



Property Online - A Time of Transition

March 10, 2003 marked the launch of the new release of *Property Online*, our external query application. Users are enthusiastic about the added advantages of the new system, including the ability to

- query the Grantor-Grantee index
- review municipal tax information for the Town of Truro and the Municipality of the County of Colchester
- view Land Registration information and live data in Colchester County.

Subscribers were offered one month of free access to the new version of *Property Online* while initial performance bugs were worked out. The previous release of *Property Online* (NSPRD Online) has remained available to provide a safety net for users as they get comfortable with the new system. The first few weeks of operations gave the technical staff an opportunity to measure the performance of the new *Property Online* and enabled them to identify those features that needed improvement.

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We have come a long way since those initial weeks, when performance was slow and stability was a problem. For high speed users, the old and new systems are now working at virtually the same rate. System crashes are a thing of the past, and the new functionality is working well.

Our planned shutoff date for the old version of *Property Online* is August 1, 2003.

New user names and passwords have now been communicated to all but a few subscribers of the previous system. If you are a *Property Online* user and have not received such a notification, call our toll-free help number 1-866-518-4640 to obtain your *Property Online* access codes.

We are now preparing to complete the orderly transition of all our subscribers to the new version of *Property Online*. At least 1,000 of the more than 1,300 active subscribers have tried the new version of *Property Online* and our planned shutoff date for the old version of *Property Online* is August 1, 2003.

Prior to shutoff of the old version, issues such as the double-login requirement and system speed for dial-in users will be addressed. As well, as users provide feedback about the new version of *Property Online*, the system will continue to be improved and modified to best suit our clients' needs.

Appreciation Event - An Opportunity to Say Thank You

On May 22, 2003 all those who played a role in the success of the Registry 2000 project were honoured at an appreciation event held at the World Trade and Convention Centre. The event celebrated the contributions of more than 70 individuals from 13 organizations outside of government who have devoted enormous amounts of time and energy to the Registry 2000 project. In total they contributed more than 30,000 hours from their already busy schedules. Of equal importance, was the efforts of more than 90 staff from a variety of departments across government.

Special designed plaques were presented by the Honourable Peter G. Christie, Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations with the able assistance of Greg Keefe, SNSMR's Acting Deputy Minister. Special tribute was paid to two significant contributors to the development and implementation of the Registry 2000 Project:

- ▶ Charlie McIntosh, who is considered by many to be the father of parcel-based registration in Nova Scotia and has worked for many years to ensure that this system was put in place; and
- ▶ Catherine Walker, president of the Real Estate Lawyers Association of Nova Scotia, and a driving force behind the current initiative. Catherine was on the Legislative Review Committee, the Steering Committee, and took on a major role in training lawyers for the new system.

Property Online Help Desk - Help is a Two-Way Street

The *Property Online* Help Desk is a vital resource for Property Online subscribers and users of the new land registration system. In her first month as the Property Online support specialist, Noreen Zakhia assisted more than 500 questioners.

Whether coming in on the toll-free help line (1-866-518-4640) or through e-mail at propertyonline@gov.ns.ca, the majority of contacts involved questions from *Property Online* users wanting to receive their new user names and passwords for the new version of *Property Online*, but she has also helped users become more familiar with the system (log on, search, new features) and with land registration issues. Noreen quickly deals with callers who require technical or procedure assistance. With Noreen's help, users learn the best way to utilize the system or deal with the land registration issues. Noreen is the first line of support - if she does not have the answer, she quickly refers the questions on to other project team members for response.



The Help Desk is not just an avenue of information for users - it has been a major information source for the project as well. Callers have been invaluable in highlighting issues that need to be resolved, both in the system as well as LRA procedures. Noreen tracks the problems and pass them on to technical support staff.

In the past weeks, Noreen is noticing an increase in more specific land registration questions, such as how to fill out the required forms and how to complete an Application for Registration (AFR) online. There have also been some questions about the changes to judgment regulations. With Noreen's help and the valuable input from system users around the province, the new land registration system will continue to evolve in the manner best suited for everyone.

Notes from the Registrar General

Keeping users of the new land registration system advised of legislative and procedural changes in a timely manner is one of the prime goals of the Registrar General and the staff at Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. This is especially important at the present time when the new system is still evolving. Although the system is operating with remarkable smoothness in Colchester, it is natural that some adjustments are required as users explore all the possibilities.

