Halifax LRO's New Home is Revealed!

For Halifax E-Vault Update, see Page 2

*I*n October 2005, a proposal was made to relocate the Halifax Land Registration Office (LRO) from Terminal Road to Lower Sackville in the fall of 2007. As the proposed location was no longer available, Service Nova and Municipal Relations (SNSMR) began the tender process to identify an appropriate space in the area. The tender was posted on April 18, 2007 and closed May 2, 2007.

The bids have been reviewed and the tender for space has been awarded to Universal Properties. In early 2008, the Halifax Land Registration Office will relocate to the third floor, **Torrington Place, 780 Windmill Road, Dartmouth**.

The facility requirements for the new location have been based on the Land Registry vision for the Halifax LRO: 100 per cent electronic access. Based on your input, and in line with our ongoing modernization activities, several initiatives were undertaken in the last year to make it possible for clients to search all indices, documents and plans electronically and to submit more than 95 per cent of all documents electronically. Much of this work is completed, and the remainder will be finished well in advance of the move date.

If you have any questions regarding the move, please direct them to Marie Vieira, Regional Manager, Halifax LRO. She can be reached by phone at (902) 424-4084 or by e-mail at vieiraml@gov.ns.ca.

Farewell, Terminal Road!

In this issue

Halifax E-Vault

Mike Jacklyn, Patti Christie, Pam Langille, Chris Ash, Bernie Cholock, Mike Hernon

**Missing from photo: Ning Wang, Doreen Sanderson, Robert Tupper, and Julia Smith.**

Service Nova Scotia has made significant investments in the Halifax Land Registration Office in order to make more processes electronic, enabling clients to electronically search all documents, plans and indices and submit documents. When the Halifax LRO relocates to Torrington Place in early 2008, the facility and processes will be transformed such that lawyers and title searchers who use the LRO on a daily basis will be able to conduct virtually all title searches and land transactions electronically.

Mike Jacklyn and his team are busily finishing up the odds and ends of indexing and scanning to make Halifax 100 per cent e-accessible. In May, the last book of paper documents in Halifax was scanned. Books 1-1283, which were digitized from microfilm, are being loaded into POL as the quality control process is completed. Due to the age of these documents, the readability is often less than perfect. The Halifax Scan Team has the ability to improve upon these images if reviewed on a one-by-one basis, but this process understandably takes an unreasonable amount of time. Rather than take months to review each image and do detailed adjustments per frame where needed, the images will be loaded into Property Online after the first stage of QC. This process ensures that no images are missing, extra pages are removed and the index matches the images.

We will continue the detailed quality control process over time and as images are identified by users as needing quality adjustments, these fixes will be done immediately.

Some mismatched large format plans need to be scanned such as highway plans, large format expropriation plans, grant plans and some plans that came in before daily scanning started.

Since our last update, the electronic GGI back to year 1749 was loaded into Property Online.
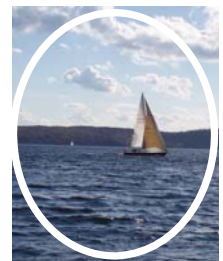
Nova Scotia's E-Land Registry

Since our last update, a number of accomplishments have been made:

60 Year Back Scanning Team Makes a Big Splash

Mike Jacklyn and his amazing team have surpassed the **15,000,000** image mark and the back scanning is underway in some new sites: Annapolis, Weymouth, Baddeck and Antigonish. Mike hopes to start Guysborough and Queens in the summer. Kings is completed and Cape Breton is nearing completion. Lunenburg should be completed in August. New sites to be started in the fall are Yarmouth, Shelburne, Cumberland and Queens.

Bi-Weekly Status Reports By County	Total Books to Scan	Books Scanned	Images Online POL	Documents Online
Annapolis	414	289	271026	56,967
Antigonish	320	239	233067	51,006
Cape Breton	1988	1643	1,589,302	353,828
Colchester	865	865	1,011,104	251,900
Cumberland	618	0	0	0
Digby	474	0	0	0
Guysborough	98	0	0	0
Halifax	1283	179	7,748,131	1,667,985
Legacy Bulk Loads	2599	2599		
Hants	866	866	718,160	170,125
Inverness	423	423	371,642	95,931
Kings	1303	1301	1,177,638	283,919
Lunenburg	911	802	851,349	175,728
Pictou	1238	1238	1,002,636	245,596
Queens	343	0	0	0
Richmond	291	0	0	0
Shelburne	398	0	0	0
Victoria	249	108	61,158	12,984
Yarmouth	558	0	0	0
Provincial Totals	**15,239**	**10,552**	**15,035,213**	**3,365,969**

Pictou E-Vault

Pictou's 265 bound document books are in the process of being digitized from microfilm; this will complete the scanning of all of the documents in the Pictou LRO. The indices for these years are being keyed as staff has time, and then the document images can be loaded into POL, hopefully by early- to mid-fall.

