

GeoNOVA Questionnaire

- 1) What are your government's objectives related to coordinating geomatics efforts?

Land Information Ontario (LIO) has as its mission, to see that all geospatial data in Ontario are managed, accessible, integrateable, and affordable. To that end, LIO is working to ensure that certain fundamental data sets exist, that all existing data sets are discoverable, that mechanisms and organizational structures are in place to allow for easy sharing of data, and that creators of geospatial data are encouraged to follow standards. LIO also works directly with provincial government ministries and agencies to improve the quality of geospatial data and reduce redundancy.

- 2) Is there a particular mandate / thrust of the current government's priorities that the geomatics efforts contribute?

The current government is stressing "more steering and less rowing", as well as increasing the province's use of Electronic Service Delivery. Standardizing and sharing geospatial data among all levels of government is an important component of these policies.

- 3) What is the level of interest in a corporate approach to data, particularly when it costs to do so?

The Government of Ontario has re-organized its entire I&IT organization committing the public service to a corporate approach to data. The Office of the Chief Information Officer includes a director responsible for corporate information architecture and all information initiatives, and budgets, must include a corporate architecture review.

- 4) What is your particular department's role in the coordinating of geomatics interests? If you have an overseeing committee (advisory group, etc.) What is your department's role? Who is the lead agency?

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Science and Information Resources Division, Information Resource Management Branch, has been declared to be the lead agency with respect to geomatics interests. Land Information Ontario acts as a secretariat to coordinate the efforts of the large number of initiatives and their respective boards, steering committees, review committees, working groups, user groups, and advisory groups. The most significant oversight is in the hands of the Inter-Ministry Committee on Land Information (ICLI), a formal group of Assistant Deputy Ministers from 13 Ontario government ministries. This group meets four times each year.

- 5) What is the current organizational structure (for coordinated geomatics efforts) and what is the general view of this structure?

Each ministry within the government of Ontario has its own geomatics unit or units, the largest of which is the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). MNR has also taken on the role of providing consulting services through a number of Geomatics Service Centres, which provide analysis, reports and small systems on a fee-for-service basis to the entire provincial public service. All ministries and agencies of the Ontario government, as well as any other public sector organizations (municipalities, Ontario region of federal government, Conservation Authorities, etc) and post-secondary institutions are joining the Ontario Geospatial Data Sharing Exchange, to share data among themselves easily and at no cost. So far, this structure has met with the acceptance of all of the participants.

6) What is your opinion of the state of the Province’s geographic data, with respect to:

Issue/Product	Control Survey	Topographic data	Digital Elevation Models	Property	Air photography	Civic Address Information
Availability	Good	Good	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
Relevance	Good	Medium	Medium	Good	Low	Low
Accuracy	Good	Medium	Medium	Good	Low	Medium
Timeliness /up-to-date	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Accessibility	Good	Good	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Cost	Good	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Medium

7) What major initiatives does your government have underway with respect to geographic information?

Land Information Ontario (see responses above).

8) What are your government’s approaches to data distribution? What technologies are employed?

Land Information Ontario has introduced several Information Access tools, which apply to members of data exchanges such as OGDE (see above). The Ontario Land Information Directory (OLID) is a Metadata input tool provided at no cost to allow any geospatial data holder to catalogue their data holdings. It is also a query tool available through the public Internet and linked to other Metadata directories through a Z39.50 protocol designed to allow searchers to discover data sets appropriate to their needs. The Ontario Land Information Warehouse (OLIW) provides an Extranet-based secure deposit

(Publication) and withdrawal (Subscription) of both structured and unstructured data. Structured data are made available through Internet views designed to meet specific user needs. Structured data are also available through an interoperable OGC-compliant Map Server.

- 9) What is the status / need for technology transfer / education in government departments regarding geographic information?

Land Information Ontario has initiated a communications program to inform the government's ministries and agencies of the existence and uses of geographic information to their day-to-day activities.

- 10) To what extent do your government departments share data and databases? For free or a fee?

Data are often shared, and shared at no cost, within the Ontario public service. Distribution of data beyond the provincial government has been in accordance with the policies and practices of individual ministries and agencies of the crown. These practices vary from free, to payment for distribution media only, to the use of value-added resellers. Under the new program of OGDE, this will change for participating organizations.