The Registrar General is responsible for the effective application of the *Land Registration Act* (LRA). Within this role, the Registrar General

- ▶ may issue directives to clarify issues, procedures and policies
- ▶ ensures that the legislation and regulations are correctly applied, and
- ▶ recommends legislative or regulatory changes, if necessary.

Registrar General Directives

To date, the Registrar General has issued four directives:

- ▶ Statutory declarations regarding judgments
- ▶ Relying on previously filed back title
- ▶ Combination revisions and recordings
- ▶ Accept/reject criteria for draft AFRs.

These directives are sent directly to LRA Eligible Lawyers by email and are posted in Land Registration and Registry of Deeds Offices. They are also posted on the Registry 2000 website and are also connected to the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society website. Notification of these and future directives will be sent to eligible lawyers through the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society **Inforum**.

Amendments to Regulations

One of the main reasons for the success of the Registry 2000 Project is the ongoing practice of incorporating feedback from stakeholders into the finished product. Such feedback has helped create and adjust the forms and regulations used to administer the new *Land Registration Act* (LRA). The *Land Registration Administration Regulations* (including standard forms) were circulated to the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society (NSBS) and other stakeholders on January 29, 2003. Many comments and suggestions for change were received during the NSBS lawyer education programs in February and March. As a result, regulations, including approximately 40 changes suggested by stakeholders, were approved by Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations Minister Peter Christie on March 17, 2003.

Of course, amendments will continue to be needed and, as always, we value the input of stakeholders in making the system run more smoothly. The amended regulations and forms are posted on the Registry 2000 website and have been circulated to all eligible lawyers (i.e. those who have completed the NSBS education on the LRA). Future amendments (the next large group of changes is planned for circulation this fall) will continue to be added to this site.

System users are encouraged to make a habit of reviewing the appropriate websites to keep up to date with regulations and directives.

Clarifications and Enhancements to Procedures and Standards

A number of procedural questions and issues have been raised since the LRA was proclaimed in Colchester, in particular, a number came from a meeting with lawyers held on April 8, 2003, in Truro. Clarifications and enhancements to procedures and standards are being sent out by email as they are resolved and we will continue to send out emails to ensure that users have the most up-to-date information. To further assist users, a full set of resource materials, including revised and updated procedures and standards documents, will be posted on the Registry 2000, Property Registration and Property Online web sites within the next few weeks (www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/property/registry, www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/property/ and www.nspropertyonline.ca). As well, the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society website will link to these pages.

Clarifications and enhancements have been provided for to the following issues:

- ▶ Moving existing Power of Attorneys to the new Power of Attorney Roll
- ▶ Easement encumbrances on AFR and subsequent Revisions/Recordings
- ▶ Conversions with easements that may impact on existing land registration parcels
- ▶ Proof of Death of Joint Tenants
- ▶ Flagging of non-land registration parcels affected by easements on registered parcels
- ▶ Addition parcels relating to consolidations on land registration plans
- ▶ Subdivision plans
- ▶ Mailing address fields and validations on AFR - guidelines on completing the various types of mailing addresses in the existing fields on the AFR
- ▶ Undertakings for mortgages and related releases
- ▶ Use of Form #4
- ▶ Recording of mortgage releases affecting land registration parcels

If you have not received information on the above issues or have further questions or require clarification on any other procedure, please contact our Help Desk by phone at 1-866-518-4640 or by e-mail at propertyonline@gov.ns.ca.

Managing the Migration of Large Land Holdings into the New System

The transfer of large land holdings, including government owned lands, is a task that the Registry 2000 Project team will be focusing on this year. A pilot migration project will be undertaken in Colchester County, starting with Crown Lands and moving forward, with lessons learned, to other provincially owned lands. Representatives from the Migration Acceleration Working Group will be meeting shortly with Department of Natural Resources staff to discuss how to most effectively begin the migration process. At the same time, large private land owners are working to get their parcels ready for migration.

One big concern raised by the voluntary migration of large numbers of parcels owned by one land owner, is that this work, if it arrives at the Registry front counter in an unplanned way, could impede the office's day-to-day business. On the other side of this issue is the right of large land owners to receive the benefits of migration as quickly as an individual land owner who is only migrating one parcel of land. The Project team is working closely with large landowners in Colchester County to ensure that the voluntary migration of large numbers of parcels can proceed in an efficient manner for both the government and large landowners. Additional mapping and other resources are being allocated to ensure the smooth transfer of lands into the system. The Migration Acceleration Working Group, government, and private landowners have a common goal – to work closely together to allow a smooth transition of lands into the system. Doing this will ensure that migration *en masse* can be achieved efficiently, without detracting from the certainty of ownership or the integrity of the land information and the government's ownership guarantee.

