



*Wayne Braid, Secretary and Executive Director of The Society of Notaries Public of BC, with Wanda Costuros and Godfrey Archbold*

## Inside BC's LTSA

**Wanda Costuros** is Chair of the Board of LTSA.

A Certified Management Accountant, she holds an MBA from Simon Fraser University.

Over the past 20 years, Wanda has held a series of senior financial positions, primarily in technology and forest industry sectors, including Vice President and CFO of Xantrex Technology Inc., senior financial consultant with Ballard Power Systems Inc., CFO of Aber Resources Ltd., VP of Finance for Fletcher Challenge Canada Ltd., and CFO of TimberWest Forest Ltd.

She is a director of the Art in Motion Income Fund and chair of its audit committee. Wanda sits on the Board of Governors of Science World and serves as its treasurer and chair of the audit committee.

**Godfrey Archbold** has been President and CEO of the Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia (LTSA) since its inception in early 2005.

He earned a BA in Political Science and History and a Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Victoria.

For most of his career, he has been with the British Columbia provincial government in a senior management and executive capacity on public land administration and policy, registry operation, and land negotiation programs.

He was intensively involved with the design, negotiation, and startup of the LTSA. Godfrey's accomplishments demonstrate the value of strategic leadership and strong customer focus for program delivery.

**THE SCRIVENER:** Good morning, Godfrey. What is your goal for the Land Title and Survey Authority?

**GODFREY:** My goal is to position the LTSA as a Canadian leader in land registry and survey services, with the Authority expanding to attain a strong international reputation in its business realm in the future. I see our technology and continuous improvement efforts as the key enablers to achieve this goal.

**THE SCRIVENER:** What is the mandate of the LTSA and who are your clients?

**GODFREY:** The LTSA is designed to provide confidence to the people of British Columbia and our key client sectors in terms of delivering assured land title and survey systems. These systems are essential to the good functioning of the property market and are, in some respects, an economic foundation for British Columbia.

“Confidence” is an important criterion for us. We believe confidence is earned through good customer service and ensuring that Notaries, lawyers, surveyors, financial institutions, and real estate agents rely on our products and services to support the real property market.

Another key sector is registry agents, who act as an interface between the professionals and our organization to support customers. Our goal is to make sure that our service and the title system itself are working well for British Columbians.

**THE SCRIVENER:** Is the LTSA separate from government?

**GODFREY:** We are a statutory corporation with a not-for-profit tax status. We went through an exhaustive process to ensure we were constituted in a way that was legally and administratively completely separate from government. We do, however, have a close relationship with government—particularly the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands that holds the legislative responsibility for the *Land Title Act* and the survey statutes.

Government also relies on our records to support functions such as property taxation and the inventory of property they may own.

We want to acknowledge the role the Honourable Pat Bell has played recently in putting forward a number of legislative changes we've needed. We certainly appreciate all the attention that he and his colleagues have put forth in those matters.

**THE SCRIVENER:** Wanda, what do you look for in a board member?

**WANDA:** I'm proud of our process. We want people who have had some experience operating at a board level. Our governing committee takes a very disciplined and intensive approach.

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We look at the skills and competencies of each nominee.

- The skills are experience and education and the candidate's experience with land titles issues, real estate, information technology, finance, and First Nations.
- The competencies are leadership and the ability to work as part of a team, the ability to support management, and experience as a board director.

We look at the balance of skills and competencies and analyze each potential director very thoroughly. From there, we select individuals we think will best fit the association.

Directors' terms are staggered so that each year, some positions are up for renewal.

**THE SCRIVENER:** The Stakeholders are part of the input you consider when you make decisions.

**WANDA:** That's right. The Stakeholder Advisory Committee, which Godfrey chairs, provides advice to management in the form of reports that include what they are discussing and their concerns.

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee was established as the Authority was being formed. Their main role is to provide advocacy for their respective group and to make sure they are being heard.

The Board interacts with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee. Once a year we have a formal meeting. Of course, there are other opportunities for dialogue.

Wayne Braid, Secretary and Executive Director of The Society of Notaries Public of BC, was instrumental in helping shape the structure of the Authority to ensure the governance structure and the performance targets for the Authority would meet the needs of the Notary profession. On the Stakeholder Advisory Committee we have representation from many key professional organizations and from the province.

