

Discussion Paper on a National Board of Examiners by the Ad Hoc Committee of CCLS

11/07/02

Background

The various Professional Associations which represent Land Surveyors in Canada (“the Associations”) are self-regulating. One of their functions is to establish standards for admission to the Profession, including academic, experience and professional standards, and to assess candidates to see if they have met those standards. For some years, the Associations have addressed this responsibility by establishing Boards of Examiners. In more recent years, some of the Associations have reached agreements through which candidates are qualified for the non-jurisdictional academic requirements by shared Boards and so today there are five regional Boards (“the Boards”) which represent all of the Associations (Note that the names of the Boards are not the “official” names, but are used here for convenience)

- The Western Board represents Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia;
- The Ontario Board represents Ontario;
- The Quebec Board represents Quebec;
- The Atlantic Board represents Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick; and
- The ACLS Board represents the Association of Canada Land Surveyors.

The experience requirements for the admission to the profession have remained the sole purview of the individual Associations through the articling or certificate of experience process. Other admission requirements such as letters of reference, fees, and ethical and ‘professional’ considerations also remain with the individual associations.

It is important to note that the ultimate authority and responsibility for the standards of admission to the land surveying profession in any given jurisdiction, lies with the self-regulating body in that jurisdiction (the Association) through provincial and federal statute. The Boards provide a service to the Associations in assessing the academic qualifications of a given candidate through the co-operative development of a common syllabus and an assessment, examination and certification process to assist the Associations in their consideration of individual applicants for admission.

For some years, the Boards, the Associations and CCLS have worked together to attempt to standardize the non-jurisdictional academic admission standards and the specific course curricula. The ten associations (not including the APEILS) that are signatories to the Labour Mobility Agreement for Land Surveying agreed in that document to continue to work towards the harmonization of academic qualifications. Nine associations (not including the OAGQ) participate currently in the system of a common core syllabus and common examinations through and MOU between the Atlantic, Ontario, Western and Canada Lands Boards.

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At a meeting of these four Boards in the Fall of 2000, a vision statement was adopted which called for the replacement of the regional Boards with a National Board. The National Board would provide services related to the common syllabus and the assessment, examination and certification of candidates on a national basis and in addition, take over from the CCLS Board of Examiners Coordinating Committee the responsibility for accreditation of educational institutions that offer geomatics courses.

The vision statement was presented to CCLS by way of a report from the Boards. There was considerable support from the Associations for investigation into the concepts and possible models for a National Board and at the Annual Meeting of (CCLS) in January of 2001, the matter was discussed and the following motion was passed:

“BE IT RESOLVED THAT the CCLS Executive strike an Ad Hoc committee to prepare terms of reference for the establishment of a National Board of Examiners to consider at the next Board meeting and that an adequate amount be set aside in the 2001 Budget.”

Following the Annual Meeting, the CCLS Executive informally followed through on the Motion and Jim Dobbin and Larry Pals became the ad hoc committee (“the Committee”). Since that time, the Committee has expanded to include its current members (Chair Jim Dobbin, Denis Blais, Sarah Cornett, Norman Lalanne, Sue Nichols, Larry Pals, Doug Simmonds, Jim Simpson, Brent Taylor).

This discussion paper has been prepared to accompany the draft agreement and funding model for a National Board developed by the Committee and set out for discussion the Committees ideas on the players, the goals, role and structure of a National Board, and the process and action items that should be addressed to bring the concept to fruition.

Those who read this discussion paper and want to comment are asked to email Jim Dobbin at jdobbin@cogs.ns.ca.

The Players

The list of parties that have a stake in this issue is relatively short. For the record, the following groups would be on the list:

- The Provincial Associations and the Association of Canada Lands Surveyors (the “Associations”);
- The five Boards of Examiners (the “Boards”);
- The Canadian Council of Land Surveyors (“CCLS”);
- The various educational institutions that provide courses which may be accepted for credit toward one or more of the Board certifications;
- Candidates who wish to become land surveyors; and
- The Provincial and Federal governments.

The Goal

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The primary goal is to consolidate the existing Boards into one National Board in order to qualify candidates in non-jurisdictional curricula in an efficient and consistent manner. By way of provincial and federal statutes the individual Associations will continue to be ultimately responsible for setting the standards and adjudicating candidates in all aspects of land surveying. The proposed National Board would provide a service to the individual Associations with respect to non-jurisdictional academic subject matter. Individual Associations would continue to set and administer local statute examinations, projects, terms of articles and other requirements for admission to the profession.

Since the Boards were created by and for the Associations, it is clear that each individual Association must be solidly behind the effort to create a National Board. Without the full support of each Association, whatever body might be created will not be national and many of the perceived benefits of a National Board would be lost. To date, the four western Associations have indicated their strong support for a National Board. The other Associations have not been formally approached on the issue.

