

## **AOLS SURVEY REVIEW DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT FOR YEAR 2023**

Paul C. Wyman OLS, MANAGER

The Survey Review Department (SRD) operates under the Inspection Program of the Surveyors Act, O. Regulation 1026, Section (40). The SRD is funded by the sale of *Plan Submission Form Stickers*, currently at a cost of \$19 per sticker.

The AOLS 2022-2023 SRD Budget estimated a \$29,587 operational surplus. However, expenses exceeded the Budget estimate by 1% and income was 8% below the budget estimate (sticker sales declined in the fall of 2023). The SRD had an operating loss of \$35,791 for Fiscal 2022-2023.

For Fiscal 2023-2024 we anticipate lower sticker sales and general expenses will increase with inflation. We will have an increase in travel costs as consultants resume 'in office' visits as part of Comprehensive Reviews. For Fiscal 2023-2024, we are estimating an operating loss of \$55,000. While we anticipate lower sticker sales because of a slowing economy, it may be offset by Ontario's plan to double the housing construction rate thus increasing surveyor's workload in 2024. For these reasons, the 2023-2024 SRD budget estimate is more uncertain than usual.

The SRD has an accumulated surplus that can absorb these operating losses. No increase in the sticker price is anticipated in the next few years.

In 2023, SRD processed over 400 orders for stickers. This takes significant staff time and SRD is looking to reduce the number of transactions. On the recommendation of the SRD and the SRD Committee, Council is recommending a By-Law (to be voted on by the AOLS membership) that would raise the minimum sticker purchase to 50 stickers from the current 10. SRD would, by special request, approve the sale of a small number of stickers to members and Government agencies who only require a few stickers per year.

In addition to the Comprehensive Reviews for firms every 5 years (funded by sticker fees), SRD also undertakes reviews requested by the Registrar for firms the Registrar is monitoring for business and/or survey practice improvement. Firms pay separately for these reviews. SRD has a fee schedule for these reviews that is approved by Council. The current fee schedule is over 10 years old and no longer reflects the true cost of this work. SRD is recommending to Council a substantial increase in these fees to bring them into line with current costs.

SRD financial reporting is based on the AOLS fiscal year which runs from November 01 to October 31. From revenues we pay the overhead and salaries of staff – manager Paul Wyman, admin. officer Sheila Lavina, OLS field examiner Al Worobec and assistant examiner Herman Bernardo. Revenues also cover the fees for the 2023 OLS Comprehensive Review Consultants - Drew Annable, Phillip Hofmann, Danny Quinlan, Ernest Sperling, & Chester Stanton and 2023 Systematic Review Consultant Tom Packowski.

For 2024, Drew Annable OLS is retiring as an SRD Consultant and on behalf of the SRD and the AOLS, I thank Drew for his 11 years of reviews and consultant training. His knowledge, experience and insights have been an invaluable asset for SRD consultants and managers.

Changes to the *Plan Submission Form Sticker* use were implemented by AOLS By-Law 2023-01, approved by Council and the AOLS Membership as follows:

