

President's Report

Association of Ontario Land Surveyors

It is with great honor and privilege that I present this report as the President of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors (AOLS) for our 133rd AGM. Having been sworn in at our last meeting in London, Ontario, I embarked on a journey representing our association across the country, engaging with land surveyors from all provinces, and advocating for the profession of land surveying.

I am especially proud to serve as the youngest president in AOLS history, a milestone that reflects the evolving landscape of our profession and the trust placed in the next generation of surveyors.

National and Interprovincial Engagement

As part of my duties, I had the opportunity to travel extensively and engage with our counterparts across Canada. These travels were instrumental in strengthening interprovincial relationships and ensuring that land surveyors remain at the forefront of innovation and collaboration in our field not just in Ontario, but across the country.

I had the opportunity to attend the AGM's in Alberta (Jasper), Prince Edward Island (Cardigan), Manitoba (Winnipeg), New Brunswick (Moncton); and wish to thank our Past President Dave Kovacs for attending the Nova Scotia (Hunts Point) AGM on our behalf.

In speaking with my colleagues across the country it became quite evident that the challenges we see in Ontario are very vibrant and consistent in all other jurisdictions. The gradual erosion of our membership numbers, lack of educational institutions offering geomatics, and absence of public awareness is undoubtedly taking a toll across our profession. Surveyors today are dealing with a rapidly changing landscape of technological short cuts aimed at "modernizing" the field, and a new generation that has yet to grasp the full understanding of what a land surveyor does but more importantly, why does the work have to be done in a certain way?

At the same time, regulatory oversight continues to be an aching topic that many provinces are carefully monitoring and or navigating to strengthen the self-regulating profession as in Ontario's particular case. One crucial element that was identified during various forums held by the presidents of each province relates to the need to more actively engage Professional Surveyors Canada to assume a stronger role in advocating for the profession while the regulators focus more on regulation. Professional Surveyors Canada has been present at all our meetings and the hard work of Darren Patkau continues to engage more member across the country. I strongly encourage all members to join PSC; with increased membership, PSC can become the national voice for surveyors and promote the role of professional surveyors.

Advancing the Profession

Throughout these engagements, a common theme was the need for continued professional development and modernization within our industry. Ontario has always been a leader in land surveying, and by learning from our peers across Canada, we can further enhance our methodologies and professional standards. Key areas of focus moving forward include:

- **Technology Integration:** The use of artificial intelligence, LiDAR, and drone technology in surveying is rapidly evolving. Embracing these advancements will position Ontario land surveyors as leaders in precision and efficiency. Post processing of LiDAR data has made leaps in advancement making these tools more viable.
- **Regulatory Updates:** Working alongside provincial agencies, we aim to ensure our regulatory frameworks remain relevant and supportive of innovation while maintaining the integrity of our profession. We we're disappointed that our proposed legislation changes did not take place due to the snap election, but the good news is that the work is done, and the changes should garner the support of the incoming government regardless of party affiliation.
- **Public Awareness and Education:** It remains crucial to promote the importance of land surveying to the public and government bodies. Strengthening advocacy efforts will ensure that the profession continues to receive the recognition and support it deserves.

Engagement with Government Officials

A key moment during my presidency was my discussion with Minister Graydon Smith regarding the decline of educational institutions offering land surveying programs. This decline poses a significant challenge for the future of our profession, as fewer students are entering the field. We discussed potential strategies to revitalize these programs, including increased government support, industry partnerships, and outreach efforts to promote surveying as a viable and rewarding career choice.

Minister Smith expressed concern over the decreasing enrollment numbers and the closure of key programs in Ontario institutions. Possible talks included increased collaboration with other ministries across the province, such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour to increase awareness of the situation and hopefully make meaningful changes. At the same time, we must accept these challenges and create our own unique solutions.

We can start by challenging our antiquated requirements to become an Ontario Land Surveyor and review our entry requirements into the profession, we must strike a balance between what is absolutely required to become an Ontario Land Surveyor, and what is realistically offered at current universities. As members of the association, I strongly urge you all to express your voice and concerns of how you see the future of the profession and what must change.

Reviving Land Surveying Programs in Universities

To address the decline in land surveying programs, AOLS is actively working with universities and colleges to develop strategies for revitalization. Our approach includes:

- **Curriculum Development:** AOLS is partnering with educational institutions to modernize curriculum content to meet the minimum requirements to allow students to articulate after graduation while ensuring the coursework remains relevant to industry needs, we aim to attract more students to the profession.
- **Industry Collaboration:** We are engaging with private firms, government agencies, and professional organizations to create cooperative education opportunities, internships, and apprenticeships that give students real-world experience and a direct pathway into the profession.
- **Outreach and Awareness Campaigns:** Recognizing the need to spark interest at an earlier stage, we are working with schools to promote land surveying as a viable and rewarding career path. This includes launching a new microsite to attract more students.
- **Collaboration with Toronto Metropolitan University:** A significant milestone was achieved through meetings with the Dean and Chair of Engineering at Toronto Metropolitan University. As a result of these discussions, existing courses have been updated, allowing any new civil engineering graduate in 2026 from TMU to be eligible to articulate right away. This marks a major step forward in streamlining the pathway for new graduates into the surveying profession and serves as a model for potential collaborations with other institutions.

Addressing this issue will be essential in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the profession in Ontario, and I look forward to working closely with the government and educational institutions to implement these initiatives.

Looking Ahead

As I reflect on the past year, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as President of AOLS. The experience has reinforced the importance of collaboration, adaptability, and leadership in shaping the future of land surveying in Ontario and beyond. I look forward to continuing to work with all of you as we advance our shared goals and uphold the highest standards of professionalism in our industry.

Thank you for your dedication and support. Together, we will continue to build a strong and resilient profession that meets the challenges of the future.

Amar Loai
President, Association of Ontario Land Surveyors