

From the Surveyor General

Surveyor General Report to ABCLS, March 2023

By Cristin Schlossberger, BCLS

I'm happy to provide a report on the activities of the Land Title and Survey Authority of BC (LTSA) over the past year. This report will highlight organization updates, operational metrics, ParcelMap BC developments and other significant projects.

Organization Updates

We've had a couple of recent hires to LTSA. Matt Dockerty joined Executive as Vice President and Chief Information Officer of our new technology division. Matt brings close to 20 years of experience leading IT programs and teams within large organizations. In addition, Lois Evans has joined LTSA as Manager, Records and Archives. Lois brings her expertise with operational records and archives to the management of work related to conservation, storage and accessibility of LTSA's records. She has recently started work on a new Historic Records Strategy.

With respect to LTSA's Board of Directors, I would like to thank Eugen Klein, current Chair of the Board for his contributions. Eugen will be reaching the end of his terms this month and a new Board Chair has been elected, to be announced later in March.

Thank you also to the ABCLS nominees, Bronwyn Denton and BJ Houghton, for their continued service on the LTSA Board of Directors.

Metrics and Revenue

After a very busy start to the year and following a sustained period of high land title transaction volumes, we are seeing a continued decline in land title volumes, which returned to pre-Covid levels in Q3 and are now significantly lower. We've recently seen monthly volumes that are the lowest volumes in 10 years. In Q3 land title transaction volumes were 20% lower than last year and in January alone, the volumes were down 36%, and in February were down 38%.

The overall 3rd quarter revenue was helped by a one-time bump from Land Ownership Transparency Registry filing revenue, due to the November 30, 2022 deadline for filing section 15 transparency reports. Section 15 refers to pre-existing owners who acquired land prior to the launch of the registry. They had until last November to file. Total revenue for Q3 was 4% lower than the prior year.

LTSA continues to invest in our systems; this past year has included work on projects to increase automation and reduce defects, modernize the internal infrastructure upon which our systems like myLTSA run, and streamline the submission of survey plans. We anticipate continued declines in land title volumes in the fourth quarter and into fiscal 2023-2024, and are looking at moderating our expenses in this declining revenue environment; however, we are continuing to re-invest in our systems.

I want to thank those land surveyors who were asked to participate in LTSA’s Customer Relationship Health Survey earlier this year. We are using feedback from the survey to identify enhancements to improve our customers’ experience. As a result,

- We are continuing to improve the functionality and workflow of myLTSA to increase the efficiency, accuracy and security of land title and survey submissions;
- We are helping customers reduce defects on land title submissions by refining system validations and increasing awareness about how to avoid common defects; and
- We are improving and expanding online services to simplify the transaction process for both public and professional customers, including the addition of online forms for certain transactions from our public customers.

The investments that LTSA has made in technology and infrastructure allowed for our organization to shift quickly during the pandemic and to continue to fulfill all of our turnaround time measures over a very busy time. I’m very proud of our staff throughout the organization and am pleased that we’ve been able to support the public in this way. Other jurisdictions have struggled with the volumes, contributing to delays of months in completing land title transfers.

Customer Operations Metrics

The following tables show an overview of customer operations metrics for Quarters 1, 2 and 3 of the current fiscal year (22/23) and last fiscal year (21/22).

Surveyor General Services						
	Q3 22/23	Q3 21/22	Q2 22/23	Q2 21/22	Q1 22/23	Q1 21/22
Crown Grants	4	12	7	22	9	14
Survey Plans	150	182	175	192	140	165
SG Applications	65	83	65	81	83	81

Land Titles						
	Q3 22/23	Q3 21/22	Q2 22/23	Q2 21/22	Q1 22/23	Q1 21/22
Plan Intake	2007	2338	2215	2383	2416	2556

Up until the end of February, 571 survey plans were received by the Surveyor General compared to 647 for the same period a year earlier, resulting in a 12% reduction in volume. We received 9% fewer applications.