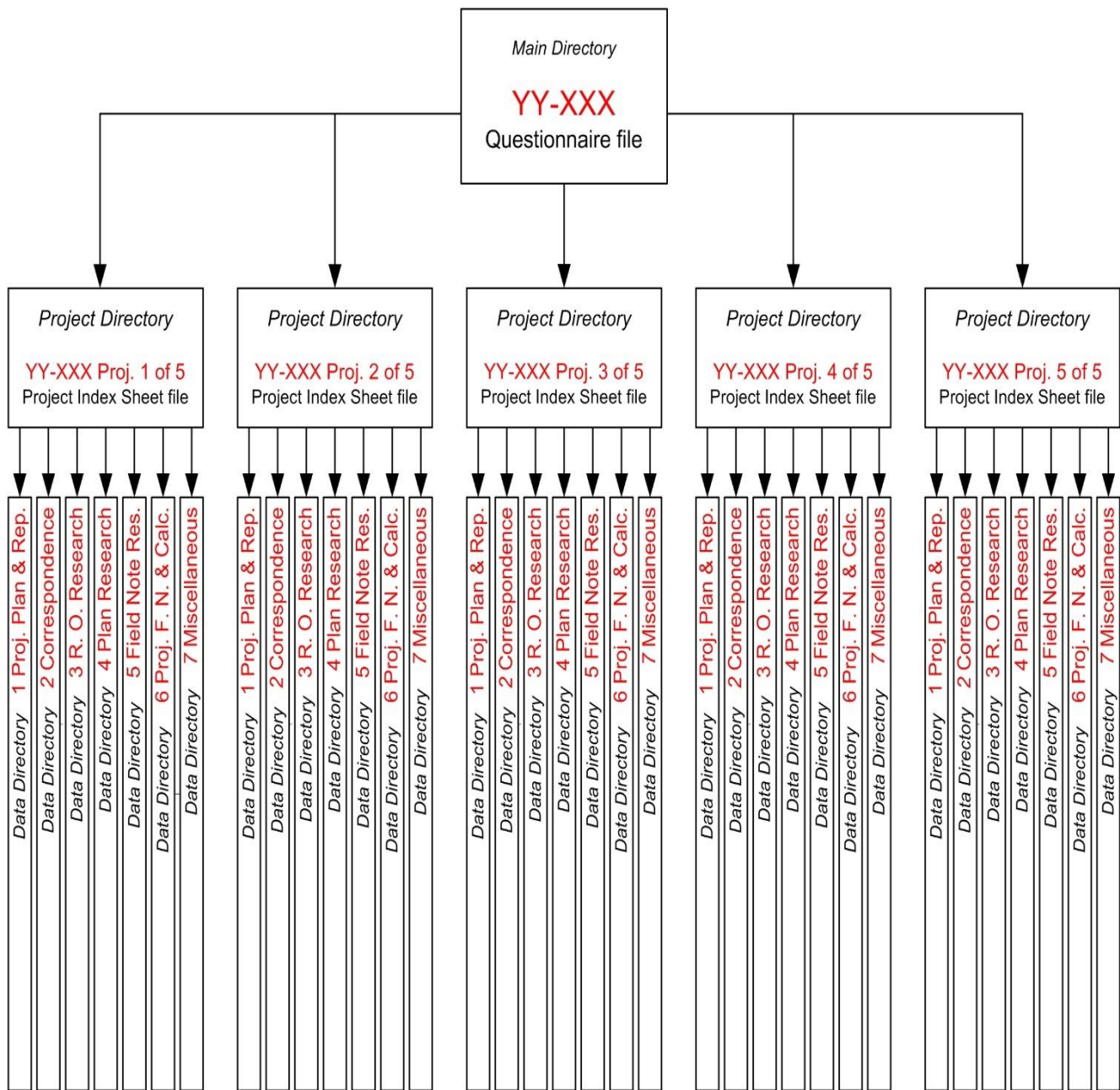
1. *The Survey Review Department shall only sell unique numbers (no physical Form) when the current supply of physical forms is depleted **or up until December 31, 2024 whichever comes first.***
2. *A plan submitted for deposit or registration in the Ontario Land Registration System shall include the Plan Submission Form number on the plan with the statement:  
This plan of survey relates to AOLS Plan Submission Form Number \_\_\_\_."*
3. *A physical Plan Submission Form issued by the Survey Review Department (until Dec. 31, 2024)  
OR a digital reproduction of a Plan Submission Form including the Plan Submission Form number  
OR the following statement including the Plan Submission Form number:  
This plan of survey relates to AOLS Plan Submission Form Number \_\_\_\_."  
is to be placed on every original plan of a Surveyor's Real Property Report and/or Plan of Survey.*

Firms wishing to use physical stickers for a while longer should make sure they add to their supply prior to the end of 2024 when SRD will stop selling physical stickers.

We select the firms for the 5-year Comprehensive Review cycle and the plans for the Systematic Reviews using the calendar year in keeping with our legislation. Please note that the Comprehensive Reviews start with a field inspection of at least one plan under review for each firm. To minimize costs, we normally start these inspections in the spring and do not complete the Comprehensive Reviews until March of the following year.

