other members of the group.

Some members like, PSC and CIG produce publications either in paper or electronically. This is a cost and an opportunity to those groups that allows them to have regular connection to their base. Other groups don't have regular communication, or if so, do with a newsletter or other intermittent means. Most have some conference or gathering throughout the year or every other year. Hopefully common points can be found between the groups to advance the sector in general. Eventually, and this is just the opinion of the PSC chair, there may have to be a different schema that allows for long term funding and reciprocal learning and advancement in the industry.

On March 15th and 16th Geo Alliance held a meeting and forum in Calgary. The chair of PSC and Hal Janes from our board in Alberta attended as well. The forum suffered a bit from a rushed planning and implementation. However the discussions were insightful, some for what not to do, and others for how the industry can work together. It is not easy and leadership is needed. Currently PSC is the only group in the Alliance that has the capability to effectively lead.

Communicate this

Communications with the membership, the public and government will continue to improve. Quarterly briefing notes such as this one and the Horizon newsletter will form the backbone of our communications with you. However this is just a small part of the changes implemented. The Chair and general office have taken many phone calls and emails from the membership about many issues. We strive to be quick with our responses to you and we hope you see that.

Communicating with the public and government require a different approach and we have tried to simplify issues so that they can be easily understood. An example of this is the position paper on the Underground Infrastructure Safety Enhancement Act. As read by a professional surveyor, you may not think the format is familiar to our usually technical approach. This is done on purpose and is part of our change in approach to describing complex issues in a way that is more relatable to the public.

Virtuous Circles

This is a repeat of the previous quarterly report, but bears repeating. Membership is the primary way PSC pays for its activities. Growing membership is a virtuous circle. If we have sufficient funding and support, together we can do cool stuff. The cool stuff allows land surveyors to project their place and importance in Canada which will lead to land surveyors having their voices being heard. The counter is unfortunately true. The public and government don't care about issues that they haven't heard of. As a comparison, the Bar Association of Canada has about 26,000 members with annual dues of about $650. Compare that to ours and guess the effect. As Chair, I have to be blunt, you may expect more than you get due to the lack of understanding of the tasks at hand or the resources needed. There appears to still be professional surveyors living in the past and that serves no one.

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Professional Liability Insurance Program

PLIC held their Bi-Annual meeting in conjunction with the Association of British Columbia Land Surveyors 111th Annual General Meeting. The Committee met to review the updated Terms of Reference and the proposed Canada Non-for-profit Corporations documentation. The proposed corporate name is Professional Surveyors Canada Insurance Program (PSCIP). The name will be subject to approval by Corporations Canada.

Over the past year there have been approximately 2.5 million dollars in claims with an average of approximately 4 claims per month. PLIC receives and reviews all claims from the Insurer and PLIC provides advice when necessary. The committee provides technical support to the insurance team. PLIC is fortunate to have such a robust insurance program. The program has unique advantages such as a stabilization fund and the prior acts endorsement which insures retired professional surveyors.

A Professional Liability Insurance Program brochure has been prepared and is available on the PSC website. The brochure contains contact information for PLIC, the Broker and the Insurer along with some background information on policies, program features, premiums and claim information. PLIC in conjunction with the Broker and the Insurer are preparing a Loss Control Bulletin highlighting the common errors that are occurring and how they should be avoided. This will be distributed through PSC in the coming months.

Advisory Representation on CCOG

The Board has submitted a letter to the Chair of the Canadian Council on Geomatics (CCOG) offering to provide a liaison representative to attend future meetings of CCOG. This was an action item agreed to by the jurisdictions at the roundtable at the NSC in Winnipeg in May of 2015. We have not received a response from verbal inquiries nor from a letter sent in December. This may be a capacity issue, we are not sure.

Other Important Activities

The Board continues to work on position papers and related initiatives in areas of concern where the expertise of our members should be brought forward. The introduction of title insurance as it is largely mistitled in Torrens systems has necessitated a need for a position paper clarifying for the public, the difference between this private insurance, the actual guarantees governments provide, and the services of the professional land surveyor.

Underground infrastructure and buried utilities are an area where more leadership is needed, as evidenced by the current position paper and the trajectory of legislation. It is common for utility companies to avoid sharing data about their underground infrastructure. In towns, reserves and in areas outside of major urban areas, the sharing of data on buried utilities is almost non-existent. The forthcoming position paper on Underground Infrastructure – Overview will highlight areas where professional land surveyors are leading the effort for better protection.

Another issue that appears frequently in the media across the country is the determination of area of condominium and strata units. Numerous court cases have occurred and numerous standards are used for area calculations for condominiums and strata titles. Professional surveyors already calculate area for these titles but these standards are not the same across Canada. Adopting a common standard in each jurisdiction and promoting that standard will allow consumers to easily compare units where previous reliance on marketing companies has led to court cases. This initiative would require a moderate amount of effort in each jurisdiction but would benefit the public and provide real leadership to the courts.

Version française à venir.

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