The Land Title Office saw a year over year decrease in plan submissions of 6% in Q1, 7% in Q2 and 15% in Q3.

Surveyor General Operations/Policy

Thank you to the Surveyor General team for their continued excellent work; including Dave Swaile, Katie Hannah, Chris Sakundiak, the SG technologists and records staff in Operations, and both Peter Haas and Tobin Pope in Policy and Legal Services.

Although Customer Operations has seen a decrease in the volume of survey plans, they have been very busy providing advice on boundary issues and supporting the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR).

The Province has a renewed focus on completing agreements with First Nations and has upstaffed significantly to respond to increased activity. Most agreements have a land transfer component, which involves our Surveyor General Operations staff.

We are responding to more requests for survey instructions, plan reviews, and delivery of professional advice and guidance. We are beginning to see what we expect to be a near doubling of required support to the ministry; we have responded by reworking procedures to seek efficiencies while maintaining appropriate professional oversight. We will be monitoring workloads and capacity to ensure we continue to provide appropriate support to all Surveyor General customers.

In February, the Oil and Gas Commission changed its name to the BC Energy Regulator with an intention to expand their mandate later in the year. We have undertaken a scan of our policies and forms to identify where the name change will need to be reflected. Our materials are in the process of being updated.

The Alberta-BC Boundary Commission met virtually twice in 2022. The commission issued three contracts for field work completed in the Summer and Fall. Restoration surveys were undertaken at North Fork Pass and Tonquin Pass and an inspection survey along both Miette Pass and Robson Pass. The field work at Tonquin Pass included using the “sheath” method for two monuments, in which a pre-fabricated steel sheath was installed overtop of the existing concrete boundary marker. The remainder of the restorations were completed using either a rock post or standard capped post set at ground level.

The Integrated Survey Area (ISA) Program Review resulted in three municipalities deciding to end their commitment to the program. As a result, they have had their ISAs annulled, as communicated in Circular Letter 488. The three municipalities are: District of Logan Lake, City of Duncan, and City of Rossland.

Additionally, the review resulted in a boundary redefinition of ISA No. 32, City of Parksville, to better fit the existing undisturbed monuments in the ISA.

The province is working towards adoption of modern vertical and horizontal datums. Before adopting CGVD2013 as the new vertical datum GeoBC is working to ensure alignment, within acceptable accuracy, of all geodetic infrastructure throughout BC with the new datum.

LTSA and GeoBC paired up to undertake a pilot project on Vancouver Island to investigate requirements for adoption. The project involves obtaining GNSS data on targeted MASCOT monuments to derive accurate CGVD2013 heights. Field work is complete and data has been delivered to GeoBC for quality control and analysis. The pilot project will help inform a province-wide project.

If you haven't had a chance to read the practice advisory developed by the ABCLS Practice Advisory Department and LTSA, regarding best practices for vertical datums, I would encourage you to make the time. The practice advisory is available on the ABCLS website.

The Land Surveyor Advisory Task Force provides LTSA with feedback on various projects and also brings items for discussion that may inform future work. Primary topics over this past year have been focused on ParcelMap BC and Survey Plan Services Modernization.

At our January meeting we were joined by John Antill from GeoBC. John presented on the Province's work to modernize the MASCOT database and discuss future consultation with land surveyors. You can expect to hear more from GeoBC on their modernization efforts.

ParcelMap BC

The ParcelMap BC team celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2022. Also last year, after more than 20 years in operation, the Integrated Cadastral Fabric (ICF) retired in July. The ICF views in the Province's data warehouse are now populated by ParcelMap BC. There are now 114 identified organizations who have adopted PMBC. As a result, the team is transitioning to focus less on adoption and more on adding value for users; for example, by supporting municipal workflows supported by PMBC.

