

# Chapter 1

## Service Quality



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# Service Quality

## Main Points

**1.1** The purpose of our audit was to see whether the federal government is providing better quality of service to Canadians, after a decade of commitments and a series of initiatives to improve it. In 1996, we provided a midcourse assessment of the government's progress. In the current audit, we revisited the same 13 services delivered by 10 government departments and agencies.

**1.2** The most significant improvement since 1996 has been to make telephone services more accessible. Canadians are now able to obtain faster responses to their enquiries once their calls are answered. Despite that improvement, however, we are concerned by the high percentage of calls not answered when lines are busy and calls abandoned while the caller waits on hold to speak to an agent. At the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (Taxation) the percentage of unanswered calls remains high at 54 percent, although it has improved since 1996, when it was 73 percent.

**1.3** For most services delivered by means other than telephone, such as counter service, there was not enough performance information for us to determine whether service has improved. The Passport Office has measured some of its key results and demonstrated significant improvement in its performance. Many departments and agencies have taken initiatives since 1996 to improve service but have not sufficiently measured the results.

**1.4** Departments and agencies need to consult more with their clients to identify the aspects of service that matter most to them, as well as the quality of service they expect. This information would help the service providers establish appropriate targets and indicators of performance to measure.

**1.5** Communication to clients at points of service has improved since 1996. Canadians visiting these offices are better informed about the level of service they can expect. However, more attention is needed to informing them on what it costs to provide the services, whether targets have been met and how they can lodge and resolve complaints.

## Background and other observations

**1.6** The demand by Canadians for services of the federal government — such as enquiries about citizenship and immigration, Old Age Security, passports, weather or statistical information — has increased significantly since 1996. Volumes of service are higher in 10 of 13 service lines we audited. At the same time, the environment for delivering services continues to evolve with rapid advances in information technology and growing use of alternative methods of service delivery.

**1.7** Telephone services have become increasingly prominent, while the use of counter services has declined. In the government telephone services we audited, the volume of telephone enquires climbed from 36 million in 1996 to 56 million in 1999, an increase of 54 percent. The numbers of written enquiries (mail, fax and e-mail), while still important in some services lines, are generally much lower.

**1.8** Although service managers have acted on our 1996 recommendations and sought ways to make continuous improvements, none of the recommendations has been implemented fully. However, we noted a shift among public service managers and staff toward a stronger focus on service and innovation.

**1.9** We were discouraged to find slow progress on the project to improve the government's telephone directory listings (the Blue Pages). The need to redesign them was identified in 1990 by the Public Service 2000 Task Force on Service to the Public.

**1.10** Over the past three years, departments and agencies have provided Parliament with more information on service quality, and the information they report is more likely to be meaningful. But better information is needed on performance trends and on costs.

**1.11** Since 1998, the Treasury Board Secretariat has given departments and agencies more guidance and support to improve service delivery. However, it has not systematically monitored progress across the government, and the information it has reported to Parliament has not been adequate to provide a clear understanding of progress in improving the quality of service to Canadians.

**The response of the Treasury Board Secretariat on behalf of the government is included at the end of the chapter. The Secretariat indicates that the new Blue Pages telephone directory format will be implemented according to established publication schedules. The Secretariat agrees with our recommendations on measurement, client satisfaction and reporting. It indicates that it is working with departments to develop an approach designed to promote continuous improvement in service delivery across the government.**

## Introduction

### Service quality is important to all Canadians

**1.12** All Canadians require the services of the federal government at one time or another. These could be services they use regularly in their everyday lives, such as getting weather information, or services they need occasionally. For example, Canadians may have to obtain a passport when travelling to another country. Once abroad, they may need consular services. When returning, they must go through customs and may have to pay taxes and duties on goods they bring back to Canada (see Chapter 5, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency — Travellers to Canada: Managing the Risks at Ports of Entry).

**1.13** At certain times in their lives, some Canadians may require services related to Canada Pension Plan benefits and Employment Insurance benefits (see Chapter 2, Human Resources Development Canada — Service Quality at the Local Level). Similarly, Canadians who wish to start a business may look to the federal government for economic and market information.

**1.14** Given the pervasiveness of government services and their importance to Canadians, their quality is a matter of wide concern. As clients of specific services, Canadians have the right to expect high quality. At the same time, the government has the obligation to provide high quality at an affordable cost. To reach an appropriate balance between cost and quality, it has to weigh the interests of individual clients against the broader interests of all citizens and taxpayers.

### The government has expressed its commitment to service quality since 1990

**1.15** In its 1990 white paper, “Public Service 2000, The Renewal of the Public

Service of Canada”, the government explicitly committed itself to delivering high-quality services to Canadians. The President of the Treasury Board was assigned overall responsibility for this commitment. Starting in 1992, the government required departments and agencies to put in place some key elements to improve service quality. These included targets for delivery, measures of performance toward those targets, cost information and complaint and redress mechanisms. Departments and agencies were to communicate these elements to clients at points of service, along with descriptions of the services and pledges of the quality of service that clients could expect.

**1.16** In June 1995, the government launched the Quality Services Initiative. It outlined specific actions to be phased in across the government over three years. While the key elements established in 1992 were an integral part of the Quality Services Initiative, the new approach stressed the importance of client satisfaction, employee involvement, innovation and the celebration of success.