Historical Plan Scanning

Historical plan scanning was completed for Halifax, Colchester, Pictou and Antigonish last year. Additional historical plan scanning is planned for 2008-09 but we will not do any more counties this year due to an already very busy year filled with scanning projects! Many POL users have been asking when we will have plans online for the rest of the province. Since our last *Common Ground*, Pictou, Antigonish and Colchester plans have been loaded into POL and very soon the first 15,000 Halifax historical plans will be available in POL. The remaining Halifax plans should be available in POL over the summer.

Daily Scanning of Plans

On April 3, we began scanning all large format plans as they come in across the counter at the LROs. Over 600 plans have been scanned by our service provider and the process is working very well, with the exception of a few wrinkles which can be expected with any new process. One of the challenges we have been working with the service provider on is the method to scan and create the image for the plan and related form. Many clients who are printing the plan images to scale are reporting that there is a lot of paper waste due to the form being part of the plan image file. The service provider will be separating the files starting this week so that the plan can be printed independently of the form.

The Process

Two originals/ copies of each plan are submitted to the LRO for recording/registration. This includes all plans over 11 X 17 which would be filed independently as plans; including easement plans, condo plans, retracement plans and subdivision plans or as attachments.

One original plan is sent to the scanning service provider and one is retained in the vault for use by on-site clients.
Plans are shipped out for scanning daily in Halifax and periodically from the other LROs, depending on the volumes of plans submitted for recording or registration.

The scanning service provider places the QC'd images on the secure FTP site for each LRO and the LRO staff import the image into our database and do the second level QC before the plan is accessible in POL.

The plans will then be accessible by our clients in POL and clients will then be able to print the plan, save it to their computer files, or request a hard copy to scale from one of five regional offices (Halifax, Sydney, Pictou, Bridgewater and Annapolis) who will fulfill these requests.

The functionality in POL and Map Library allows you to zoom in on a small area and print, print the entire plan on selected page sizes and print the full plan to scale on a plotter. Some of the earlier images have a slight reduction ratio. If you see a grainy plan, please report it through the image reporting process so this can be fixed.

The paper plans will eventually be moved off site to central and secure storage and will remain on site until the QC'd image is viewable in POL.

Electronic GGI

As the busy real estate period descends upon us, further back-keyed indices will have quality assurance performed as time permits. We should see more queryable data loaded into various registration districts in the fall of 2007.

Meanwhile, Hants is currently searchable from **1879** to present.

Pictou Indices for years **1861** to **1915** were loaded into POL on May 23.

Pictou County also added 54 years of historical names data and is now searchable from January 1861 to present.

System Continuity
Scheduled versus Unscheduled Interruptions

To keep our cars and bicycles running smoothly, we perform preventative maintenance on them, and sometimes take them off the road just to make improvements. This common sense follows us into our world of computer systems, where system interruptions are a signal that some kind of improvement is on the way. Scheduled interruptions allow us to do system upgrades and maintenance, such as applying new versions of Land Applications which introduce new features. It might be time to install operating system security patches, Daylight Saving Time change patches or any number of innovations. These interruptions are unavoidable and make up the majority of the system's total down time. We try to give our clients at least one week notice before an interruption happens and we try to keep the time frame within the maintenance window (Sunday morning).

In spite of all our foresight and our backup plans, computers don't always work the way we expect. Inevitably, crashes happen. This is the unscheduled system interruption that we work so hard to avoid. Last year we had 13 hours of total unscheduled system down time, due mainly to computer hardware failure. Still, the overall system availability is 99.9 per cent.

Reducing the Unscheduled System Down Time
We put our heads down and our noses to the grindstone to improve the overall system reliability and stability. Our IT guys went shopping and are working on installing and configuring the following computer hardware to integrate into our existing environment.

