

Report on Canadian Government On-Line Activities

Leiden, Netherlands – October 2000

1) *Serving Canadians in a Digital World*

The Government of Canada is developing and using advanced information technologies to reap the economic and social rewards of the knowledge economy, and to deliver better government, under a wide-ranging initiative called Connecting Canadians.

A key part of the initiative is delivering government on-line. In the October 1999 Speech from the Throne, the government's annual priority-setting address, the federal government reaffirmed the importance of using the Internet to deliver information and services:

"The Government will become a model user of information technology and the Internet. By 2004, our goal is to be known around the world as the government most connected to its citizens, with Canadians able to access all government information and services on-line at the time and place of their choosing".

Part of that goal will be achieved by the end of 2000, when all laws, regulations, policies and information on key government programs and services, and the most commonly used forms will be available electronically.

Connecting citizens and delivering on-line government is a complex undertaking for Canada, one of a few countries in the world that is relatively under-populated. Canada has a population of 30 million spread across more than nine million square kilometres and spanning six time zones. Some 77% of the population is centred around towns and cities; the other 23% lives in rural and remote areas. There are two official languages, English and French.

Canada has a well-developed Internet infrastructure with all major cities connected to a high-speed backbone, the cost of access is relatively low (local calls are free) and an increasing proportion of the population has access. It is estimated that 45% of Canadians now use the Internet. In two years, this figure could reach 80%.

Survey research on service delivery shows the telephone remains the most popular way for Canadians to interact with government. However, the on-line channel is catching up and surpassing most traditional channels for the first time.

The task of delivering government on-line is being led by the government's employer and management board, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. The 2000 Federal Budget set aside \$160 million over two years as seed funding to get the initiative up and running.

A project office for Government On-Line has been established in the Board's Chief Information Officer Branch to co-ordinate government-wide planning, provide common frameworks and metrics to departments and agencies, and monitor progress.

In September of this year, Michelle d'Auray, a highly respected public servant with solid experience in e-commerce, was appointed Chief Information Officer for the Government of Canada to lead the initiative; and Helen McDonald, previously associated with Industry Canada's Connecting Canadians initiative, has just been appointed Director General of the GOL project office.

While the Treasury Board office is leading the initiative, individual departments across government have a large role to play. Each is responsible for reengineering its services for on-line delivery, and pursuing

opportunities for the integration of related information and services in ways that respond to the needs of citizens.

Industry Canada is especially key in its role in promoting the growth of information and communications technology industries and the smart use of technologies in all parts of the economy and society. The department is helping to equip schools, community centres and volunteer groups with electronic access, including a Smart Communities program to support and showcase the innovative use of technologies for community development and the delivery of public services.

2) **Drivers of Change**

There are three key primary drivers behind Canada's connecting agenda. Firstly, information and communication technologies are not only changing the nature of work but also the nature of relationships and of expectations, including the expectations that Canadian citizens and businesses have of their government.

Secondly, the impact of globalization on the economic and social structure means countries cannot make public policy in isolation of the global context.

The third driver is the push towards citizen-centred service delivery. Technology provides the opportunity to offer services in a timely and affordable manner, based on the needs of citizens not the needs of government. Government On-Line responds to these needs and to the growing global e-marketplace.

Canada has long recognized the opportunity that technology offers to improve services and productivity. Three noteworthy reports were published: *Blueprint for Renewing Government Services Using Technology* in 1995; the report of the Information Highway Advisory Council in 1995-97; and *Fast Forward: Accelerating Canada's Leadership in the Internet Economy*, in January 2000.

A number of strategies and initiatives are in place across government to support these changes under the broad umbrella of the Connecting Canadians (www.connect.gc.ca/) agenda. They include:

- **The Government On-Line (GOL) initiative** (www.gol-ged.gc.ca/), the government's plan to deliver electronic access to government information and services by December 31, 2004;
- **Strategic Directions for Information Management and Information Technology: enabling 21st Century Service to Canadians** (www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/Pubs_pol/ciopubs/TB_OIMP/sdimit_e.html), a strategy outlining broad-based visions and plans for a more citizen-centred government. It outlines a series of priorities to lever the government's significant investments in Information Management and Technology and move towards a more integrated, collaborative model of government;
- **Electronic Commerce Strategy** (www.e-com.ic.gc.ca), the policy framework to engender trust in electronic transactions. This includes legislation to protect personal information in private sector transactions, and to provide legal certainty for the use of electronic signatures and records, as well as a policy encouraging the use of cryptography for electronic commerce;
- **Canada On-line**, a variety of programs to increase public access to the Internet. Canada was the first country in the world to connect all its schools and libraries, and is now in the final stages of setting up 10,000 access points in communities across Canada through the Community Access Program; 5,000 rural and remote communities and 5,000 in urban neighbourhoods. The next step is to connect as all classrooms;
- **Cultural Content On-line**, a plan to bring Canadian culture into the digital age. Through consultations three areas were identified as key:
 - digitizing significant collections and setting up the virtual museum of Canada;

- assisting new media producers to create innovative cultural content; and
- improving access to Canadian cultural content through better visibility, branding and distribution.

3) Capability and the “Back Office”

The Government of Canada will implement e-government by building a strategic infrastructure comprising both shared departmental and government-wide components. Together, they are called the "federated architecture", and are distinguished from the unique departmental components that departments build purely for their own business needs. It is anticipated that all departments will be able to rely on this architecture as a utility through which they can share information and provide services directly to Canadians.

The following tasks are part of the proposed strategy for building this architecture:

- build an enhanced, secure Government of Canada Network (i.e., a secure electronic delivery channel across Canada);
- connect departmental networks to the Government of Canada network;
- centrally procure, manage and fund the Government of Canada network;
- ensure departmental networks conform to Government of Canada standards;
- assess the need for a multi-vendor network policy.

Significant progress has been made to date on the development of Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) to ensure the security and confidentiality of on-line transactions. A Policy for Public Key Infrastructure Management in the Government of Canada was completed in May 1999 http://www.cio-dpi.gc.ca/pki/Documents/documents_e.html.

There are already 17 PKI pathfinder projects and more than 100 PKI pilot projects using the Internet and PKI to deliver services on-line (www.cio-dpi.gc.ca/pki/home_e.html).

With respect to administrative systems, government is undergoing a renewal of its shared systems activities to ensure they support electronic service delivery.

4) Supply – “Front Office” Government Services or “Portals”

Two initiatives focused on citizens are converging to change and improve Canada’s service delivery systems – putting government on-line and integrating delivery of services across government through a single-window, in person and over the phone.

The overall service initiative, called Service Canada, is a partnership with organizations across government, providing services through access centres in communities, through the 1-800-OCANADA (1-800-6226232) telephone service and on-line through the Government of Canada’s primary doorway, the Canada Site.

On-line government is delivered through the Canada Site (www.canada.gc.ca), being revamped to make easier for citizens in Canada and around the world to navigate the vast number of electronic information and services on government web sites.

Under the Canada Site, services are being re-organized under three streams and subject cluster areas, and will be launched at the end of the year. An important element of this exercise is the adoption of

“common look and feel” standards across government to ensure government information and services are easily recognizable.

Many services are already available (see sections 6 and 7). The following web sites are examples of service groupings, available through the Government of Canada portal at www.canada.gc.ca:

- Canada Business Service Centres at www.cbsc.org, the premier gateway to government information for business;
- Canadian Consumer Information Gateway at www.consumerinformation.ca, for consumer information and services;
- ExportSource at www.ExportSource.gc.ca, the online source for export information;
- Youth Resource Network of Canada at www.youth.gc.ca, designed and managed by Youth offers a multitude of information on the employment world.

5) Consultation with Citizens and Business

Canada is placed among the top four countries in the world for its e-government initiatives according to Andersen Consulting.

The Statistics Canada's Household Internet Users Survey revealed that 42% of Canadian households contain at least one regular Internet user in 1999. This figure continues to grow. Three separate surveys conducted in 2000 have shown the percentage of Canadians using the Internet has climbed to around 60%.

At the start of 2000, EKOS Research predicted that 80% of Canadians would be on-line by 2002. While Canadians continue to favour telephone and in-person methods of communication with the federal government, there is an increased percentage that would like to access government programs and services over the Internet. As more Canadians come on-line and are comfortable with Internet technology, this percentage is predicted to steadily increase.

To help ensure electronic services meet the growing needs of customers, individual departments and agencies carry out extensive consultation as part of the service development process. Various approaches have been used, including electronic feedback channels, on-line surveys and discussion groups. For example, Human Resources Development Canada carries out annual on-line surveys to find out if electronic services are meeting expectations in the area of social security.