- 11) What policies are in place related to the handling of and dissemination of geographic data?

See above.

- 12) Does your government make use of a coordinated directory of geographic data holdings (i.e. metadata catalogues) Is it available on the web? To what extent is it being used?

See response to question 8, above. The number of data sets documented in OLID is now almost 1000 and is expected to double every six months for the next three years. The majority of the records represent data holdings of the government of Ontario, but other organizations are making significant contributions.

- 13) Are there forums for agencies to exchange information with colleagues regarding geographic information and technology? Should there be?

Yes. There are specific user groups for each of the technology tools, for each of the Exchanges, and for each of the data-related projects.

- 14) How would you and others within your government rate the ease of access and sharing of geographic information?

Up until recently, access to, and sharing geospatial data was a matter of knowing personally where to find what you need and how to get it. The existence of Land Information Ontario has begun to make a significant change to this situation.

- 15) What are the gaps facing the provincial government in inter-agency geomatics cooperation?

The most important means of reducing redundancy, and allowing each agency to concentrate only on its own data elements, requires a one-time shift to standard data quality (accuracy, currency and completeness), as well as agreement on the maintenance of common base elements. This is costly, and difficult to justify under the normal budget process, which evaluates each organization on its own merits.

- 16) What are your governments top priorities in geomatics over the next five years?

The highest priorities would be: cataloguing all geospatial data holdings, standardizing data quality within the government of Ontario, increasing membership in OGDE to increase data sharing activities, ensuring the self-sustaining existence of important geospatial data sets, encouraging more direct interaction among various levels of government, and encouraging more universal use of geospatial data in all walks of life.

- 17) Are there any new or innovative geomatics applications being planned within your government over the next five years?

All applications will begin to have geospatial components.

- 18) How has the Internet changed how your agencies:
manage data
access data
disseminate data
How do you anticipate this changing over the next 5 years?

All data access, data discovery, and data dissemination tools are Web-based. All new or revised data maintenance tools are also Web-based.

- 19) What strategies have you used to enhance geographic usage?

Communications plans have been initiated through LIO and the Ontario Land and Resource Cluster of ministries.

- 20) What are the issues which impact geographic information provision and use today and over the next five years?

Geographic use will depend on the use of mainstream software, such as Microsoft Office,

and other tools, with the expected increase in embedded geographic capability. This will focus attention on the availability and quality of geospatial data. This will, in turn, demand better data maintenance and discovery processes.

- 21) Does the level of participation within your government's coordinated geomatics effort need expanding? If so to whom?

Yes, but this is scheduled, and expected.

- 22) Are your government's standards (and policies) current?

The government of Ontario has no over-arching geospatial standards, yet. However, current initiatives are causing all participants to see the benefits of creating, and abiding by, such standards. There are relatively good standards for individual agencies and the increasing use of OLIW for storing, sharing and displaying structured data is forcing many of the individual organizations to move to common standards.

- 23) Are your government's standards (and policies) being used?

See response to Question 22.

- 24) How do policies and standards affect / influence / constrain the behavior of stakeholders?

New players request standards. Existing players move to standards based on enlightened self-interest as appropriate.

- 25) Are your government's standards (and policies) seen as a help / hindrance?

Standards are seen as good. However, that may be in light of the fact that the standards are not yet imposed or enforced, except for contributors expecting to use the exchange media and facilities.

- 26) Have national, industry de facto, US or international standards superseded the existing government standards or policies?

International standards are important for Metadata collection and for interoperability. However, this has meant data mapping rather than abandoning Ontario standards.

- 27) Should provincial governments develop their own standards or adopt those developed by others?

The more any organization follows existing standards or precedents, the easier it is to work together. We encourage all geospatial data users and suppliers to work to standards available at any level (from their immediate neighbours up to the international standard).

On the other hand, it is important for each organization, including provincial governments, to examine the federal and international standards to see if they meet their needs before adopting them. Ontario, for example, elected to create its own Metadata standard, GO-ITS 72.00, which is a sub-set of the federal model with a couple of additional fields to be used internally.

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