**1.17** The government’s initiatives to improve service quality have evolved since 1996, when we last reported on their progress. The government remains publicly committed to strengthening the quality of service delivery. It has reaffirmed its commitment on a number of occasions and in a variety of ways (see Exhibit 1.1).

**1.18** In April 1998, the government responded to the Fifth Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which dealt with our 1996 audit of service quality. The government’s response clearly emphasized a commitment to service quality, and outlined a framework for organizing services from a citizen’s standpoint.

**1.19** Other jurisdictions in Canada and abroad are also moving to make government services more client-focussed and to improve their quality. For example,

**All Canadians require the services of the federal government at one time or another.**

**Canadians have the right to expect high-quality service. At the same time, the government has the obligation to provide high quality at an affordable cost.**

the Province of Ontario is implementing its “Customer-Centred Government”, a strategy that aims to deliver service of high quality from the customer’s perspective and to increase public satisfaction. The Province of New Brunswick has established a corporation, Service New Brunswick, with a mission to improve the delivery of government services to the public. One improvement is electronic service delivery through a network of commercial service centres.

**1.20** The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently reported that making service more responsive to citizens is a key

objective of public management reform in all member countries. The United States government is implementing the National Partnership for Reinventing Government. A focal point of that reform effort is to put customers first in service delivery. The United Kingdom’s “Service First” initiative, built on its Citizen’s Charter, established new principles of public service delivery. It focusses on responsiveness, quality, effectiveness and working together with other service providers.

**Time to revisit service quality**

**1.21** In 1990, the Public Service 2000 initiative envisioned that public servants

**Exhibit 1.1**

**Government Commitments to Service Quality Since 1996**

Date	Commitment
February 1997	<p><i>Clerk of the Privy Council, Fourth Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada</i></p> <p>“Commitment to quality service is a fundamental responsibility of the public sector.”</p> <p>“We must relentlessly pursue the elimination of self-inflicted impediments to improved service delivery.”</p> <p>“We need to take a ‘whole-of-government’ approach in service delivery which looks outward to the public interest.”</p>
September 1997	<p><i>Speech from the Throne to Open the First Session, Thirty-Sixth Parliament of Canada</i></p> <p>“The Government will continue to renew the Public Service of Canada to ensure its members have the skills and dedication to continue serving Canadians well.”</p>
March 1998	<p><i>Clerk of the Privy Council, Fifth Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada</i></p> <p>“We will continue our efforts to focus service delivery around citizens’ needs and on improving citizens’ access to government.”</p>
April 1998	<p><i>Response to the Fifth Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, on Service Quality</i></p> <p>“The Government is committed to strengthening the quality of service delivery and enhancing the use of service standards for all government programs.”</p> <p>“The Government has established within the Treasury Board Secretariat a new Sector with the mandate to focus on government-wide approaches to improving service to Canadians.”</p> <p>“Measurement and reporting are central to understanding the present state, and to tracking progress towards service improvement...it is important to monitor progress regularly.”</p> <p>“As part of the Treasury Board’s increased emphasis on improving service delivery...the new Service Sector will be studying appropriate ways of monitoring departmental performance and reporting on progress.”</p> <p>“The Government is committed to citizen-centred service delivery [which is] a broader concept, comprised not only of service standards, but also leadership, planning, good management, and measurement and reporting of performance, and the implementation of new integrated approaches to service delivery, such as single windows and partnerships.”</p>



by the year 2000 would be operating in a much more flexible and service-oriented environment. Our 1996 audit assessed the government's progress at midcourse toward establishing such an environment. Our report made several recommendations to improve service, many of which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts also made in its Fifth Report (see Appendices A and B).

**1.22** After a decade of government commitments to service quality, and a

series of initiatives to improve it, we believe that now is a good time to look at the results.

#### Focus of the audit

**1.23** We audited the same 13 service lines covered in our 1996 audit, including the same 6 telephone operations (see Exhibit 1.2). These 13 service lines represent highly visible, frequently used services to the public. Our purpose was to see whether their quality has improved since 1996, and by how much. We looked

**After a decade of government commitments to service quality, and a series of initiatives to improve it, we believe that now is a good time to look at the results.**

#### Exhibit 1.2

#### Service Lines and Telephone Operations We Examined

Department	Service Lines	Telephone Operations	Other Operations
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (Customs)	Customs inspection at an airport or a border crossing		√
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (Taxation)	Answering enquiries about taxation matters at a counter or by telephone	√	√
Citizenship and Immigration Canada	Providing information about citizenship and immigration	√	
Environment Canada	Providing weather information by telephone and other means		√
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade	Issuing a Canadian passport		√
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade	Providing consular services at a Canadian mission overseas		√
Human Resources Development Canada (Employment Insurance)	Providing Employment Insurance benefits	√	√
Human Resources Development Canada (Income Security)	Providing Old Age Security or Canada Pension Plan benefits	√	√
Industry Canada	Providing information at a Canada Business Service Centre	√	√
Parks Canada Agency (formerly Canadian Heritage)	Providing services to visitors at Canadian national parks		√
Public Works and Government Services Canada — Reference Canada	Answering the 1-800 number (in the Blue Pages) and telling how to contact specific government units	√	
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	Providing police assistance in towns and villages served by the RCMP		√
Statistics Canada	Providing statistical information at the local Reference Centres of Statistics Canada		√

**Fiscal restraint and downsizing of the public service in the 1990s forced the government to find smarter and more cost-effective ways to do business, including the way it delivers services to Canadians.**

**The Internet has become a major tool for providing information.**

**The telephone has become a preferred mode of service for many clients and the public.**

at whether the departments and agencies that deliver the services have measured their results and reported them to Parliament. We also examined what the Treasury Board Secretariat has done to help them improve service quality. Our audit covered the delivery of the services between 31 March 1996 and 31 October 1999.