**THE SCRIVENER:** What is the role of the LTSA Board?

**WANDA:** The Board oversees the management of the LTSA and while the day-to-day management of the organization is the domain of the President and CEO and his management team, the Board is there to ensure that in terms of the big picture, strategic plans, and overall budgets, management has a framework to follow and a sounding board. We've gone to great lengths to follow best practices and governing processes.

**GODFREY:** The Board also helps ensure the Authority has the correct accountability structure to meet our objectives and successfully carry out the functions we are required to perform under statute, such as annual general meetings and publications that will be read by British Columbians. It's all part of building confidence about what we're doing.

**WANDA:** Very much so. Accountability and transparency are extremely important to the LTSA.

**THE SCRIVENER:** How has the LTSA changed the way it does business on behalf of British Columbians compared to when the system was part of government?

**GODFREY:** I want to characterize two things. The first reflects the change in the governing structure. When a function such as land titles or the surveyor general is in a government context, it's usually located in a large ministry as only one of a number of programs or directions that government will want to pursue.

The second aspect is a much more direct relationship with the customer. Our business has a very limited constituency of direct customers. Through forums such as the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, we enjoy a direct opportunity to garner advice from customers about the program, the kind of plans we have in place, suggestions for technology improvements, and so on.

**WANDA:** To build on that, when we look at the importance of employees in our organization, if employees are part of a larger government department and a larger ministry, trying to get specific feedback can be challenging.

We've been pretty systematic about engaging our employees and getting ideas and feedback through questionnaires that are very specific about our business practices and what we can do to manage better—and we respond accordingly. We have a close association with our employees and with our customers.

The other element that is quite different about the way we've been constituted versus government is that we're not driven by annual determined budgets. We're better able to make long-term financial plans.

We are embarking on a very significant technological change in our organization. It would have been very difficult to do that under any kind of government model where you are driven to spend your budget by the end of the year, but don't know necessarily what the budget will be for the following year or longer.

We run the LTSA like a business. That means we can take a much longer-term view and plan—and provide funds to carry out the plan.

**GODFREY:** I'd like to pick up on the point Wanda mentioned about questionnaires. From the formal questionnaire we provided to our customer sector, we're starting to get feedback in terms of what's working and what things we can improve. We will use that intelligence as a way of structuring what we will be doing to improve the customer's relationship with us.

**THE SCRIVENER:** That's refreshing—to ask your employees and your customers how you're doing.

**GODFREY:** Absolutely. That feedback is worth its weight in gold.

**I'm very happy to report many of our assumptions turned out to be correct.**

**THE SCRIVENER:** The LTSA is self-sustaining. Please tell us about that.

**GODFREY:** It was a brave day.

**LAUGHTER**

**WANDA:** The financial model was developed as part of the Authority's startup. We did not have any equity from the province. We had debt. We had to buy information systems and equipment from government.

**GODFREY:** Part of the sense of risk and excitement about starting the Authority was that no one else in Canada had made the step of taking those functions out of the government structure and putting them into an independent corporate arena.

On our first day of operation, we had no money in the bank. We were \$8,000,000 in debt and had a payroll due in 2 weeks. My colleague Greg Pedersen, Chief Financial Officer, said, "I certainly hope this works."

**LAUGHTER**

**THE SCRIVENER:** Congratulations on your courage and your good management!

**GODFREY:** We had, in establishing the Authority, negotiated with the province a financial model based on a series of assumptions a number of

us had made around how much would it cost to operate these functions outside of government and free from voted appropriation.

We developed an estimate, then translated it into a percentage of the fee we would charge for each individual transaction we processed.

- 31 percent of the fees earned stay with the Authority
- 69 percent of the fees are returned to the province

I'm very happy to report many of our assumptions turned out to be correct. We couldn't have planned better, but of course that was all deliberate on my part!

**LAUGHTER**

**THE SCRIVENER:** Why has the LTSA been so successful?

**WANDA:** We've done very well on two fronts. Number one, clearly we were able to test the validity of those financial assumptions. We felt that the model, even under conservative assumption, was going to play out appropriately. And we were very fortunate as to the timing of the real estate market to enable us to build a healthy balance sheet. We will reinvest those funds in the business—in technology change and business transformation. We are eager to get underway and we have the financial capacity to carry out our plans.

**THE SCRIVENER:** Now, let's talk technology.

**GODFREY:** Technology is a major part of who we are and how we do our business. Coincident with the startup of the Authority, Land Titles had launched electronic filing—EFS, a means by which certain professionals can interface with the registry by submitting documents electronically instead of on paper. We wanted to explore that platform for the tendering of land title transactions and looked to harness it for survey plans.

