

Use of Scanned Signatures during COVID-19 pandemic

Background

We have received a request to allow the use of a scanned signature on an electronic version of a plan of survey to accommodate work-at-home situations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Health officials have encouraged people to stay at home to avoid unnecessarily spreading the virus. This has resulted in most companies encouraging people to work from home if possible. Ontario Land Surveyors have been declared to be an essential service and many companies continue to work with many doing so from remote locations.

While Council would not normally encourage the use of a scanned signature on a plan of survey, these are unusual times requiring some concessions in order that the public may be served in a safe fashion.

Interim Policy

While the order declaring an emergency under s. 7.0.1 and 7.0.2(4) of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act related to COVID-19 declared by the Province is in effect, Council agrees to allow scanned signatures to be used on Plans of Survey with the following provisions:

- The plans of survey cannot be deposited or registered in the Land Registry Office,
- The plans must include the following statement: "This plan was signed with a scanned signature as a result of the Emergency Order related to the COVID-19 pandemic",
- The plan must be personally reviewed by the certifying licensed member prior to adding the scanned signature
- A document (likely email) from the certifying licensed member listing the file name or number and names of the authorized individual(s) who can add the scanned signature must be placed on file for every plan produced prior to adding the scanned signature, and
- This policy does nothing to change the requirements for affixing a sticker and sealing a plan.

Considerations

Surveyors should continue to use physical signatures if it can be done safely. Where Surveyors are using scanned signatures, consideration should be given to protecting the file and documenting approval with a true electronic signature.

Conclusion of Policy

For clarity, this policy does not apply beyond the lifting of the Emergency Order regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.