**1.24** As this audit focussed on results, we asked departments and agencies to provide us with their performance information. However, we did not audit its accuracy. We assessed the information using the criteria developed for our audit.

**1.25** This chapter provides a general assessment of progress made in improving service quality government-wide. It is not intended to give a full account of quality in each service line we covered. Where appropriate, we used specific examples to illustrate general points.

**1.26** Further details on our objectives, approach and criteria are presented at the end of this chapter in **About the Audit**.

## **Observations and Recommendations**

### **The Environment for Service Delivery in the Federal Government**

**1.27** Fiscal restraint and downsizing of the public service in the 1990s forced the government to find smarter and more cost-effective ways to do business, including the way it delivers services to Canadians. A number of factors have provided both opportunities and challenges for the government in meeting its service quality commitments.

**1.28 Advances in information technology.** Information technology has grown exponentially. The Internet has become a major tool for providing information, and Canadians can now turn

to the Web sites of all departments and agencies. An example is the spectacular growth in the use of the Internet for specific information on national parks, national historic sites and canal and national marine conservation areas — from a negligible volume in 1995–96 to around 25 million “hits” in 1998–99.

**1.29** When Canadians were asked recently how they wanted to obtain government services, many favoured electronic service delivery. A quarter of the respondents were comfortable with kiosks and almost 20 percent preferred Internet-based services. In the 1999 Speech from the Throne, the government said it would become “a model user of information technology and the Internet.” Its “Connecting Canadians” initiative has a goal of making all government information and services available to Canadians on-line by 2004.

**1.30 Call centres have become widespread.** The telephone has become a preferred mode of service for many clients and the public. Several departments and agencies are using call centres as a more cost-effective method of service delivery. Examples are Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Human Resources Development Canada. The private sector’s use of call centres has also grown. For example, the Amex Canada Inc. call centre has grown in the past three years from fewer than 200 agents to nearly 800. This call centre provides telephone services to clients in Canada and the United States and, through its outsourcing division, to clients of other businesses.

**1.31 Alternative and integrated service delivery.** The federal government has established a number of new ways to deliver public services. These include service agencies, like the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (created in April 1997), Parks Canada Agency (December 1998, formerly in the Department of Canadian Heritage) and the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency

(November 1999, formerly Revenue Canada). The government has also set up collaborative and partnering arrangements among departments, and with other governments, the private sector and not-for-profit organizations. It is using them increasingly to provide more cost-effective services. An example is Industry Canada’s network of Canada Business Service Centres, which involves joint ventures with other federal departments, provincial ministries, municipal governments and private sector organizations.

**1.32** Calls for “single window” service delivery have required that departments and agencies look for ways to manage their services jointly and sometimes to deliver services with other levels of government. For example, in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Regional Municipality of Hamilton–Wentworth, Human Resources Development Canada has established a single window where the public can go for services related to income support, employment preparation and job searching. As we completed our

audit, there were also a number of pilot projects under way through Service Canada, a government-wide initiative to provide Canadians with one-stop access to a range of services (see Exhibit 1.3).

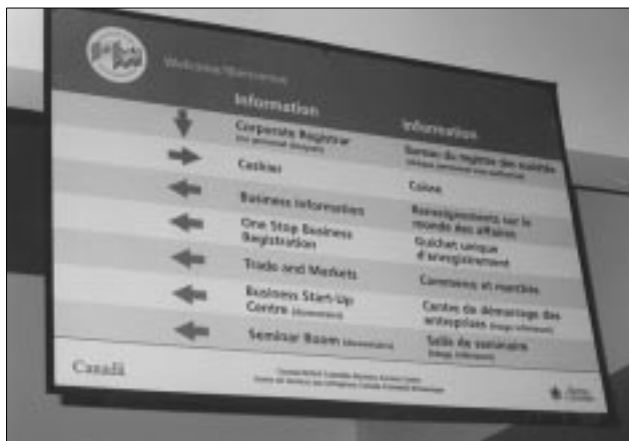
### Progress in Improving Service Quality

#### Most service volumes have increased since 1996

**1.33** Since our last audit, one of the most noticeable changes in the service lines has been the sheer volume of services they provide. Volumes are higher in 10 of 13 service lines we examined (see Exhibit 1.4). Telephone services have become increasingly prominent, while the use of counter services has declined. And numbers of written enquiries (mail, fax, e-mail), while still important in some service lines, are generally much lower.

**1.34** In 1996 we noted that direct deposit payments could be a cost-effective way to reduce unnecessary telephone calls. Since then, as the current audit found, direct deposit of major payments has increased significantly. At

**In most of the service lines we audited, volumes of service are higher than in 1996.**



*The Canada-British Columbia Business Service Centre features federal-provincial partnering to provide services for business (see paragraph 1.31).*



*A storefront concept provides a welcoming appearance and good access to service. The centre is located in a high traffic area.*

**In the government telephone services we audited, the volume of enquiries has increased 54 percent in three years.**

**Where possible, we tracked trends in service performance since 1996. Some service lines showed improvement in aspects of service quality.**

31 March 1999, the government was using direct deposit for 81 percent of Old Age Security payments and 77 percent of Canada Pension Plan payments — each up 17 percent since 1996. Direct deposit of Child Tax Benefit payments was at 81 percent, an increase of 24 percent over 1996.