The Treasury Board Secretariat, as the management board, is providing leadership in the service improvement agenda by developing policy based on consultations and identification of best practices. Notable efforts in this area include national surveys of Canadian households and creation of a Senior Service Delivery Officials forum for key federal and provincial service providers. The national survey, conducted in April 1998 resulted in a *Citizens First*, a report by Erin Research. *Citizens First* defines five elements of service delivery that most strongly affect the citizen's perceptions of service delivery and offers clear direction for improving services.

6) E-consultations and Citizen Engagement

The Government of Canada is currently developing a policy statement and guidelines on engaging Canadians. This initiative results from a commitment to update the 1992 consultation guidelines and a recognition that consultations be better integrated into public policy-making and better reflect the public's expectations for more meaningful engagement with government. It also takes into account the emergence of Internet-based applications in this area.

In addition to a broad, overarching policy statement, the package will include a number of operational guidance documents as annex items, e.g. participant funding guidelines, evaluation criteria, and guidance on the use of electronic consultation/engagement.

A preliminary draft of the proposed policy and guidelines should be available by early 2001.

7) Update on Electronic Services to Citizens

Public Access and Learning

Canada's SchoolNet (www.schoolnet.ca) was established in 1993 and is designed to promote the effective use of information technology among Canadians by helping Canadian schools and public libraries connect to the Internet.

SchoolNet, with the assistance of its partners, successfully connected all Canadian schools and public libraries to the Internet on March 30, 1999. It is now planned that SchoolNet will continue to work with provinces, territories and the private sector to extend connectivity from schools to classrooms by March 31, 2001. In addition to the Community Access Program mentioned in section 2, current programs include:

- **Campus worklink**, which helps match the skills of Canada's post-secondary students and graduates to the needs of employers;
- **CanConnect**, a program to mobilize Canadian businesses, organizations and communities to help Canadian youth acquire skills required for success in the new knowledge-based economy;
- **Computers for schools**, an award-winning program that aims to donate surplus IT equipment from government and the private sector to educational establishments.

Employment

Human Resources Development Canada maintains an Internet-based job matching service, the Electronic Labour Exchange (ELE). Employers create a profile of the vacant position and job seekers create similar profiles describing their skills and experience. ELE then matches the two. The ELE web site is at <http://ele-spe.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/index.html>.

Other electronic services include:

- **Job Bank on the Internet**, an electronic listing of jobs, work or business opportunities provided by employers across Canada;
- **Job Bank Kiosks**; jobs, work or business opportunities are listed in kiosks on site at local Human Resource Centres of Canada, at selected public locations and in some provincial organizations and/or provincial ministries. Access is free of charge and available during the regular business hours of the host location;
- **AVRES**, a telephone listing of locally selected jobs, work or business opportunities accessible by telephone. Access is free but long distance charges may apply. The service is available 24 hours a day and listings are updated daily;
- **Worksearch**, a web site that aims to guide individuals through all aspects of looking for work including information on looking for work, training and becoming self-employed;
- **WorkinfoNET**, a web site that helps Canadians connect to the resources they need in the areas of jobs, work and recruiting, learning, education and training, occupations and careers, labour

market information and outlook, self-employment, workplace issues and supports, and financial help and issues; ;

- **Public Service Commission Federal Job Site** (http://jobs.gc.ca/home_e.htm), government job postings and post-secondary graduate recruitment calendars;
- **Youth Resource Network** (http://www.youth.gc.ca/jobopps_e.shtml), provides young people with help preparing for and finding work.

Social Security

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) is responsible for the provision of social security services in Canada, one of several functions of the organization. Its mission is to enable Canadians to participate fully in the workplace and the community. This includes:

- helping citizens prepare for, find and keep work;
- assisting Canadians in their efforts to provide financial security for themselves and their families;
- promoting a fair, safe, healthy, stable, co-operative, and productive work environment.

HRDC's web site (www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca) provides access to a wide range of information and newly introduced electronic services. The current strategic priorities for ESD have been defined in accordance with government-wide targets set through the Government On-Line initiative.

As a result of providing electronic services to customers, HRDC considers that it has improved the delivery of social security services to its clients by:

- providing fully bilingual, on-line integrated information and user friendly services that are citizen-centred;
- improving accessibility through providing 24 by 7 service (through the Internet and IVR); and
- simplifying processes for clients.