The PMBC team has recently been renamed to the Geodata services team, recognizing their work goes beyond just maintaining PMBC. They continue to maintain an impressive 1 day turn-around on dataset integration. In addition they are delivering spatial improvements for 1-2 areas of interest each month. These improvements are prioritized to address those areas of the parcel fabric most in need of improvement and areas identified in communication with users.

The Geodata team has integrated the majority of road parcels with active PIDs for the Titled Roads Project. There are approximately 750 remaining parcels out of 32,000. These parcels are increasingly difficult to integrate and will require additional time and attention.

Work is continuing with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure on a project to create a mapped representation of highways and roads records which fall under MoTI's purview. MoTI has identified approximately 30,000 historic records which require indexing and the Geodata team has completed nearly 1100 so far, with many of these also resulting in a new parcel in PMBC. The project will benefit MoTI, as well as add to the completeness of the parcel fabric for all users.

SurveyHub

The development team continues to work on Survey Plan Services Modernization including the new SurveyHub application. The vision for Step 1 of the project, includes unifying survey plans and datasets in a central workspace with streamlined pre-submission workflow and enhancing validation and versioning.

In November and December, LTSA held user experience consultation with both internal and external customers. Thank you to the land surveyors that have been providing feedback to our team on the development of SurveyHub.

We are focusing on wellsite plans for an initial internal release. This will allow the team to build the system infrastructure and test it out with a simple plan type before building in requirements needed for more complex plan types. No firm dates have been set for external release.

Post-Quake Boundary Restoration

Thank you to Dr. Brian Ballantyne for his presentation earlier this week about restoring boundaries after an earthquake. We've benefited from Brian's expertise in getting our project in BC up and running.

We have developed a handbook that can be used after a significant earthquake to assist our office in responding quickly; providing informed requirements to land surveyors; and communicating with numerous parties in a way that will support certainty in the rebuilding process. This handbook will continue to be refined and updated.

Over this past year we've met with the land surveyor working group to review draft guidelines and seek feedback, we've met with representatives from Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), to discuss their post-quake experiences, we've worked with land titles to determine any specific requirements for all plan types and we continue to work with the Ministry of Forests with respect to legislation.

Next week our team will be meeting with the Surveyor General Branch at NRCan to discuss our proposed approach and consider how we can align approaches between Federal and Provincial lands in BC. We plan to continue with stakeholder consultation over the next year to continue to refine the handbook.

Lytton Wildfire

We all witnessed the destruction of the fire that swept through Lytton in 2021. You will recall LTSA was able to support a contract to locate survey evidence in the fire damaged areas before the cleanup began. That work resulted in the filing of a posting plan in the land title office to record the existing survey evidence.

Now that soil remediation within Lytton is substantially complete, phase 2 of the survey project is continuing. This work will include Exton and Dodge Land Surveying returning to the site to determine which posts have been destroyed and to replace key block corners. This survey will assist re-building efforts as the municipality begins to issue building permits this Spring. From photos, it appears likely that most of the original survey evidence has been destroyed by the clean-up activities but the control

monuments will have survived. If you are retained to conduct a survey within Lytton please contact our office so we can ensure consistency in boundary restoration.

In the next fiscal year we will be reviewing the approach taken in Lytton to maintain the integrity of the cadastre after a wildfire and draft guidance for consideration in the future.

Surveyor General Vision

I have created a vision that is a forward looking view of how the survey system and processes should evolve over time, with an emphasis on certainty. The primary purpose of the vision is to guide internal LTSA and LandSure staff, as we consider new projects and changes to policies and to provide guidance to the Provincial government.

The vision focuses on three components:

- Ensuring certainty in the Province's legal survey structure;
- Supporting advancements in survey technology; and,
- Embracing modern service delivery.

I will be inviting all BC Land Surveyors to a virtual meeting this Spring to share my vision, solicit your feedback and answer any questions.

In conclusion, I appreciate the involvement of many land surveyors in our ongoing projects and thanks to all of you for continuing to provide BC with high quality surveys.