

Historical Wisdom and Modern Challenges in Quebec Land Administration: From Paper Cadastral Maps to On-Line Services

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SUMMARY

In Canada, each of the ten provinces has the constitutional responsibility over land administration: land and natural resources management, land rights registration, cadastre, land use control. In the province of Quebec, the current land administration system is the heritage of more than four hundred years of land surveying and registration, influenced by France (1534 to 1763), England (1763 to 1840), and Canada (1840 until now). Quebec is also the only Canadian province under the authority of a Civil Code (inspired by the Napoleonic Code). Then, its land administration system is very unique in North America and could be used as a source of inspiration by many countries in the World. Grounded in a strong historical wisdom, the Quebec land administration system is far from being static and is driven by innovation. It is constantly adapted to new technological possibilities, institutional arrangements, and social demands. The current 30-year program of cadastral reform, the land registry computerization, the diffusion of land data on the Internet, the public-private collaboration model in land surveying, the development of e-government services, and the use of cadastral data within many geographic information systems are some examples of the modernisation of the land administration system. New challenges appear on the horizon as the specific registration and cadastral mapping of second-rank rights, as easements, restrictions, and responsibilities, and land title insurance. All these challenges aim at improving the public land administration institution as a whole and the individual services offered to the citizen. A very good knowledge of past experiences, combined to the wisdom then developed, is necessary to consider and develop any proposal of modernisation.