A number of factors have helped to ensure that electronic services are successful. These include:

- reciprocal links exchange with sites of similar interest;
- regular re-registration of Income Security Program's web pages to top search engines;
- use of meta-data;
- level of Internet usage of specific target groups (i.e. baby boomers and youth); and
- focus-testing.

HRDC has experienced an increase in departmental costs as a result of introducing its electronic services. These costs are attributed to an increase in human resources required to support Internet services and the need to purchase new technology. At present, no cost savings have yet been identified.

An on-line customer survey of HRDC's Income Security Programs was carried out in June 1998 - June 1999. Some 82% of respondents found the information available on-line was useful. Many who thought the site didn't meet their needs were looking for more interactive functions such as secure e-mail and on-line applications. Citizens who deal with HRDC have said they want single-window access to services that are delivered over a choice of delivery channels (Internet, telephone, mail and physical counters).

Health

Health Canada (www.hc-sc.gc.ca) has the overall responsibility for the provision of health services in Canada. However, the Office of Health and the Information Highway (OHIH) was created in 1997 in recognition of the growing importance of ICTs in the delivery of future health services. It was set up to assist the Minister of Health and Health Canada address new and evolving issues and develop a longer term strategy regarding Canada's Health Info-structure.

Through establishing OHIH, Health Canada gave itself a focal point for co-ordinating, facilitating and managing health infrastructure-related activities both within the department and with external stakeholders. Health Canada provides a considerable amount of health information through its website as well as simple interactivity through mini applications such as a height/weight machine and active living quizzes that help Canadians better understand current health issues.

Health Canada is a pioneering partner in secure electronic service delivery. Within a year this project will allow key initiatives, such as the First Nations Health Information System targeted at healthcare for example to remote Inuit communities, to communicate with securely and privately.

Tax

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) is committed to fully enabling electronic service delivery for all of its programs by 2004, with cost savings in the future depending on the number of users. An earlier project e-File (see below) has demonstrated that significant savings can be made in data entry and processing – approximately 60 full-time equivalents per million users. CCRA currently provides a range of electronic service delivery options offering a choice of media for citizens when filing tax returns:

- e-FILE, (<http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/menu/EmenuFAC.html>) a third-party tax filing system started in 1990; 5.5 million participants in 1999;
- TELEFILE (<http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/eservices/telefile/index-e.html>) introduced in 1998; 700,000 participants in 1999;
- Tax information Phone Service (TIPS) (<http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/eservices/tips/tips-e.html>); an automated telephone service that provides citizens with general and personal tax information;
- NETFILE, (<http://www.netfile.gc.ca/>); a pilot phase project introduced in 2000 which allows individuals to file tax and benefit returns via the Internet; 400,000 citizens will be participating in this pilot;
- CCRA's web site gives on-screen access to more than 5,000 public forms and documents which can be easily downloaded (<http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/formspubs/menu-e.html>).

NETFILE returns can be processed in about two weeks which ensures a faster refund. Electronic confirmation of receipt can be received in seconds. Security for NETFILE is ensured by personal identification numbers (PIN) numbers and secure socket layer 128 bit encryption. In an earlier pilot phase of NETFILE, it was discovered that PKI technology was too complex for clients and a security model adapted from TELEFILE is now being used for the current pilot.

Customer awareness of NETFILE has been stimulated by an advertising campaign plus publicity on television, radio and in newspapers regarding the launch of NETFILE. The agency is also working with the software industry on commercial products that will be able to use NETFILE. Although late participants and a few technical issues have limited the initial take up (but still reaching the projected target), feedback from customers has shown that this is a highly desirable service and it is expected that take up rates will grow significantly.

CCRA has also used the services of a research company to obtain information on the attitudes and opinions of Canadians towards electronic commerce and this information has proved very useful in planning agendas and timescales for e-services.

A virtual call centre has been set up allowing citizens to have access to Tax Service Office agents no matter where they live. This network of 46 offices receives on average 20 million calls per year.

Also to be launched later in 2000 is Corporate e-FILE (<http://www.cca-adrc.gc.ca/tax/business/t2return/fil0609-e.html>) which will enable businesses to file corporate income tax returns directly to the CCRA. This will be a stepping stone towards providing businesses with a total electronic solution.

