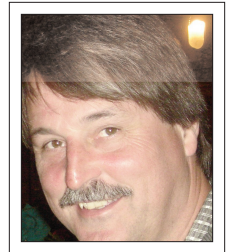


DESCRIPTIVE PLANS: AN APPROACH TO ADMINISTRATIVE DESCRIPTIONS BY ONTARIO'S MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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This paper briefly looks at the use of graphical descriptions (Descriptive Plans) of land for provincial administrative purposes in Ontario. The four "W's" of Descriptive Plans—Why use them/ When can they be used/ What they are and/ Where they can be found are discussed. The paper also touches on some recent applications and some of the perceived benefits and limitations with a description plan approach as Ontario's land administration system continues to evolve.

Cet article se penche brièvement sur l'utilisation des descriptions graphiques (plans descriptifs) des terres à des fins administratives provinciales en Ontario. Les quatre questions fondamentales (pourquoi, quand, quoi et où) au sujet des plans descriptifs – pourquoi les utiliser; quand peuvent-ils l'être, en quoi consistent-ils et où peut-on les trouver – font l'objet de discussions. L'article aborde aussi des applications récentes et certains avantages et limites perçus de l'approche par plan descriptif alors que le système d'administration des terres de l'Ontario continue d'évoluer.



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Introduction

The ability to manage land information digitally in a Geographic Information System (GIS) is critical to Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and other Ministries across the Ontario Public Service (OPS). Geographic information, such as the location of roads, water systems, protected areas and other jurisdictional boundaries are fundamental to natural resource management in the Province of Ontario. The ability to identify the boundaries of such areas and features in a reliable and cost-effective way is critical to the ability of MNR to effectively manage resources.

Historically, Ontario's Office of the Surveyor General – Crown Land Survey Unit (OSG) has been entrusted with the management of surveys on Crown land. Today, the nature of the Office's activities has undergone significant transformation in the way survey services are delivered to the Ministry's various program areas and has evolved in that it also includes aspects of land information management.

The ability to provide a high degree of clarity and certainty in the way lands are described for land administration purposes remains key to the OSG's function. A number of factors have merged in recent years to exert pressure for change in the way this is accomplished. These factors can be grouped as follows:

- Economic pressures: Fiscal responsibility is always a concern and certainly a driver when considering land description

options. The remoteness and extent of some lands has not changed but surveying costs have. The costs of ground surveys can be prohibitive; and,

- Legal pressures: These have covered a wide range of subject matters and many are related to changes in the way land is administered. Essentially, technology has raised the bar on the minimum standard for land descriptions. Descriptions must not only be easily related to MNR's internal data but they need to also be related to Ontario's automated parcel records in such a manner that provides a higher degree of clarity and certainty.

This paper will look at how these administrative needs have been addressed with the use of Descriptive Plans.

Descriptive Plans— Why are they used

Often the OSG is called upon to provide legal descriptions that encompass large parcel areas within Ontario to support various Provincial or Federal initiatives. These initiatives include descriptions to support regulations, government orders or other legal agreements. Descriptive Plans