

Geographic Information Policies In Nova Scotia:

The Province of Nova Scotia has developed geomatics policies in the following areas:

A Property Records Information Management Policy (April 1993)

A Nova Scotia Topographic Database Management Policy (March 1995)

A Coordinate Referencing Policy (November 1995)

A Distribution and Pricing Policy for Government Owned Geographic Information (November 1995)

The content of these policies are of course specific to the products and services offered by provincial geomatics agencies.

In 1989 while developing the corporate land-related information strategy a series of 38 “policy statements” were made in regards to effectively implementing such a system. Many of these policies have found their way into the works noted above, others have been less evident, in part do to the changing political, budgetary and business drivers climates. Table 2.0 present a summary of these policies.

Other less obvious policies also exist and might in fact be better termed procedures or guidelines. For example under the civic addressing initiative a Road Naming Policy highlighted the need for clear and consistent province wide naming. Another example, also from the civic work was a General Service Area Naming and Boundary Delineation policy. Both works sited here are still under development as part of the Civic Addressing Program work plan. What these examples highlight however is the unclear nature of the differences between policies versus procedures, guidelines and standards. The Canadian Oxford dictionary defines a policy as “a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government, party, business or individual, etc.; a contract of insurance.” Webster further defines policy as “a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions; a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a government body.” Therefore in the case of the efforts relating to civic addressing the Province has yet to establish a clear policy for this work.

A careful look at the content of the four adopted geomatics policies for Nova Scotia show that these 6 to 8 year old documents do contain dated material. References are made to offices soon to be open; political structures which have changed several times in the past 6 to 8 years and industry views and interests which have also gone through a metamorphosis.

Many data users and providers, in particular municipal and non government organizations look to the Provincial Government for directions set within such policies. Some have even been known to model their work in a similar manner. The Halifax Regional Municipality, for example, began in 2000 to formulate a geographic data distribution policy. In their effort they first consulted the Provincial model so as to ensure they might have some level of consistency with their provincial counterparts.¹

¹ The HRM continues to work on it first data distribution policy.

For several years now the Province has suggested it needs to review all of these policy documents. Such action is deemed necessary in part so as to keep up with activities in other jurisdictions. As well, the Province has been a part of national policy discussions, particularly in the area of data distribution and pricing (always a hot topic)². Because of the tone of the national findings, many provincial users are wanting Nova Scotia's specific policies to now come in line with the national efforts. Industry in particular wish to have a more seamless business with municipal, provincial and federal agencies and if there are differing policies amongst jurisdictions business transactions can be hampered.

Table 2.0
Corporate Land-Related Information Policies
 [taken from UMA Group, September 1989,
 "Corporate Land-Related Information Strategy For the Province of Nova Scotia"]

General Policy Category	Specific Policy Statement³	Comments
Goals / Objectives	The new department will be responsible for implementing the corporate land related information management system for Nova Scotia, as effectively and efficiently as possible.	A new department was not established, rather a new division was created to address the development of a land related information system. Issue addressed as normal part of RIMS business planning as well as interagency cooperation
	The new department will implement the system by contracting as much of the work as possible to the private sector, hence keeping its staff complement to a minimum.	Part of RIMS Goals and Objectives
	The new department will encourage the development of professional, technical and management training courses at the Nova Scotia universities and colleges.	Ongoing requirement
	The new department will assist the private sector in marketing Nova Scotia expertise in [RIMS] outside Nova Scotia.	Part of RIMS ongoing involvement in sectoral groups such as Champlain Institute Inc.

² The Province of Nova Scotia did participate in the policy study sponsored by the GeoConnections Policy Advisory Node entitled "Canadian GeoSpatial Data Policy Study".

³ The policy statements have been taken directly from the strategy document. Working of these policy statements reflect the climate of the day. Many organizational changes have occurred since that time, including the creation of "the new department" noted throughout these statements (i.e. creation of Registry and Information Management Services)