**1.35** Nevertheless, the volume of telephone enquiries overall has continued to grow. In the government telephone services we audited, the volume climbed from 36 million in 1996 to 56 million in 1999, an increase of 54 percent in three years (see Exhibit 1.5). As a result, a number of departments and agencies had to expand their telephone services. Taxation had to restructure some of its telephone operations: it now has a call centre in Toronto dedicated to telephone operations only, with counter services available at other locations. In Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada now provides most of the information on its services by telephone. It has consolidated 23 small telecentres into three large call centres in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

**1.36** Departments rely increasingly on methods of service delivery that do not require direct contact with the client.

For example, improved telephone technology allows automated voice response systems to handle a higher share of simple enquiries. In 1998–99, almost 60 percent of enquiries to the telephone services we examined were handled by automated systems. Another means of service delivery is the Internet. Contacts to obtain weather information from Environment Canada’s Web site jumped from fewer than two million in 1996 to well over 50 million in 1999.

**Some demonstrated improvements in service quality**

**1.37** We asked the departments and agencies to provide us with performance results for the 13 service lines from 1 April 1996 to 31 March 1999. Where possible, we tracked trends in service performance since 1996. In some cases, we were able to assess performance in meeting service delivery targets (for example, timeliness and accessibility) established by the departments and agencies.

**1.38** Four of the six telephone operations and one other service provided performance data that demonstrated improvement in at least some aspects of service quality. The four telephone operations were in:

**Exhibit 1.3**  
**Service Canada**

Service Canada is a government-wide initiative undertaken in 1998 by the Treasury Board Secretariat. Its purpose is to provide Canadians with one-stop access to a range of government services in person, by telephone, or electronically through the Internet. It involves three types of services: providing general information about federal programs and services and those of other levels of government; offering multiple transactions through one-stop access points; and providing referrals to sources of more detailed information.

For 1999–2000, Service Canada’s priorities included:

- putting in place an in-person service delivery network, supported by electronic and telephone infrastructure;
- laying the groundwork for the introduction of electronic transactions through the Internet; and
- enhancing the government’s database for telephone inquiries.

At the time of our audit, Service Canada had completed its planning phase and the government had provided funding for a two-year development phase, to include pilot projects.

- Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (Taxation);

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada;

- Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC–Employment Insurance); and

- Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC–Income Security).

The other service was the Passport Office of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

**1.39** It is important to note that these cases reflect measured progress in only some aspects of service quality.

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**Exhibit 1.4**
**Service Volumes — 1995–96 and 1998–99**

Department	Service	Volume		Increase (Decrease) Percentage
		1995–96	1998–99	
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (Customs)	Travellers processed Airports Land crossings	13.4 million 87.9 million	18.1 million 82.8 million	35 (6)
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (Taxation)	General and business enquiries Telephone Counter	11.1 million 2.6 million	15.9 million 2.8 million	43 8
Citizenship and Immigration Canada	Telephone enquiries answered	1.1 million <sup>1</sup>	3 million <sup>2</sup>	173
Environment Canada — Weather	Enquiries answered (mostly automated)	50 million	37 million	(26) <sup>3</sup>
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade — Passport	Passports issued	1.4 million	1.6 million	14
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade — Consular	Canadians assisted	1.5 to 2 million	2.3 million	15–53
Human Resources Development Canada — Employment Insurance	Telephone enquiries answered	19.2 million	31.2 million	63
Human Resources Development Canada — Income Security	Telephone enquiries answered	3.7 million	4.5 million	22
Industry Canada — Canada Business Service Centres	Enquiries answered (telephone and walk-in)	687,000	790,000	15
Parks Canada Agency	Visitors to parks	15.3 million	15 million	(2)
Public Works and Government Services Canada — Reference Canada	Telephone enquiries answered	748,000	848,000	13
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	Calls for police assistance	2.4 million	2.6 million	9 <sup>4</sup>
Statistics Canada — Reference Centres	Client contacts	488,000	373,000	(24) <sup>5</sup>

All figures are rounded.

<sup>1</sup> For 1994–95.

<sup>2</sup> Includes enquiries for both immigration and citizenship, as the call centres were consolidated in 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Decrease in telephone enquiries was due to closure of weather offices and increase in Internet access.

<sup>4</sup> Data based on incidents recorded by RCMP's Operational Statistical Reporting system; excludes a significant number of unrecorded calls for assistance.

<sup>5</sup> Decrease in telephone enquiries was due partly to increase in enquiries through the Internet.

**Source:** Departmental records (unaudited)

Departments and agencies do not always set targets for, or measure, all aspects of service quality and client satisfaction that may be relevant.

**1.40 Telephone services: progress but some concerns.** In 1996, we noted serious problems with accessibility of service in large telephone operations. This

area shows the most significant improvement in service quality.