As Wanda said, we inherited a lot of somewhat stale-dated technology that we needed to immediately refresh, using some of our financial and human capital.

A good example is the project we started in our first year of operation—the jukebox migration. The jukebox was a piece of hardware. All the images of the documents on which professionals rely when they want to do a transfer of property were housed in it. Well, the jukebox had gotten to an age and service length where IBM, the manufacturer, was no longer supporting it. It was just going to wear out.

Second, we were advised by our technical specialist that our jukeboxes were getting full—there soon would be no room to add more images. We embarked on an exercise to transfer all those images to modern server technology. That was one of the first pieces of work we did to ensure operational vulnerability would not impact customer service. We did that beautifully through our technology team. For the customer, there was no apparent change.

Our server is able to present images to customers faster than the mechanical jukebox did. That's a tremendous win for us.

We also have embarked on an exercise of copying document images as part of the larger collection that pre-dates 1990.

For documents that predated 1990, you had to go to the office and look at microfilm or obtain a hard copy of those documents. We're now engaged in looking at all active charges dated between 1960 and 1990. Those will be available for customers by the beginning of April 2008.

The other major piece of work underway is the hardware change for the ALTOS system itself, which is really the engine that drives the electronic recording of land title transactions. Older mainframe technology is costly and inflexible. We will convert that database to modern server technology.

Each of the steps is tremendously important. We've been able to achieve cost efficiencies in our service and technology. We will continue to ensure we're operating in the most cost-effective fashion.

Now we can shift gears and think about new ways to interface with the customer. All our intelligence—strategic and tactical—indicates that more and more of our business will be done electronically.

**THE SCRIVENER:** You have had the wisdom and foresight to ensure there is no ceiling on what you can do with your computer system.

**GODFREY:** Absolutely. Those systems are integral for the real property market. There would be profound consequences if that technology were to fail. We must have modern, cost-effective, efficient, reliable technology that can be backed up and restored in a moment's notice.

**In an electronic world, you can obtain all the signatures simultaneously and manage the process electronically.**

**THE SCRIVENER:** Why has the LTSA been successful?

**GODFREY:** One of the factors is our aim for high levels of customer satisfaction—those levels are a critical measure of our performance. We learn and adapt from the input we receive. The validation of our efforts by professional bodies such as The Society of Notaries Public of BC is also very important to us.

We enjoy a direct constituency with Notaries, lawyers, surveyors, and registry agents. They comprise the vehicle by which the public interfaces with us. That limited constituency is a terrific benefit for us.

The public turns to those professionals when they want to change their real estate property holdings. Other clients include the real estate industry, local government, the province, historians, and the First Nations Summit.

Many of the records that we house date back to the very creation of the province. All the survey records and some of our other materials are quite important for First Nations

when it comes time for them to articulate about matters such as treaty settlement. Those records show historic settlement patterns.

There's quite a bit of interest in our historic documents. Professional historians and genealogists are interested in the historic settlement of the province. We can provide information to them.

**THE SCRIVENER:** I understand that BC land surveyors can now do electronic survey plans—ESP.

**GODFREY:** Yes. We're very excited about that. It's really harmonizing the way survey plans typically are developed. Now BC surveyors can send us an electronic representation of their survey diagram. Notaries and lawyers can also electronically submit land surveyors' plans and documentation to us. We don't have to house hard-copy originals. Electronic surveys will be part of our large repository of survey plans and documents.

That is a fairly significant change in British Columbia. We're talking about a very deliberate and important step that eventually will allow these electronic survey plans to update a consolidated representation of the survey fabric in the province.

Surveyors will go into that fabric, pull out a piece, and do the work for an individual piece of property. In the act of registering the new plan, they will be able to update the fabric. There are some tremendous downstream advantages.

In large developments when you have a number of international owners, the exercise of getting those signatures on a plan can be extraordinarily complicated and risky—you might get some of the owners' signatures, then the plan gets lost, so you're back to square one.

In an electronic world, you can obtain all the signatures simultaneously and manage the process electronically. Certainly, the customer feedback we have received so far in using this technology in a pilot context has been very positive.

The ability to get all those signatures concurrently saves time and effort and it's far less risky.

**THE SCRIVENER:** And it is secure.

**GODFREY:** It is secure. Absolutely. We use state-of-the-art encryption. A characteristic of this system is that it relies on the same Juricert authentication as the electronic filing of land title documents.