In 2023, Systematic Reviews were successfully undertaken using digital (pdf) plans. In June of 2023, the SRD undertook a Survey Monkey questionnaire with respect to digital Comprehensive Reviews and over 90% of respondents favoured digital submissions. In November the issue was endorsed by the SRD Committee and by AOLS Council. In 2024, SRD will start the transition to digital submissions for Comprehensive Reviews. For 2024 Comprehensive Reviews, the following process will be used:

- When a firm is notified that they are due for their 5-year Comprehensive Review, they will be asked if they wish to submit their data in digital or hardcopy format. Firms must select one of the two possible formats as the SRD does not have the capacity convert the data.
- The digital data for a review will be destroyed sometime after the Comprehensive Review is completed unless the Review is referred to the Registrar.
- The SRD review process will also be 'digital' and our plan review and other reports will be provided to firms as digital 'pdf' files.
- Firms electing to use the hardcopy format will submit all data as printed copies as they have done in the past. There is no change in this process.
- Firms electing to use the digital format must provide all data as digital files in Adobe Acrobat 'pdf' format, as simple text files or as picture 'jpg' files. Data cannot be submitted in proprietary file types from data collectors, GNSS or other survey equipment or software.
- Digital data must be submitted to the SRD in a defined subdirectory structure – sorted in much the same way as the hardcopy data was previously submitted. The SRD will provide firms with a ZIP file containing the 'directory tree' where the individual files can be stored. When the ZIP file is opened on a computer, it automatically creates the subdirectory structure as noted below.



- The digital files in the subdirectories can be transferred to the SRD using a ‘cloud’ service or placed on a USB memory stick and mailed. We are currently discussing the possible use of the Provincial Survey Records Index (PSRI) website operated by iLOOKABOUT as an intermediary for firms without a cloud storage account.

Based on our experience with digital Comprehensive Reviews in 2024, the SRD may recommend to Council that in 2025 we transition exclusively to digital submissions.

Please take the time to provide all the relevant data for the Comprehensive Reviews. The consultants can only base their reviews on the material provided. If materials are not provided, the consultant can only assume it does not exist or was not used for the project. When survey firms provide data after the initial review, it may take the consultant several hours to redo the review incorporating this new data. AOLS Council By-Law 94-3 provides that SRD may charge a fee of \$500.00 to recover costs for the ‘late’ submission of requested review materials.

For the 2023 year, the SRD opened 45 new Comprehensive Reviews plus 3 Review files requested by the AOLS Registrar. Three survey firms either relinquished their C of A or were merged into other survey firms so their Reviews were closed. At the writing of this report (February, 2024) we have completed the reviews of 44 (98%) survey firms consisting of a total of 206 projects.

Referrals

Reviews are rated using a ‘demerit’ point system. Demerit points exceeding 25 per project are considered ‘sub-standard’ and may be referred to the Registrar. Of the 44 completed comprehensive reviews, 1 (2%) has been referred to the AOLS Registrar for ‘sub-standard’ work – this is an improvement over 2021 (13%) and 2022 (10%).

Firms referred to the registrar had demerit points per project indicating substantial non-compliance with regulations and best practices.

Research

Issue Cited	% of Firms (2021)	% of Firms (2022)	% of Projects (2022)	% of Firms (2023)	% of Projects (2023)
Documentary Evidence	72	70	42	66	45
Survey Records	37	40	27	48	35

Research issues were generally related to registry office and field note research. These issues are persistent and AOLS firms are not sufficiently addressing the problems.

Field Survey

Issue Cited	% of Firms (2021)	% of Firms (2022)	% of Projects (2022)	% of Firms (2023)	% of Projects (2022)
Best Evidence	58	60	31	43	17
Integration	26	43	16	25	12
Field Procedure	98	100	95	98	86
Measurement Verification	74	83	74	73	55
Quality Assurance	72	77	68	61	51
Interests in Title (Easements, etc.)	25	30	9	20	5
Monumentation One-In-Four	51	37	13	32	8

While modest improvement is noted for 2023, these issues are persistent and AOLS firms are not sufficiently addressing the problems.

## Plans

Issue Cited	% of Firms (2021)	% of Firms (2022)	% of Projects (2022)	% of Firms (2023)	% of Projects (2023)
Error of Closure	15	30	16	36	16
Interests in Title (Easements, etc.)	34	30	9	43	13
Fences (hedges, etc.) Plans	26	50	16	43	25
Method of Survey	46	33	11	48	16
Evidence	30	40	12	55	20
Identify Roads, Railways, Waterways	49	43	12	48	17

These issues are persistent and AOLS firms are not sufficiently addressing the problems.