8) Update on Electronic Services to Business

Fostering a growing competitive, knowledge-based Canadian Economy

Industry Canada is responsible for the provision of services to businesses in Canada and its mission is to foster a growing competitive, knowledge-based Canadian economy. It provides a wide range of services to business through its web site (www.ic.gc.ca).

Industry Canada has a mandate to help make Canadians more productive and competitive in the global economy and is one of the federal departments responsible for the provision of services to businesses in Canada. It delivers information and services through its primary web site, Strategis (www.strategis.gc.ca), launched in 1996. Strategis is a comprehensive site for Canadian businesses and consumers to help identify new markets, find business partners and locate emerging technologies.

A number of databases are on-line for direct queries and forms can be completed and transmitted on-line on the Strategis web site, including federal incorporations, patent and trademark protection, Investment Canada filings, lobbyist registration, and the Canadian company capability directory entries and updates.

Industry Canada has made progress in providing clients with on-line interaction and official on-line responses (other than receipt acknowledgement) for four services. These services are federal corporations, Investment Canada filings, on-line spectrum license auction, and the automated name search service.

Industry Canada also participates in a number of partnership business sites or portals which pull together information and forms from across government according to client needs. ExportSource (<http://exportsource.gc.ca>) provides access to a breadth of information for Canadian firms that want to expand their business in the international marketplace. The Canada Business Service Centres web site (<http://cbssc.org>) helps small and medium-sized businesses with an extensive database of programs and services, as well as interactive planning tools and information on pertinent regulations from all levels of government.

Employers Online (<http://employers.gc.ca>) is a Human Resource Development Canada/Industry Canada partnership web site for employers.

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency is involved in or seeking partnerships with the provinces in the creation of an electronic single-window registration service to business. The objective is for businesses to obtain a business number to register for programs, register a business name, or apply for certain provincial licences.

Procurement

Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) is responsible for the development of electronic government procurement in Canada. A range of well-developed e-procurement services is accessible through its web site (www.pwgsc.gc.ca).

The Automated Buyer Environment is an end- to-end procurement system that handles all aspects from receipt of requisition to bid evaluation. This system links seamlessly to a number of other databases and

procurement systems, including the key service, MERX (<http://contractscanada.gc.ca/en/tender-e.htm>), Canada's official tendering service.

MERX is an on-line service that advertises government contracting opportunities to potential bidders. Departments must use MERX for requirements subject to any of the trade agreements. More and more of the Government of Canada's requirements are advertised on MERX and this amounts to \$5 billion annually. MERX is accessible from any location in Canada on 24 hours day, seven days a week. Customers have free access to view the notices of opportunities on the Internet and pay a subscription fee for additional services. MERX also allows users to identify other suppliers ordering bid documents, helps organizations to determine their competitors and identify a bid partner, and provides an on-line support facility.

Contracts Canada (<http://contractscanada.gc.ca/en/index.html>), a partnership of 24 government departments and agencies, has launched a new registration system for suppliers who want to do business with the federal government.

The Supplier Registration Information (SRI) service provides for on-line registration and allows government buyers to search for sources of supply for low-dollar value opportunities not included in MERXtm. SRI can be accessed by all departments and agencies giving companies greater potential for opportunities. An important feature of SRI is the Procurement Business Number (PBN) which is created using the supplier's Canada Customs and Revenue Agency Business Number to uniquely identify a branch, division or office of the company. The PBN will eventually become the common identifier for all government purchasing and payment systems as government moves further towards electronic commerce.

Contracts Canada provides a range of e-procurement related services via PWGSC's web site. These services are organized into two categories to suit prospective users; those who are interested buying for government; and those who want to know how to do business with government.

The Buying Power 2000 application (BP2K) provides authorized federal employees with the capability to make on-line, low value purchases from electronic catalogues over the federal government Intranet, including confirmation of receipt and electronic settlement with the client department at the back end. On average, BP2K saves the government \$29 a transaction or 25% of the total administrative costs. The cost per transaction before the introduction of BP2K was nearly \$120.

The Standing Offer Index site on the government Intranet offers departments a searchable list of Standing Offers and Supply Arrangements.

For up-to-date information on the initiative to put the Government of Canada on-line, visit <http://www.gol-ged.gc.ca/>.