When Notaries or lawyers and surveyors work on a transaction, it will be important that both the transfer instruments—the documents and the plan—are submitted electronically. The system doesn't contemplate easily the world in which a plan is submitted electronically and the documents are delivered in hard copy. It is very difficult for the land title operation to marry those processes efficiently.

We are encouraging the professions—Notaries, lawyers, and surveyors—to think about electronic submission and to make very deliberate steps at the outset of a transaction to decide

- are we going to do this one electronically?
- are we going to do it in hard copy?

If we're going to do it electronically, we must enlist everybody involved to ensure that that outcome is achieved.

**THE SCRIVENER:** How can a consumer see a survey plan that has been sent to the LTSA?

**GODFREY:** The surveyor can print the electronic image and provide a copy to the customer or the client can go to our office to get a copy. Another way is to access the plan through BC OnLine, for a small fee.

All we're doing is changing the interface between the professional and our office. You no longer have to provide paper or Mylar. This sets the stage for the future in British Columbia where more of this kind of work will be done electronically than on paper. There are a number of advantages. We can think about that in a green business context . . . we're using fewer resources to effect real property transactions. It's efficient. It's secure. It really is the way of the future.

**WANDA:** Particularly for people who are not living in the Lower Mainland or Victoria.

The initial pilot project with the land surveyors was an overwhelming success. In terms of EFS, although there are many more legal professionals to get onside, the goal of the Electronic Survey Plan Project was to get surveyors on board. The response was phenomenal. They want this.

**I can't overemphasize the importance of the roles of Notaries, lawyers, and surveyors as professionals in assisting the process.**

**GODFREY:** We launched the project using Crown land surveys as the first pilot area where electronic plans would be received. In general, 74 percent of the plans that could have been tendered electronically were sent that way.

**THE SCRIVENER:** That is superb. Please tell us about the demographics of the people who work at the LTSA.

**GODFREY:** It's fair to say that over the next 5 years, about 50 percent of the staff will be capable of retiring. That is one of the compelling factors that moves us to think about transforming the way we do business. We believe some of the routine work currently being done by staff can be done by computer.

For a very simple transfer of property from one owner to a new owner with a single lot, the comparison that must be done to register that transaction is not complicated. With the use of even more sophisticated computer technology, that kind of work we think can be done by a computer.

Technology will play a much larger role in that world than is true today. It will require legal reform as well as improved customer interface and advice and support. We believe the time is ripe in British Columbia to do that. Jurisdictions in Australia

and New Zealand and some European jurisdictions are already considering electronic registration in addition to electronic submission.

Our staff will deal with the more complicated transactions where more discretion and more understanding about the transaction are required for a successful registration.

**THE SCRIVENER:** Would a simple transaction be done by an individual without the services of a BC Notary or a lawyer?

**GODFREY:** No. The role of Notaries and lawyers in British Columbia still will be very important in terms of the way real property is conveyed.

We have a very reliable, cost-effective land title system, achieved in large measure by the role each one of the professional groups plays. When a citizen goes to a Notary's office and says, "I would like to sell my house and buy a new one," the Notary assumes a set of responsibilities—and provides advice to us on a series of professional undertakings when that transaction is ready to be registered. Those undertakings allow the system to react quickly to register the transaction with an average turnaround time of 4.4 days for land title documents and 4.6 days for *Land Title Act* survey plans.

Our "business transformation" will not be a change in our relationship with those professionals. Rather, when the application has been received from the Notary or lawyer, the computer conceptually may be the source of the decision as to whether or not to register the transaction. Again, we're talking about technology handling only the most straightforward transactions.

I can't overemphasize the importance of the roles of Notaries, lawyers, and surveyors as professionals in assisting the process.

**THE SCRIVENER:** What is the LTSA offering to attract and keep staff in this competitive marketplace?

**GODFREY:** For most people, property is the most valuable asset they own. At

the LTSA, we have a unique business realm—the chance for a citizen to become more familiar with the way property is conveyed in British Columbia.

For the kind of individual who is attracted to that type of work, this is a very exciting place. In BC, we're going to set the stage in Canada for modernizing the way property is conveyed. Our staff members are centre stage. A number of jurisdictions in Canada will be very interested in watching us closely in terms of our success.

We're constantly looking to the marketplace to ensure that as an employer, we are positioned competitively. We've engaged in programs to reward and recognize employee achievement. We have started a program with respect to wellness and providing funds to employees so they can pursue activities to improve their health and well-being.