**1.41** A caller's first priority is to gain access to the telephone system. Busy telephone lines were cited as the most common problem by respondents to the Citizens First survey (carried out for the Citizen-Centred Service Network, see paragraph 1.65). Even callers who do not

**Exhibit 1.5**

**Telephone Operations We Examined**

Departments and Operations	Number of Call Centres	Volume of Calls Handled <sup>1</sup>		
		By Automated Systems	By Agents	TOTAL
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (Taxation)				
(1995-96)	47	2,100,000	9,000,000	11,100,000
(1998-99)	49	5,100,000	10,800,000	15,900,000
Citizenship and Immigration Canada — Telecentres				
(1994-95) <sup>2</sup>	23	664,000	450,000	1,114,000
(1998-99)	3	1,500,000	1,500,000	3,000,000
Human Resources Development Canada — Employment Insurance Info-Centres				
(1995-96)	24	13,100,000	6,100,000	19,200,000
(1998-99)	11	24,100,000	7,100,000	31,200,000
Human Resources Development Canada — Income Security Program Call Centres				
(1995-96)	8	not available	3,700,000	3,700,000
(1998-99)	10	not available	4,500,000	4,500,000
Industry Canada — Canada-Ontario Business Call Centre				
(1995-96)	1	114,000	83,000	197,000
(1998-99)	1	83,000	94,000	177,000
Public Works and Government Services Canada — Reference Canada Telecentre, National Capital Region				
(1995-96)	1	not applicable <sup>3</sup>	748,000	748,000
(1998-99)	1	not applicable <sup>3</sup>	848,000	848,000

1 All figures are rounded.

2 1995-96 data not available.

3 Does not have an automated voice response system.

**Source:** Departmental records (unaudited)

get a busy signal may abandon the call in frustration if the telephone continues to ring with no answer. Some may get an answer but abandon the call if they have to wait too long on hold (see Exhibit 1.6).

**1.42** So an important indicator of the quality of telephone services is the proportion of calls that go unanswered (whether busy or abandoned). As Exhibit 1.7 shows, over the past three years this proportion has fallen in the four largest of the six telephone services we examined.

**1.43** Nevertheless, the proportion of calls that go unanswered remains high — in 1998–99 at 10 percent and higher in the six telephone operations we examined. By comparison, good practice in the private sector puts the proportion at three to five percent.

**1.44** In 1998–99, 28 percent of calls to Citizenship and Immigration Canada were not answered. In Taxation, it was 54 percent, compared with 73 percent three years earlier. The fact that five of every 10 calls go unanswered does not mean that half the callers do not get service. It does mean that many may have

to make several calls before they are served.

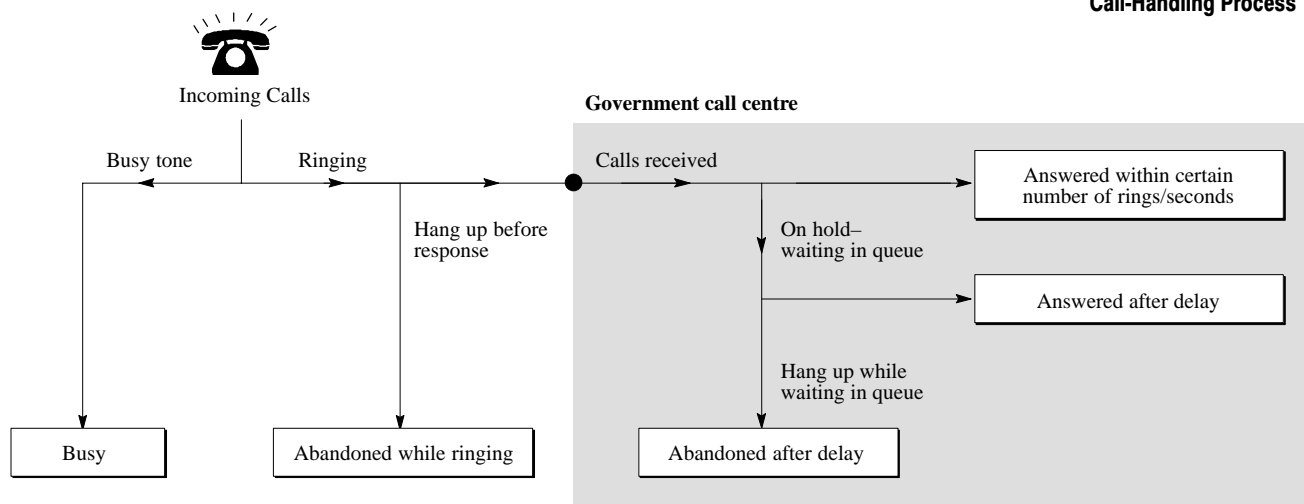
**1.45** Some telephone services have established targets for the proportion of answered calls that are answered within a certain number of rings or a certain number of seconds. The largest of the operations with such targets and with performance data for several years (HRDC–Income Security) showed significant improvement. Its target for answered calls is to answer 95 percent within three rings. From achieving only 54 percent in 1994–95, this service improved to 98 percent in 1998–99. HRDC–Employment Insurance also exceeded the same target and achieved 99 percent in 1998–99.

