

# POLARIS

## AUTOMATION OF THE ONTARIO LAND REGISTRATION SYSTEM

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### BACKGROUND

THE LAND Registration System in Ontario is operated by the Real Property Registration Branch in the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. The registration of real property is administered under the Registry Act and the Land Titles Act from 65 field offices distributed throughout the province. Both systems are operated on a manual basis.

Over the past eight years work has proceeded on the development of an automated system known as POLARIS (Province of Ontario Land Registration and Information System). The system provides on-line, real time, access to the record indexes via computer terminals and a data base is used to print maps which illustrate property descriptions, to assist users with accessing and retrieving title information. A major element of the POLARIS implementation is the reorganization of the document index records to an ownership parcel basis to facilitate user access. The POLARIS system has been implemented into the Oxford County Registry Office located in Woodstock as an operational pilot model containing approximately 35,000 properties. As of April 1, 1987, title information for all Oxford properties is available on the POLARIS system.

### IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY APPROVED

In July 1987, Management Board of Cabinet approved additional resources for the implementation of the POLARIS system and other improvements into the remaining 64 land registry offices over the next 12 to 15 years. The key principle of the Ministry's implementation strategy is that every office in the province will benefit from automation and/or operational improvements within 3 years. It is felt that this approach is essential to satisfy the expectations of both clients and staff, as well as to provide operational benefits province wide.

Therefore, in addition to the implementation of POLARIS, the strategy includes a number of interim improvements and special projects critical to the success of the project.

### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Full automation will be extended to all land registry offices over a 12 to 15 year period. The initial focus is primarily on seven offices which would be initiated in 1988 and proceed over a 5-year period. These offices are the three Toronto offices, the Chatham office, the two Ottawa offices and the Sudbury office. These offices were generally selected due to their high profile, service volumes and the existence of active property mapping underway by municipalities which will assist POLARIS mapping activities.

Full automation includes the implementation of self-serve microfilm systems to allow direct access by the public to documents, as is currently provided in the Newmarket and Ottawa offices.

The successful implementation of these 7 offices will result in almost 30% of the properties in the province being automated within 5 years, representing over 25% of the total registration volume.

This work will require the services of up to 140 additional people including data collection (title and survey information searching), data entry and mapping technicians. Current plans include the use of private sector services for much of this work, especially in the area of mapping. It is proposed that at least half of the expenditures on map production be for private sector services.

### INTERIM IMPROVEMENTS

Three new initiatives have been identified for implementation in other offices in the interim:

1. The abstracting function will be automated by employing microcomputer processing and utilizing a revised, simplified abstracting process to reduce time requirements.
2. An automated writs of execution search system which operates on micro computers will be installed to support the land titles registration process. This system has already been implemented into four land registry offices and will be extended to five more offices in 1987.
3. Implementation of parcelization procedures, utilizing manual sketches, will proceed in those offices where conversion to the automated system is not currently scheduled. The parcelization of records provides quicker and easier access to information for the client and is a necessary step preceding automation.

### SPECIAL PROJECTS

Three special projects which are critical to the implementation strategy, will be carried out over the next three years.

#### 1. Land Titles Conversion Test

Roughly 70% of the properties in the province are registered under the Registry Act, while the remaining are registered under the Land Titles Act. The optimum title records system following automation is the land titles system, supported by document microfilm and computerized property maps.

Conversion to Land Titles requires that the records be parcelized and title certified, requiring substantial record searching and recording. The initial cost of conversion to Land Titles is offset by the reduced costs to later convert to the automated system. In order to evaluate the feasibility

ity of converting all registry properties to land titles, the Ministry has initiated a pilot project in the London land registry office, covering 10,000 properties. The evaluation process is scheduled to be completed by September, 1988.

## 2. **Joint Venture Mapping**

A large number of municipalities are interested in entering into cooperative ventures with the Ministry to produce computerized maps to support automated municipal information systems. During 1987 and 1988 the Mapping Development Section will participate in joint projects with several municipalities to establish standards and to identify benefits to be derived from such arrangements.

The Ministry will provide limited resources, expertise and the methodology to ensure that the resulting products are compatible with those required by the Branch for land registration and provincial land data base purposes. The results of this activity will be used to establish the nature of the future relationships with other municipalities and the benefits to the Ministry in achieving reductions in the Province's mapping ef-

forts where preliminary mapping products are available.

## 3. **Decentralization of Toronto Land Registry Offices**

The implementation of automation facilitates the provision of remote searching and possibly remote registration. A separate project will evaluate the potential to split the three Metro Toronto Offices into 4 or 5 sub offices. This would reduce the need to occupy expensive city core office space and reduce demands and congestion in the Toronto offices. The study will deal with the feasibility of decentralized operations, costs of relocation and operation and more importantly initially, the impact of this approach on the implementation strategy.

The Real Property Registration Branch looks forward to working with the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors to explore ways in which they might interact to facilitate the implementation of the automated title and mapping systems as well as their utilization by the AOLS profession. Progress reports will be presented to the AOLS periodically for the interest of its members. ●