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AltaLIS Streamlines Alberta's Mapping and Positions for Internet Distribution

AltaLIS Ltd. signs long-term contract with Spatial Data Warehouse Ltd. for management, marketing and distribution of Alberta's base mapping, property mapping and terrain information; an initiative set to improve availability, accessibility, accuracy and affordability of digital spatial data assets through e-business capabilities.

CALGARY – AltaLIS Ltd., Calgary, has completed a long-term agreement with the Spatial Data Warehouse Ltd. (SDW) organization to maintain, enhance and market Alberta's base mapping, property boundaries and terrain spatial data information.

James D. Chorel, AltaLIS General Manager, said, "AltaLIS has dramatically reduced the time required for delivery of spatial data ordered by customers – surveyors, utilities and communications companies. We've reduced order delivery cycles from an average of five days to one hour."

With the completion of the long-term agreement, AltaLIS is embarking on an aggressive program to further improve access to data and to reach new customers. A newly updated Internet site, <http://www.altalis.com>, was launched in March, providing background on the AltaLIS initiative and the ability to view sample data from any Internet browser. Future AltaLIS innovations will include "e-business" capabilities to access and order data via a Geographic Information System (GIS) viewing browser over the Internet. "This will enable customers to download information directly from the AltaLIS database," said Chorel.

The agreement marks another significant step in Alberta's initiative to transition the day-to-day management of its digital base mapping infrastructure to the private sector, while still retaining ownership of this spatial data as a government asset. "Under this innovative arrangement, the costs of maintaining and distributing spatial data have been redirected from taxpayers to the users and those causing changes to the data," said Wolfgang Janke, General Manager of SDW. "At the same time, the updating costs have been reduced by approximately 50 percent."

AltaLIS, a joint venture of Calgary's QC Data International Inc. and Martin Newby Consulting Ltd., was created to pursue the SDW initiative. SDW is a non-profit organization consisting of the provincial government and local utility and communications companies who are the largest

users of Alberta's base mapping information. SDW sought a private sector partner through an extensive competitive procurement process. The AltaLIS team was selected in late 1997 as the operator responsible for updating, managing and marketing spatial data. AltaLIS has worked hand-in-hand with the government and private sector consumers to effectively transition ongoing maintenance of the data.

"The AltaLIS team has worked tirelessly over the past two years to take on the day-to-day activities, while keeping an eye towards streamlining maintenance cycles and turnaround times for data requests and to identify new markets for the data," said Chorel.

Cost savings and faster delivery are just two of the benefits of digital mapping's move to the private sector. AltaLIS has re-engineered processes so that spatial data is of higher quality and so less manual updating is required for such things as cadastral, or property, mapping. "Alberta Land Titles was moving toward a requirement for digital submission of surveyor plans," said Chorel. "We were able to incorporate these digital plans into the updating process, thus eliminating the step of creating digital files and allowing for direct integration into the mapping."

Revenues generated from sales of the digital base mapping infrastructure are used to support ongoing management and maintenance of the government-owned data. Chorel noted, "Under our arrangement with SDW, the government retains ownership of the existing data sets as well as all enhancements to the data." The replacement value of this data is in excess of \$50 million.

As part of AltaLIS' contract with SDW, new markets and uses for the data will be continually explored. New pricing and licensing alternatives for data use have been established.

"Sales of data to a broader audience through the Internet will work to drive costs down for all users," said Chorel.

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