**1.46** In the other two operations with like targets (Reference Canada and the Canada-Ontario Business Call Centre), performance has declined since 1995–96. Each service has a target for answered calls of 85 percent answered within three rings. In 1995–96, Reference Canada reached 93 percent but dropped to 83 percent in 1998–99. The Canada-Ontario Business Call Centre achieved 90 percent in 1995–96, compared with 84 percent in 1998–99. In

**An important indicator of the quality of telephone services is the proportion of calls that go unanswered. This has fallen, but still remains high.**

Exhibit 1.6

Call-Handling Process



**Telephone services show mixed performance in the length of time a caller waits on hold or in a queue.**

the latter case, Industry Canada officials attributed the decline in performance to problems with staff turnover in 1998–99, which they indicated have been resolved.

**1.47** Another measure of the quality of telephone service is the length of time a caller waits on hold or in a queue after the call is answered (see Exhibit 1.7). Here, the available data show mixed performance. HRDC–Income Security, the Canada-Ontario Business Call Centre and Reference Canada met their performance targets in 1998–99. In the Canada-Ontario

Business Call Centre and Reference Canada, however, the wait time in queue has increased since 1995–96. The other three telephone services (Taxation, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, HRDC–Employment Insurance) did not meet their wait-time targets. However, Taxation reduced its average wait times from 111 seconds in 1995–96 to 80 seconds in 1998–99.

**1.48** Service lines have generally improved telephone services by extending their hours of service. Of the telephone

**Exhibit 1.7**

**Accessibility of Telephone Services**

Departments and Operations	Calls Unanswered (Busy and Abandoned) Percentage	Wait Time in Queue	
		Target	Actual
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (Taxation)			
(1995–96)	73	180 seconds	111 seconds
(1998–99)	54	50–70 seconds	80 seconds
Citizenship and Immigration Canada — Telecentres			
1994–95 <sup>1</sup>	65	no target	–
(1998–99)	28	20 seconds	50 seconds
Human Resources Development Canada — Employment Insurance Info-Centres			
(1995–96)	18	80% within 150 seconds	76%
(1998–99)	14	95% within 150 seconds	72%
Human Resources Development Canada — Income Security Program Call Centres			
(1995–96)	47	180 seconds	98 seconds
(1998–99)	10	180 seconds	37 seconds
Industry Canada — Canada-Ontario Business Call Centre			
(1995–96)	6	18 seconds	7 seconds
(1998–99)	12	18 seconds	15 seconds
Public Works and Government Services Canada — Reference Canada Telecentre, National Capital Region			
(1995–96)	8	not applicable <sup>2</sup>	not applicable <sup>2</sup>
(1998–99)	13		

<sup>1</sup> 1995–96 data not available.

<sup>2</sup> Does not have an automated voice response system.

**Source:** Departmental records (unaudited)



operations we examined, all but Reference Canada make basic information accessible around the clock, seven days a week, through interactive voice response systems or automated telephone information systems. Reference Canada does not use automated systems because it provides information on many government services, and needs to interact with callers to assess their requirements. To focus more on this personal service and to support initiatives such as Service Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada is replacing Reference Canada with a new “1-800-O-Canada” service.

**1.49 Other services.** In other service operations, we noted that the Passport Office has significantly improved its performance in issuing passports by mail within its target of 10 days from application. From 63 percent of passports issued within 10 days in 1995–96, it improved to 97 percent in 1998–99.

#### **Some services lack information needed to demonstrate progress**

**1.50** Six of the 13 service lines have not provided performance information in a form that demonstrates whether they have improved service quality since 1996. In most cases, they have not tracked performance results systematically against targets or over time, or have not rolled up results annually, or have no systems to collect results measured at local levels and report national performance. The six service lines are delivered by:

- Customs (customs inspection)
- Environment Canada (providing weather information)
- Foreign Affairs and International Trade (consular services)
- Parks Canada (services to national park visitors)
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (providing police assistance)

- Statistics Canada (providing statistical information)

**1.51** These same service lines may indeed have improved service quality, given the initiatives they have taken. For example:

- Customs introduced changes to speed up the clearance of low-risk, frequent travellers entering Canada at major border crossings and at one airport.
- Environment Canada now provides more precise five-day weather predictions.
- Consular Service now operates an after-hours emergency line to Ottawa from posts abroad, supported by a computer system that allows access to case information worldwide.
- Parks Canada initiated a toll-free telephone service for reservations in national park campgrounds of Atlantic Canada, the Prairies and British Columbia. Last year it also introduced a national 1-800 number where callers can ask for general information.
- The RCMP developed a differential response model — a systematic way to identify priorities in responding to calls for police assistance. Several detachments across Canada now use this model.

- Statistics Canada introduced a client “helpline” for users of its electronic products, including Internet commercial services.

**1.52 Departments and agencies should measure the results of service performance and track them over time to identify changes in service quality and be able to demonstrate progress.**

#### **Unsatisfactory progress with the Blue Pages**

**1.53** In 1990, the Public Service 2000 Task Force on Service to the Public identified the need to improve the Blue Pages — the government’s telephone directory listings. The purpose was to make it easier for Canadians to find the

**Some service lines have not provided performance information in a form that demonstrates whether they have improved service quality since 1996.**

**In 1990, the Public Service 2000 Task Force on Service to the Public identified the need to improve the Blue Pages.**

**The Treasury Board Secretariat partnered with Public Works and Government Services Canada to redesign the Blue Pages.**

**The Blue Pages project has made little progress. A co-ordinated effort is now needed.**

right telephone number for the government service they wanted.