	The corporate land information captured will be used primarily for routine administration; modeling and simulating developments; project planning and preliminary design.	Not specifically a policy, rather a recommendation for data use.
Priorities	The new department will take a phased approach to implementing the Nova Scotia land information management system, by first establishing standards for data content, organization and structure, and then testing and refining the processes in a prototype prior to province wide implementation.	See standards review for details of activities to date.
	The new department will concentrate on facilitating the development of reliable land related information inventories in the key departments, using proven technology.	A policy related to the need for metadata. See standards review for details.
Responsibilities	Management Board, with the assistance of the new department will develop guidelines for each department to follow in preparing a land related information systems development plan for their department. This plan will include establishing corporate land related information functions and allocating staff to undertake these functions.	Structures have changed. Such plans never materialized.
	All departments will prepare a land related information systems development plan and have it approved by Management Board prior to funding being committed.	Such plans never materialized.
	The new department will advise Management Board on the approval of each department's land related information systems development plan.	LIMS / RIMS was never established for an overseeing role
	Management Board will review the development plans to ensure that data being gathered in one department is not duplicated by another. It will also approve the classification of information as confidential/secret by a department.	Process was never addressed. Classification and sensitivity of information is a departmental responsibility with departments having to place such information the context of FOIPOP.
	The new department will primarily be responsible for establishing and maintaining up-to-date the things essential for corporate data including: (a) The official position base of key natural and man made features; (b) The translation software, hardware and	(a) Reference made in Coordinate Referencing Policy (b) Part of business program within

	<p>procedures necessary for corporate land related information sharing;</p> <p>(c) The official standards and design criteria required for the easy sharing of corporate land related information by Nova Scotia Government departments and others.</p> <p>(d) Build and maintain up-to-date directory / dictionary of the information resources of the Nova Scotia Government.</p>	<p>NSGC.</p> <p>(c) See standards review for details of activities to date.</p> <p>(d) Issue was only partially addressed in regards to metadata</p>
	The new department will be the government focal point for land related information systems knowledge and the single point for public access to digital government corporate land related information.	
	All departments will locate their information, corporate or otherwise, by reference to the official position base of natural and man made features prepared by the new department.	
	All departments will follow the official standards for data organization and structure, required for data sharing and established by the new department.	
	All departments will allocate sufficient staff and resources to maintain its corporate information and will co-operate fully with the new department in accordance with its approved land related information systems development plan.	
	All departments will capture their information in a disaggregated form so that it can be aggregated into corporate forms required by other departments.	
	Operating departments will make their corporate information available at no charge to the new department to encourage the interdepartmental sharing and use of corporate information.	
Technical Issues	The new department, with assistance from other departments, will determine the nature and form of the corporate information to be gathered by each department.	
	The new department will establish official standards for data organization and	

	structure to facilitate data sharing.	
	The new department will use a secure and reliable data communication link to facilitate the updating and sharing of corporate information.	
	The new department will establish official standards for data security to ensure data integrity, confidentiality and protection against loss.	
Legal Issues	All departments will be responsible for the legal and ethical aspects of their information as well as its content.	
	All departments will take into account citizens' legal rights to privacy in providing corporate information.	
	All corporate information will contain notice of copyright in the name of the originating department.	
	All corporate information will contain notice that the department will not be held liable for any action arising out of the misuse of the information by a recipient.	
	All departments will be responsible for clearly communicating any known limitations of quality, which may exist in their corporate data.	
	The new department will be responsible for establishing conditions and procedures to be used in electronically distributing corporate information to organizations outside the Nova Scotia Government. These will include pricing, liability, access, mechanisms, conditions of use, etc.	
Social Issues	Government departments will not encourage the use of corporate information that would open up an individual's personal or business activities to scrutiny in a way that is not traditionally possible.	
	The new department would contract for its requirements in a way that would optimize the potential for job creation in the private sector through export of Nova Scotia based land information management systems and	

	services.	
	Departments classifying information as secret or confidential and hence not available for distribution, will have to justify this to Management Board.	
	The new department will enhance Nova Scotia's international reputation in [RIMS] by commissioning and publishing books and scientific papers on corporate land related information management.	
Assessing, Monitoring Results / Activities	The new department will monitor costs and benefits of the Nova Scotia land information management system on an ongoing basis and report yearly to Management Board.	
	The new department will undertake studies on the social and economic impact of the Nova Scotia land information management system on an ongoing basis and report yearly to Management Board.	
	The new department will facilitate research and development into new applications that require corporate land related information.	
	The new department will maintain a library of current knowledge on land information management.	
	The new department will monitor developments in global positioning systems, remote sensing, radar imaging and encourage the use of information from space for land information management, where appropriate.	
	The new department will appoint advisory committees to advise on technical , marketing, research, education and training matters relevant to land information management. These committees would be made up of representatives of private industry, municipal government, the academic community and relevant professional groups.	

