

## Provincial Land Register/Canada



### Iron Mountain Helps This Provincial Agency “Go Digital” And Increase Its Productivity While Lowering Operations Costs

- CUSTOMER:** The customer is the Land Register office for one of Canada’s 10 provinces. The Register provides land rights services – including registration, consultation, and publication services – to members of the public and professionals, such as notaries, surveyors, and attorneys.
- CHALLENGE:** In one of the largest digitization projects in North America, the goal was to create an online digital archive of land records spanning 170 years, without disrupting the Register’s daily operations.
- SOLUTION:** As part of a strategic implementation team, Iron Mountain managed the indexing, transportation, scanning and archiving of nearly two centuries worth of physical documents.
- BENEFIT:** The Land Register now offers consistent, reliable, and exponentially faster service to the public – and has realized a savings of approximately \$11 million per year.

#### The Customer

The Land Register is a comprehensive archive of the land records for one of Canada’s province, spanning the period from 1730 - when all land records were hand-written – to property transfers that were completed just days ago. Through 73 registry offices and 8 Operations Centers, citizens and professionals can look up current land rights, register changes of ownership, obtain publications, and request advice.

#### The Challenge

Relying on an outdated, paper-based records system, the Register had been struggling to keep up with the demands of its many constituencies, which include citizens, notaries, lawyers, land surveyors, and municipal offices. On an average day, Register offices received a total of 5,000 requests for information, services and registrations, many of which were forwarded on to one of eight Operations Centers for fulfillment.

With this legacy system, the processes for registering, storing, retrieving and distributing documents were slow, inefficient and costly, both for the organization and its clients. Notaries, for example, were forced to make multiple trips to registry offices for a given transaction and submit three copies of relevant documents. Land surveyors responsible for remaking the cadastre – a detailed register showing the extent, value, and ownership of land for taxation purposes – might wait several weeks for a cadastre to be redrawn and several more for it to be registered. And citizens commonly faced delays when registering transfers or requesting assistance.

The inherent constraints of physical documents made it impossible to evenly distribute the daily workload across the Register’s eight Operations Centers. What’s more, the direct handling of paper documents – some of which are extremely old and delicate – was contributing to their deterioration and potential destruction. Because one of the Registry’s aims is to ensure the preservation of land information for documentary heritage, the paper-based system obviously needed to be replaced with something more dynamic and durable.

*By bringing 180 million pages of paper land records online, the Land Register has saved millions of dollars a year, dramatically improved turn-around times for land-rights services, and expanded its hours from 30 to 100 a week without adding staff.*

#### The Solution

In choosing to bring the entire archive of 180 million pages online, the Land Register launched one of North America’s largest digitization projects to date. At a cost of \$92 million, it was also one of the most ambitious computer projects taken on by the provincial government.

The Register chose an expert team that could ensure fast implementation, full online functionality, and a strong, secure infrastructure – without interrupting day-to-day services. Iron Mountain Canada Corporation, with its expertise in digital archiving and secure document storage, was charged with converting the Register's archives into digital format and managing post-conversion storage of the physical records. Those services would be instrumental in achieving all of the Register's goals: increased access to information, improved customer service and security, and the full preservation of its valuable paper documents.

To minimize disruption to daily operations, it was decided that the 73 Register offices would be converted one by one – and outside of normal business hours. After an office closed on Friday, documents that Iron Mountain had previously indexed were inventoried and then securely transported to a nearby scanning facility set up for that purpose. For documents in good condition, digitization was rapidly implemented using six high-volume scanners, each operating at a rate of 2,500 double-sided pages per hour. Information was then loaded into the databank, where it would be available for online access by Monday morning.

For fragile documents, Iron Mountain employed flatbed scanners that would prevent further damage. Iron Mountain also installed 75 scanners at local Register offices so Register employees could digitize newly created documents in real time, preventing the creation of an additional backlog while the document conversion process was taking place.

With the complete archives digitized, the Register's documents are easier to search, access, and distribute. Users can access multiple types of images – including administrative, geomatic, and graphic – from the comfort of their home or office, while the documents' confidentiality and integrity are maintained. Clients have 24/7 online access to the Register's complete suite of services, including a highly secure public key infrastructure that lets them view and sign legally valid documents online.

### The Benefits

Since going online, the Land Register has gained a reputation for fast, reliable, and consistent service throughout the province. Registration times have been reduced from 24 hours to only 4 hours. Surveyors can now remake and register the cadastre in days instead of weeks. Municipalities can collect property transfer taxes more quickly and update their evaluation rolls the same day transactions are recorded in the register.

With all its documents digitized, the Register's work can be dynamically distributed among the Operations Centers, increasing efficiency and improving client service without adding staff. The organization has realized savings of nearly \$11 million per year and been able to reallocate records storage space for other purposes.

With that level of success, it's not surprising that the Land Register Online has attracted the attention of civil service agencies in several other countries, including Lebanon, Argentina, France, Vietnam, Japan, Peru, and Romania.

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745 Atlantic Avenue  
Boston, Massachusetts 02111  
(800) 899-IRON

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