**1.54** In 1996, we noted some changes in the structure of the Blue Pages but said that further improvement was possible. In 1997, the Treasury Board Secretariat partnered with Public Works and Government Services Canada (Government Telecommunications and Informatics Services — GTIS) to redesign the Blue Pages.

**1.55** The objective was to make the Blue Pages easier to use by listing the services of all levels of government by type of service instead of by provider (department or agency). Adding new information, such as hours of operation and Web site addresses, was to improve access to services. A new electronic platform was to be developed by June 1999 to improve the collection of information and allow for the integration of provincial and municipal information. Detailed plans were prepared, and in March 1999 the government gave the Secretariat approval to go ahead with revamping the Blue Pages. The project was to be completed by the end of 2000.

**1.56 Progress has been slow.** In the current audit, we were discouraged to find that this project has made little progress. By the end of 1999, only seven cities across Canada had completed pilot projects. The City of Kingston piloted a directory listing of three levels of government (see Exhibit 1.8). The Province of Ontario has agreed to a province-wide roll-out of the new Blue Pages in 2000, beginning with Kitchener-Waterloo. However, it is not clear to us how the roll-out in the rest of Canada can be achieved by the end of 2000.

**1.57** GTIS told us that in September 1999 it suspended work on developing the electronic platform, due to

lack of funds. At the time of our audit, it was looking for alternative funding to resume the project. In the meantime, the Secretariat is continuing with its project to secure the participation of other levels of government and start negotiations with telephone companies.

**1.58** The purpose for the original collaboration between the Secretariat and GTIS was to take advantage of the expertise of each. Both have to work in tandem to move the project forward. A co-ordinated effort is needed now to ensure that the benefits of the redesign are not deferred, and to minimize the project's cost. Currently, only partial cost information is available. As part of the management control framework for this project, and in order to carry out proper business-case and cost-benefit analysis, project authorities need to track total costs.

**1.59 Learning from the American experience.** A blue pages redesign project for federal listings has been under way in the United States since 1995. The U.S. Vice-President has called it an important government-wide service initiative. The project's milestone reports indicate that by the end of 1999, 37 states were using the updated directories.

**1.60** The Treasury Board Secretariat took the initiative to learn from the U.S. model for its electronic platform, which was provided to Canada. The GTIS project plan includes determining the extent to which Canada can make use of the U.S. platform. In the meantime, the Ontario government has begun "Canadianizing" the U.S. model.

**1.61 Given a decade of activity already spent on the Blue Pages redesign project, the government should set realistic target dates for its timely completion and ensure a co-ordinated approach by the organizations responsible for the project.**

Exhibit 1.8

Redesigning the Blue Pages to Help the Public Find the Right Telephone Number

The Blue Pages, which contain federal and other government listings, are included in 143 telephone directories across Canada. Traditionally, names of departments have been listed rather than the program or service. Research undertaken for the redesign project showed that citizens prefer listings by function for all orders of government. They want larger print, local street addresses, hours of operation and e-mail addresses.

For example, the new Blue Pages of Kingston, Ontario use a large-type, key-word heading such as 'EMPLOYMENT' to identify employment insurance and related telephone numbers for all levels of government. The old Blue Pages of Ottawa-Hull list the telephone numbers under the names of departments, for example, Human Resources Development Canada.

NEW

OLD

**NEW**

**DRIVERS AND VEHICLES —Continued**

Licensing Agents  
Deseronto 370 Main ..... 308-2917  
Elgin 15 Main ..... 358-8056  
Genesee 178 Garden ..... 303-7287  
Kingston  
702 Bathfrd ..... 308-8021  
Napawan  
3-115 Industrial ..... 354-3522  
Verona Hwy3603ath ..... 374-3094  
Westport Church ..... 273-2145  
Parking Permits for the Disabled  
Dial ..... 1 800 368-4886  
Used Vehicle Information Package  
Dial ..... 1 800 367-6847  
TTY Only ..... 1 800 401-8866  
Vehicle Certification Inspection  
358 Counter ..... 545-4768  
For Long Distance  
Dial ..... 1 800 267-6283  
Vehicle Quisize Overweight Permits  
358 Counter ..... 545-4765

**DRUG BENEFITS**

Seniors 88 Plus  
1055 Princess Kingston ..... P  
Dial ..... 545-5811  
Under 88  
Frontenac County  
1055 Princess Kingston ..... P  
Dial ..... 545-4553  
For Long Distance  
Dial ..... 1 800 367-6238  
Lanark and Addison Hwp Counties  
198 DundasE ..... P  
For Long Distance  
Dial ..... 1 800 367-6238  
Leeds and Grenville Count  
81 KingE ..... M  
For Long Distance  
Dial ..... 1 800 267-6238

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Economic Development Trade and Visitors P  
Regional Services Provincial  
Dial ..... 545-8321  
For Long Distance  
Dial ..... 1 800 367-7848  
Geneseeq ..... M  
Economic Development Committee  
30 KingC ..... 353-3771  
Greater Macanee ..... M  
Dial ..... 354-3351  
Kingston Economic Development  
Corporation (KEDEC)  
Formerly known as Kingston Area  
Economic Development Commission  
206-181 Wellington ..... P  
Dial ..... 544-2725  
24 Hour Information Line ..... 544-2726  
Lanark and Addison Economic  
Development Department  
County Court House ..... M  
87 Thomas St Macanee ..... 354-4883  
Dial ..... 354-4883  
Loyalist-See Lanark and Addison