Two New Web Servers
These two new web servers will replace the current old web servers and accomplish the "dual web server" architecture and, together with "BIG-IP" technology, they will provide the load balancing and fail-over support.

A New Application Server
This new application server will leverage the load from the existing application server to provide better system response time and reliability.

A Second Data Storage Device (Storage Area Network)
We now have a second SAN and are moving it to a separate location apart from the provincial data centre. This will ensure that we always have a quick and reliable backup copy of the production data and will make the system restore faster (hours vs. days) if our worst nightmare happens.

Land Programs System Architecture (Concept)
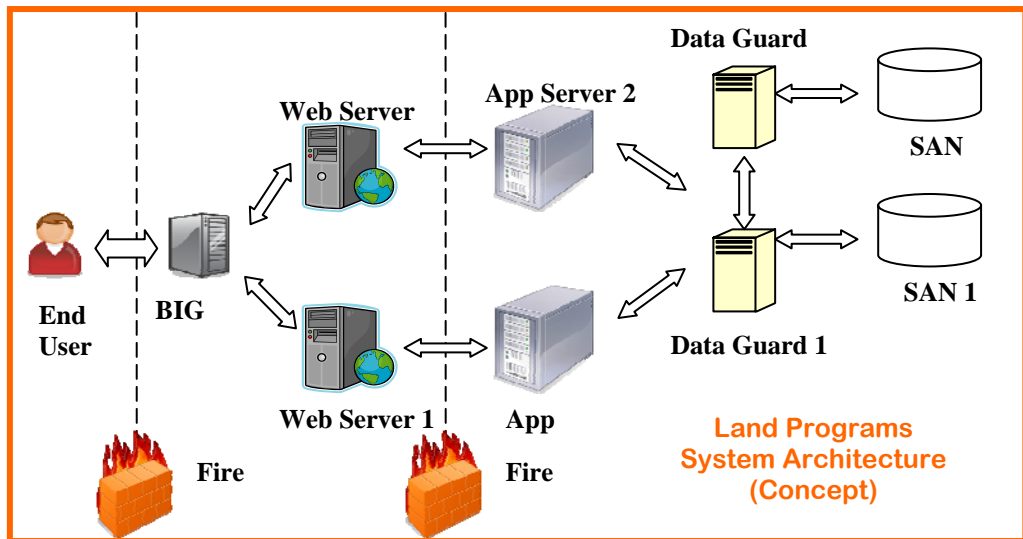
A New Data Management Server (Data Guard)
This new Data Guard server manages the second SAN and synchronizes the land data on the two SANs in real time. With its help, the "hot switch from the main SAN to the second if the main SAN is down" becomes possible.

We appreciate that our unscheduled system outages are a source of frustration for users. Our commitment is to further reduce the possibility of outages occurring and if they do, to reduce the down time to an absolute minimum.

Reporting Quality Issues with
Document and Plan Images

We recently reached the 15 million image mark for historical images in Property Online! This does not include the new documents and plans being scanned daily; that's a lot of scanning and digitizing of documents and plans over the past few years. Obviously, the Provincial E-Land Registry initiative is well under way!

The scanning and quality control teams are doing an excellent job. They must scan and check images to ensure the quality is at least as good as the original documents before loading them into Property Online for access by users. At times, the readability of the document or plan is improved over the original because of the adjustments that can be made in the image itself. But inevitably there will be the odd document or plan image which gets past the quality control process and will be discovered by a searcher, authorized lawyer or authorized surveyor.

Currently, requests to investigate an unreadable, missing or incomplete image are coming in to a variety of points: directly to the scanning team, the Land Registration Offices main lines and staff, to Land and Property Programs staff and to the POL Help Line. This makes it very difficult to manage the requests, track issues and get accurate information to the Scanning Project Manager and team for investigation and correction. Last month, we decided upon a consistent method for addressing image

quality issues to allow the proper tracking of details and the identification of any larger issues that can then be tackled by the scanning team.

Any quality issues involving images are to be sent to "Ask Property Online A Question" at https://ows2.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/POLHelpLine or for clients working on-site in the LRO, please report the image issue through the Property Online Help Line. The reported issue will be relayed to the document scanning team for investigation and they will respond to the client as soon as the issue has been resolved.