The **caris**® Connection - LIN-NS Solution Vendor

One of the less visible but most crucial partners in the ongoing success of the Registry 2000 project is CARIS Universal Ltd., the Fredericton based company that is developing the new land registration system for Nova Scotia.

CARIS is a technology company, which was started in the late 1960s by Dr. Salem Masry, a survey engineering professor in the Department of Geodesy and Geomatics at the University of New Brunswick. Working in the basement of his home with help from some of his students, Dr. Masry researched data structures and computer-aided cartography. His work evolved into a state-of-the-art system to support digital mapping programs, and his privately held Canadian company has expanded to include offices in the United States and the Netherlands.



On the Stairs, Left to Right: Sharon Caissie, Paul Cornect (LIN-NS Project Manager), Kendra Guitard, Chris Bangay, Joey Bernard
Floor, Standing, Left to Right: Travis Foster (Projects Division Manager), Jason Nicoll, Trevor MacDougall, Jared Harding, Svjetlana Mijatovic, Theresa Comeau, Stella Jia, Matt Brown
Floor, Kneeling, Left to Right: Nathan Clifford, Craig Pothier, Lee Dong

Although primarily known for GIS technologies, one of CARIS' major success stories was the development of applications for the new land registration system in New Brunswick. That fit well with Registry 2000, where one of the original goals was to find an existing system we could build on rather than develop a new one from scratch. New Brunswick's system, with its parcel-by-parcel migration and its ability to reflect guaranteed interests, was very close to the type of system we wanted here in Nova Scotia. As well, through the previous New Brunswick experience, CARIS understood the need to support names-based registry and traditional parcel maintenance as the new system was being implemented.

CARIS' impressive technology and their New Brunswick experience have been key in the successful implementation of the new land registration system in Nova Scotia. The CARIS staff is dedicated and knowledgeable, and, since they're in Fredericton, close enough for those vital face-to-face meetings.

We are proud that CARIS is fully integrated into the Registry 2000 Team. Connecting with CARIS is a decision that has proved to be mutually beneficial.

Now Serving Number 294...

Since the new land registration system was launched in Colchester County more than two months ago, staff and users have been adjusting to the technology and procedures required to administer the *Land Registration Act*. The smoothness of the transition has been remarkable, and new parcels continue to be added to the land registry at a steady rate. As of June 9, 2003, the Colchester Land Registration Office:

- ▶ had processed 571 Applications for Registration (AFRs),
- ▶ had reviewed 591 Parcel Description Certification Applications (PDCAs), and
- ▶ had migrated 294 parcels into the Land Registration System.

Alpha Site Training for External Groups - by the Numbers

The months and weeks leading up to land registration implementation in Colchester were busy ones for the SNSMR and Barristers' Society training team. Close to 500 participants attended multiple sessions held to ensure that users were prepared for the transition to the new system. Surveyors, developers, development officers, and realtors all received training tailored for their own specific needs. In addition, legal assistants, title searchers and lawyers received hands-on training, giving them an opportunity to "test-drive" the new system immediately prior to implementation. More than 140 representatives from the legal community attended the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society mandatory training, qualifying them as authorized users of the new land registration system. The legal attendees included 64 eligible lawyers, of which 55 are authorized, 64 legal assistants and 13 title searchers.

Participants in the training sessions facilitated by SNSMR staff were asked for their feedback to assist the trainers in tailoring the next round of training to best suit our users' needs. The average approval rating ranged between 1.4 and 1.7 (on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being completely satisfied), showing that those trained generally felt the sessions were useful and relevant.

Now that the new system, legislation, procedures and forms are being used daily, lawyers, surveyors and others submitting documents to the Land Registration Office in Colchester are providing the best feedback to identify improvements and suggest changes to material, such as guidelines and quick reference tools. The training team have collected many ideas and suggestions which will be used in future training and will be available soon on our new resource and procedures web page. Thanks for all the great feedback, and keep the suggestions coming.

Long hours were put in by both project team members and Barristers' Society trainers to ensure that all users were adequately prepared for the system launch. Congratulations go out to the trainers for their excellent work in preparing the material, scheduling the sessions, booking space, and conducting the training.


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