It is possible to identify several potential advantages of a National Board structure:

- the curriculum which a candidate would follow would be the same regardless of the Association which they wish to join or the educational institution which they have attended. This would eliminate the problems which have arisen in the past where the expectations of some candidates have not been met by the current structure.
- the structure would support the goal of labour mobility within Canada and the development of international mobility agreements.
- the structure should be more economical to maintain, simply through economies of scale. Note that this benefit has not been quantified and would be dependant on the final structure of a National Board.
- the structure should be of some benefit to the various educational institutions which would no longer have to address a number of curricula.
- the National Board would carry out any accreditations for educational institutions across the country which would hopefully insure more consistency and less duplication

There are also some possible disadvantages to a National Board structure:

- there may be a perceived loss of autonomy among the Associations.
- valid regional differences in curricula may be lost. This is especially apparent for the Province of Quebec, but also relates to other regional differences. These issues may have to be addressed by increasing the content of the examinations administered by the individual Associations, resulting in a potential additional cost.
- a National Board may not be as responsive to individual concerns as the smaller, local Boards have been.

Accreditation of University programs for land surveyors has been provided by a committee of the CCLS made up of representatives of each of the current Boards and chaired by the CCLS Vice-

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President. This committee developed an accreditation process, evaluated applicants for accreditation, and made recommendations for accreditation of specific programs to the CCLS Board of Directors. It is envisioned that a National Board of Examiners under the umbrella of the CCLS would take on this role as well as the challenge to revisit and revise and expand the current accreditation process taking into consideration recent input from various parties to the Boards and the CCLS.

Beyond the primary goal of consolidating and improving existing functions, a national board of examiners could provide a co-ordinated national body with in-depth knowledge of the academic requirements for entry into the land surveying profession as well as the ongoing requirements of the profession for new professional candidates. This places a national board in a unique position use its national platform and resources to participate economically and efficiently in the promotion the awareness of surveying and the broader geomatics sector across Canada and to promote fellowship in the geomatics community at an early stage in the professional's career. A significant consideration in determining the specific role for a National Board in this area is avoiding duplication of effort and competition for support and resources with other geomatics organizations including the CCLS itself, the proposed Geomatics Human Resources Sector Council, the Canadian Institute of Geomatics, and others.

Specific terms of reference covering all of these areas are included in the draft agreement.

The Structure

Because the Canadian Council of Land Surveyors is the national organization representing the Associations, with a vision, mission, objects and policies developed since 1976 through the consensus of the Associations, it would seem reasonable that the National Board exist under the umbrella of the CCLS. The proposed terms of reference for a National Board are consistent with and/or complimentary to the vision, mission and objects of the Canadian Council of Land Surveyors and maintaining a single co-ordinated national voice and a common conduit for communication of the associations on a national basis would avoid duplication of efforts and competition for support and resources amongst the membership.

The structure suggested by the Boards at their Fall 2000 meeting appears to be a valid possibility. That structure envisioned a Board made up of one representative from each provincial association and one from the ACLS together with one representative from each of the educational institutions offering degree programs in geomatics. A registrar/administrator was to be appointed.

The Process

A number of steps must be completed for the National Board to become a reality:

- A full committee of the CCLS is to be formed with reasonable national representation.
- The committee is to explore various models for a national organization and refine a discussion paper and presentation that will be appropriate to give to each organization

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- The discussion paper is to address at minimum:
 - The mandate of a national organization
 - A structure that recognizes the legislative responsibilities of the individual associations but still provides a viable national model
 - Predicted staffing levels including basic job descriptions and required qualifications for each major position
 - A five year budget and economic model for a national organization including estimates costs to candidates, educational institutions and individual associations
 - An implementation schedule
 - An outline of the minimum requirements for start up
- a memorandum of understanding and funding model must be drafted for signature by the Associations. The MOU would create the National Board, define its structure and operating processes and the funding model set out the funding principles and demonstrate the economic feasibility of the proposal.
- legislation (generally by-laws and/or regulations) would have to be changed by many of the Associations. It may be that governments would have to be consulted and brought “on side.”
- the present curricula of the Boards would have to be unified and decisions made as to what local content (if any) would be taken over by the Associations. The Agreement on Interprovincial Trade should serve as the guide for this process.
- the National Board (Council and Registrar) would have to be populated by the Associations.
- a physical space would have to be found for the “filing cabinets.”

All of this should be transparent to candidates now in the process.

Action Items

The following is a suggested list of action items with the parties responsible listed and time lines attached.

Action Item	Party Responsible	Time Line
Communicate with Associations and ask for their support in creating a National Board.	Ad Hoc Committee of CCLS.	Begins immediately. Formal presentations targeted for fall '02
Communicate with educational institutions for information purposes and support.	Ad Hoc Committee	Begins immediately. How much has Jim/Susan communicated
Individual Boards to continue work toward standardizing curricula and identifying what (if any) local content might be taken	Boards.	Process has begun. To be continued at meeting in June '01 in

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over by Associations.		Fredericton. Update?
Draft MOU for consideration by Associations.	Ad Hoc Committee	Draft MOU close to being ready to present to Associations
Draft detailed funding model.	Ad Hoc Committee	Needs work and an individual to lead it
Consolidate Association support for MOU and funding model.	Ad Hoc Committee	Begins in earnest with fall '02 circulation of Draft MOU
Changes to legislation (generally By-Laws and/or Regulations) by each Association where required. May require consultation with government.	Associations.	Spring '02?
Populate National Board and find it a home.	Associations.	Begins as soon as possible.
Others?		