

# How the City of Laval's Legal Affairs Department Digitized its Practices

City of Laval's Legal Affairs Department, Attorney Marc-André Russell and Notarius



Since the adoption of Notarius' signature solutions, the City of Laval's Legal Affairs Department has been able to:

- ✓ Create more than 4,000 compliant electronic documents
- ✓ Complete 1,200 signature projects in one year
- ✓ Save 80% in signing-related fees
- ✓ Speed up processes and reduced multi-day turnaround times to a few hours

Operating in the third largest city in Quebec and the thirteenth in Canada, the City of Laval's Legal Affairs Department is mandated to provide the City with legal advice and support for its activities. It also acts as its representative in all administrative and judicial matters. In addition to managing various legal mandates and claims made to the City, the department also manages the Municipal Court and its clerk's office, with the exception of judges and their support staff.

For the City of Laval, the department is a hub where, for example, finance, engineering, urban planning, and the property assessment office come to obtain advice or to settle disputes. As a result, its performance has a considerable impact on the municipality's activities and on the services rendered to citizens.



Thanks to Notarius' signature solutions, the department was able to completely digitize its documents while continuing to meet its legal obligations. In addition, the department saw significant increases in employee efficiency.

Attorney Marc-André Russell, a strong advocate of digital tools, shared his experience with the adoption of Notarius' solutions within his department.

## Ensuring compliance and focusing on what matters

With hundreds of documents generated daily, Laval's Legal Affairs Department has made a significant technological shift in recent years. To ensure that its legal documents are compliant and to protect them from modifications, the department sought a legally reliable

digital solution. After evaluating the options on the market, Notarius' solutions quickly emerged as the ideal answer.

**"When it comes to archiving and given the numerous documents that are available on the servers, CertifiO for Employees allows us to ensure the reliability of documents in the long term."**

In addition to complying with Quebec's Archives Act by ensuring the longevity of information using PDF/A format, the adoption of the ConsignO Cloud and ConsignO Desktop signature solutions has also freed the department from time-consuming administrative tasks. By eliminating the printing, sending, and scanning steps, employees can now focus on more meaningful and motivating tasks. Russell adds that human errors are much less frequent, and he even estimates that the savings generated are more than 80%.



**“Before implementing Notarius’ solutions, there was a real risk of losing valuable information. With the CertifiO digital signature, which ensures electronic document compliance, we are able to securely digitize our documents. Searching for and verifying information is also much faster.”**

But that’s not all! In addition to speeding up once-tedious processes, Notarius’ solutions have significantly increased human-resource mobility. For example, an attorney employed by the city can sign from his office, and an administrator in the Department of Economic Development can sign in minutes, even from across the country. As a result, projects that used to take weeks due to administrative delays can move forward much faster.

## **A 100% electronic municipal court**

Taking the lead in Canada, the City of Laval’s Municipal Court was one of the first to eliminate paper. By reducing the time necessary for signing processes and affording different stakeholders the ability to sign documents from anywhere, the City reduced the time needed for hearings and rulings.

**“The Municipal Court is now paperless. [...] It is one of the first courts where people do not need paper. Everything is digital.”**



For example, a judge can electronically sign documents in the evening and on weekends, which reduces the waiting times for procedures which previously took several days.

The department’s digital reform has allowed the Municipal Court to repatriate powers for certain offences filed under the Criminal Code, including assault, impaired driving, and theft. While this type of offence would normally be tried before the Court of Quebec at the courthouse in Laval, the gains in efficiency obtained by the Municipal Court and a recent reform of the federal

law enabled the Government of Quebec and the City of Laval to establish a new way of collaborating.

In the end, more than 3,000 additional cases per year will be heard in the Municipal Court.

**“By participating in the digital transition movement, our department is helping to improve our practices and make justice more attainable.”**





## Attorney identities and accessibility of the courts

The CertifiO for Employees digital signature provides a digital identity for attorneys and judges as employees of the City of Laval's Legal Affairs Department. Each time a signature is affixed to a document, the legitimacy of the signature is verified through a certified digital infrastructure. In the end, this proven and secure technology is what has made it possible for the department to fully transition to digital processes.

This could, according to attorney Marc-André Russell, be adopted in other courts to optimize the performance of the courts in Quebec and Canada.

Mr. Russell points out that the massive adoption of digital solutions could reduce delays and allow individuals to save on fees.

Moreover, with government agencies such as the Quebec Land Registry making digital signatures mandatory, it is only a matter of time before all professions subject to compliance requirements will adopt digital signatures.

## A transformation that transcends the municipality

As a result of its reforms, the City of Laval's Legal Affairs Department has become a trailblazer in Quebec with respect to the digitization of legal services.

Mr. Russell mentions that while the field of law is conservative, things are beginning to change because digital identity technologies have proven their worth.

With mobile phones and computers, almost all citizens have access to transactional tools and communication platforms. Mr. Russell suggests that to remain connected with citizens, the judicial system should draw on what his department has done in recent years to adopt new and innovative practices.

**"There are many ways to make justice more efficient. The digital solutions that we have adopted, like the Notarius digital signature, have increased our performance and, most importantly, the services we provide to citizens."**





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