If you call the Property Online Help Desk at 1-866-518-4640, please state the following:
- Contact Name and contact number.
- County/Book/Page/Document Number.
- Indicate image issue (readability, missing, incomplete, incorrect).
- Indicate urgency (e.g. you only have access to image).

If you use the Ask POL a Question:
- Choose *General Procedures Question* on the main page.
- Select **"Image"** in the *Subject of Call* drop-down list.
- Complete contact name and number, etc.
- Indicate in the *Question* text box the County/Book/Page/Document Number.
- Indicate image issue (readability, missing, incomplete, incorrect).
- Indicate urgency (e.g. only have access to image).

Client Manual Update

The client manual is growing! New material is being added and the various methods of accessing it make it more user-friendly.

Sometimes we tend to look in only one spot on a page, especially after it becomes familiar and we think we know everything that's there. Take a look now at (https://ows2.gov.ns.ca/LandRegistrationResourceMaterial/Client_Manual_Default.html) and notice that, in addition to the main section of the page with the big heading **Welcome to the Land Registry Client Resource Material**, there is also a column of links to the left. If you don't see the column, then look at the menu above, on the blue bar, with the words (links) **Contents, Index, Search**, and **Glossary**. Each one of these provides a whole world of information. Click on **Contents** to reveal a list of folders, each of which can be opened and their contents further broken down. Keep selecting until you get to the item you need, which opens in the main window with one last click.

Another way to look for the resource material you want is to use the **Index** button. The index is an alphabetical listing of dozens of issues and terms you will likely utilize at some point during the conversion a property. But if you don't like scrolling, or if your computer is slow to display the entire index, you can very quickly bring up the information you want by typing in a word or term in the window at the top of the list. Before you finish keying in the term, the system will find it and place it within your viewing range in the index, with the search term highlighted. When you click on the item in the index, information appears on the main page.

You also have the option of going directly to the **Search** page (in the blue menu) where your search will provide a list of all documents that contain your search term.

And finally, if you're unsure of the meaning of any of the terms you encounter, try the **Glossary** function: scroll down the list, click on the appropriate term, and the definition is displayed in a window at the bottom.

It's as easy as 1 – 2 – 3 – 4, and the more you use it, the faster you'll get at finding what you need. Taking a few minutes to familiarize yourself with it today will save you time and effort in the long run.

Removal of Crown Lands Green Layer in Property Online

The Crown Land Layer in Property Online was made available in early 2005. The "green layer" in the mapping was to serve as a flag to searchers of possible ungranted crown lands during the search required to register title under the *Land Registration Act*. It was not ever intended to be an authoritative source for information on Crown Interests.

Lawyers, surveyors and title searchers have always had the obligation to ensure that there is no outstanding Crown interest in land, so the presence or absence of the Crown Lands Layer in the mapping does not change this.

Effective at end of business day on July 6, 2007, the Crown Lands Layer is being removed from Property Online due to the confusion it is creating with respect to the presence or absence of possible Crown Interests. The removal of the Crown Lands Layer from Property Online does not remove the lawyers' obligation to determine that the Crown interest in a parcel of land has been granted or, barring that, extinguished.

DNR has made the crown index sheets available online and has implemented a new service to provide Crown Lands records information to real estate professionals upon their request via fax, e-mail, CD Rom, mail-out or in person.

The Crown Index Sheets for the Province have been posted on Natural Resources' website at www.gov.ns.ca/natr/land/grantmap.htm . Information on the purchase price of grants can be found at www.gov.ns.ca/natr/library/oldmaps2.html .

For information shown on the Index Sheets, please contact the Crown Land Information Management Centre. Contact information is displayed on the site. The Crown Land Information Management Centre is located on the fifth floor at Founders Square, 1701 Hollis Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday.
Phone: 424-3171. **E-mail**: benedida@gov.ns.ca

To acquire document information indexed on the Sheets, you may contact the Centre by phone or e-mail with the specifics from the Index Sheet for the area of your inquiry. Document information requested will be forwarded via fax, e-mail, CD Rom or mail-out, with the Cost Fee for this information charged.

DNR will no longer accept inquiries for information identifying just a PID number. Often staff cannot match the historical Crown Index mapping to a PID. DNR staff will assist in identifying the location of the inquiry, but it is ultimately the responsibility of the client to identify the location of your inquiry.

The Land Programs staff wishes all our clients and staff a fun, relaxing, and renewing summer. Stay safe!