We enjoy the support of our Human Resources Committee and

our Board. The Authority is well positioned to attract new talent into our organization. We're starting to add staff and all our training materials have been completely updated.

**Whatever we do in the future, there will be a home—a good home—for our province's historic records.**

**THE SCRIVENER:** When the Authority was first formed, it announced the closure of a number of its venues. Does the LTSA plan to close offices in the future or open offices in other regions. Are the present offices adequately serving the public?

**GODFREY:** Certainly we have built the financial capacity to continue to operate in our current locations—Kamloops, New Westminster, and Victoria. We do not have plans to close offices.

While those centres serve important areas in the province, we must remember that our business involves all areas of the province—from Fort St. John down to Cranbrook and across to Vancouver Island.

In future, technology will provide the basis to ensure that irrespective of your physical proximity to one of our offices, you will have access to all our products and services. That will be the most cost-effective and best vehicle to serve the public. While members of the public do go to our offices, that tends to be a very small percentage of what we do.

**THE SCRIVENER:** Are you making efforts to put BC's "historic records" into an electronic system?

**WANDA:** We take very seriously our role of preserving historic records. Whatever we do in the future, there will be a home—a good home—for our province's historic records.

**GODFREY:** A good example of that work is that within the conduct of the

surveyor general's records was a series of survey fieldbooks developed for Indian reserves in British Columbia. Those old documents were being used extensively and they were starting to physically deteriorate.

We have scanned them in colour; the electronic images will be available for our customers by the beginning of April. The originals will be stored in a proper archival inventory.

We have a challenge with some of the historic records for which we are responsible because they are literally as large as this boardroom table. Scanning would be very expensive. We must find the right balance between making the investment in scanning technology and the frequency with which a record is accessed. Some documents are needed quite infrequently.

Our vision is to consolidate the LTSA headquarters and the Land Title Office in a single location—with a state-of-the-art, fire-protected vault with controlled temperature to house all the historic records.

We understand the scale and scope of the collections. Since the inception of the Authority, we have retained the services of a document conservationist to go to each of the document collections throughout the organization and inventory them. Jean Topham is taking very old documents and ensuring that their physical condition is preserved and improved as well as possible.

**WANDA:** Jean is a very interesting professional. She looks for even a miniscule tear in a document and has created her own custom-formula glue. Nothing off the shelf will do!

Some of the documents are huge, with incredible detail on them.

**GODFREY:** They're all hand-drawn. Artwork, really.

**WANDA:** They're beautiful. You could perfectly preserve those records by simply closing the doors and not accessing them. Nobody could look at them, but they would be preserved.

Our conservationist is looking at the historic records that are most in need of restorative work. Then we

will gradually work our way through the other documents. They are a key focal point for some members of our customer sector. The surveyors are interested, as are historical associations.

Dr. Jacqueline Gresko, a member of our Stakeholder Advisory Committee, represents a huge constituency for whom the records are important. And of course the First Nations Summit wants to ensure the records are properly managed.

**GODFREY:** Although the very old documents are of interest primarily to historians and genealogists, they still are of considerable importance. The volume of records is simply staggering. When we move to a new place, you must come by for a visit! ▲



## LTSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND THEIR STAKEHOLDER NOMINATING ENTITIES

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Peter Cook (Board Vice Chair)

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Richard Swift, QC

### Association of British Columbia Land Surveyors

Michael Waberski  
Richard Wright

### British Columbia Real Estate Association

Robert Wallace

### British Columbia Association of Professional Registry Agents

Peter Baran

### First Nations Summit

Vacant

### Society of Notaries Public of British Columbia

Robert Reid

### Union of British Columbia Municipalities

Brian Ross

## LTSA STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE STAKEHOLDER ENTITY AND MEMBERSHIP LIST

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### David Bazett, Vice Chair

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Land Surveyors  
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### Ralston S. Alexander, QC

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### G. W. (Wayne) Braid

Society of Notaries Public  
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### Connie Fair

BC Assessment Authority  
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### Jacqueline Gresko, PhD

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### Michael Kader

Canadian Bankers Association

### Robert Laing

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### Debbie Larson

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of Professional Registry Agents  
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### Grant Parnell

Province of British Columbia  
Ministry of Agriculture and Lands  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Crown Land Administration Division

### Chief Robert Sam

First Nations Summit

### Richard Taylor

Union of British Columbia Municipalities  
General Manager, Victoria Operations