## Reports

Issue Cited	% of Firms (2021)	% of Firms (2022)	% of Projects (2022)	% of Firms (2023)	% of Projects (2023)
Client Engagement	no data	43	25	25	13
Report to Client	70	77	61	64	46

Issues were often related to lack of contracts, project estimates and final reports. These issues are persistent and AOLS firms are not sufficiently addressing the problems.

**In all years from 2021 to 2023, the SRD has found that field survey issues are the most cited and survey firms need to focus on staff training to improve field note recording and field survey procedures.**

At the writing of this report, the SRD has completed 100% of the Systematic Reviews for 2023.

Systematic Plan Review Statistics		
Item	Year 2022	Year 2023
Total Number of Plans Reviewed	250	238
Total Number of Issues Notes		118
Written Response Required	19 (7.6%)	21 (8.8%)
Bearing Comparison Issues	22 (8.8%)	30 (12.6%)
Method of Survey Issues	21 (8.4%)	27 (11.3%)
Incorrect / Incomplete Integration Data		11 (4.6%)
Drafting Errors		40 (16.8%)
Schedule Errors		4 (1.7%)
No Plan Submission Form Sticker		4 (1.7%)

Missing PINs		5 (2.1%)
Inadequate / Missing Monumentation		11 (4.6%)
Topographic Detail Issues	7 (2.8%)	15 (6.3%)

Note: Blank Cells for Year 2022 are data that is not available.

These deficiencies indicate a drop in the quality of plans prepared by surveyors in 2023 – only about 50% of plans reviewed meet regulatory compliance. **Firms that utilize plan check lists and that have robust plan preparation procedures produce plans with few or no deficiencies.** In a few instances, it appeared that the signed plan was not checked. Plan checking procedures need to be more rigorously followed to reduce the number of avoidable errors.

Plan ‘Schedule’ errors remain a concern, as the consequences of mistakes in the Schedule can have major implications for the Client / Public. Surveyors must check and double check the Schedule to ensure that the Schedule matches the plan, and the plan matches the Schedule.

Errors in integration data remain persistently high. The 11 integration errors observed in 2023 could have been easily avoided had the plan checking procedure simply included the step of inverting between the integration coordinates and comparing the results with dimensions shown on the plan.

We have noted that approximately 1% of the plans registered or deposited in the Land Registration System do not have the required Plan Submission Form number (sticker number) entered in the ‘one line’ certificate that is placed below the Surveyor’s Certificate. This appears to be a simple oversight. We suggest that surveyors add this to their plan check list so that the sticker number is added at the time of plan creation.

Both the Systematic and Comprehensive Reviews are undertaken by our consultants who base their comments on common law & court decisions, provincial statutes & regulations, and AOLS by-laws & best practices. To assist surveyors and their staff, much of this information is available on the AOLS website. Additionally, there are many checklists prepared by the AOLS Professional Standards Committee available on the AOLS website (*section on Survey Practice under Best Practices*), including a construction survey checklist.

Over the past few years, the Department has had to adjust to the realities of COVID 19 resulting in virtual office visits, mainly using ‘Zoom’ technology. We appreciate that Zoom meetings require good Internet connection, audio / video technology and are not always ideal. We thank the membership for their cooperation and believe that this process has not affected the integrity of the Reviews themselves. As COVID infection rates have declined, SRD will increase ‘in person’ office visits but where acceptable to the firm and consultant, we will also use virtual office visits.

The Comprehensive Review process concludes with an invitation to the survey firm to take part in an opinion survey regarding their experience with the process. These opinion surveys are confidential. The surveys are sent to the **SRD Committee** where they are reviewed and tabulated. Matters of particular importance are raised by the Committee at the regular meetings held between the SRD Committee and the SRD Manager. I encourage you to take part in the opinion survey as part of your Comprehensive Review. Your comments and suggestions help improve our processes.

Respectfully,  
Paul C. Wyman OLS  
Manager, AOLS Survey Review Department