**EDUCATION**

Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology  
Loyalist College  
Dial ..... Belleville 963-1913  
St Lawrence College  
Dial ..... 544-5430  
Colleges and Universities  
General Inquiries  
Dial ..... 1 800 387-5814  
TTY Only  
Dial ..... 1 800 263-2880  
Correspondence Education  
Independent Learning Centre Elementary  
and Secondary  
Dial ..... 1 800 387-8572  
Parent Council Ontario  
Dial ..... 1 800 361-8483  
Facsimile ..... 418 314-0425  
Universities  
Queen's University  
Dial ..... 545-2080  
Royal Military College  
Dial ..... 541-6080

**ELECTIONS**

Elections Ontario  
Dial ..... 1 888 968-8683

**EMERGENCY MEASURES  
-See Safety**

**EMPLOYMENT**

Employment Insurance Telemassage and  
Social Insurance Numbers  
General Inquiries ..... 545-8586  
For Long Distance  
Dial ..... 1 800 206-7210  
Employment Telemassage  
Dial ..... 545-8586  
Human Resources Centres  
Geneseeq & Chatham ..... 352-2134  
Kingston 289 Concession ..... 545-8583  
Napawan 2 Dairykr ..... 354-3267  
Record of Employment Requests ..... 548-8917  
Job Connect  
Employment and Training Hotline  
Dial ..... 1 800 367-5686  
Youth Opportunities Ontario  
Dial ..... 1 800 367-5686  
Ontario Works/Social Services  
362 Montreal Kingston ..... M  
542-2190  
Ontario Works Resource Centres  
289 Concession Kingston ..... 544-8410  
Record of Employment Requests  
Dial ..... 545-8917

**ENERGY**

Energy Science and Technology  
Dial ..... 1 877 818-2900

**ENVIRONMENT**

Evolution 2000  
Dial ..... 1 800 891-7785  
Environment Canada  
General Inquiries  
Toronto ..... 416 738-4528  
Web: <http://www.ec.gc.ca>  
133 Dufferin ..... 548-4000  
For Long Distance  
Dial ..... 1 800 267-0074  
Environmental Assessment  
Toronto ..... 416 448-3450  
Environmental Ontario Ministry of the  
Environment  
133 Dufferin ..... 548-4000  
For Long Distance  
Dial ..... 1 800 267-0074  
Environmental Assessment  
Toronto ..... 416 448-3450  
Environmental Ontario Ministry of the  
Environment  
133 Dufferin ..... 548-4000  
For Long Distance  
Dial ..... 1 800 267-0074  
Environmental Spills Reporting  
Provincial 24 Hours  
Dial ..... 1 800 358-6060  
Environmental Emergencies (Spills)  
Federal  
Toronto ..... 416 346-1971  
Kingston Area Recycling Centre (KARC)  
Composting-Recycling-Yard Waste-  
Disposal of Household Waste-Prod-  
Exchange  
73 LapsarLn ..... 546-6523  
Potable Air Water  
Dial ..... 545-4500  
Public Information Centre  
Dial ..... 1 800 988-4823  
Web: <http://www.gov.on.ca>  
Water and Waste Water Treatment  
Services  
Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA)  
883 NormCr ..... 634-6292  
For Long Distance  
Dial ..... 1 800 653-6292  
Kingston Township Water Treatment Plant  
475 From Rd Kingston ..... 542-7122  
Dial ..... 542-7122  
Water Treatment  
Geneseeq PUC ..... 382-4359  
Water Walls  
Dial ..... 545-4308

**EXPORT**

Trade Canada Inc  
Export Information Services  
Dial ..... 1 888 671-1118  
Web: <http://reporttrade.gc.ca>

**FAMILY BENEFITS**

Family Benefits-Federal Program  
Canada Child Tax Benefit  
Dial ..... 1 800 367-1193  
OST/OT Credit Cheques  
Dial ..... 545-8285  
For Long Distance  
Dial ..... 1 800 950-1953

**OLD**

**CAN 86**

GENERAL PUBLIC SERVICE Staff Reduction  
Surv. Ottawa 996-8888

**CAN 70**

HEALTH CANADA  
General Inquiries ..... Ottawa 951-2991  
Toll only  
No Charge-Dial ..... 1 800 383-1283  
Publications ..... Ottawa 954-9993  
HEALTH POLICY Coordinator and  
Program Director, Ottawa 954-5259  
Health Protection Branch  
Inquiries ..... Ottawa 957-2891  
Product Safety Bureau  
(Manufacture Products Act)  
Ottawa 951-2991  
National Overweight or Family  
Weights Ottawa 957-2888  
No Charge Dial ..... 1 800 383-1281  
Problems ..... Ottawa 951-8986  
Toll only ..... Ottawa 954-6399  
Web  
No Charge Dial ..... 1 800 951-9443  
Family Violence Prevention Division  
Ottawa 957-2888  
Toll only ..... Ottawa 954-6399  
Web  
No Charge Dial ..... 1 800 951-9443  
Division of Aging and Seniors  
Ottawa 952-1909  
Fitness  
General Information ..... Ottawa 941-2105  
Adult Sports ..... Ottawa 941-2105  
Toll only ..... Ottawa 998-8888  
Web

**CAN 71**

HEALTH OF ANIMALS  
Federal Court of Canada  
Register of Appeals ..... Ottawa 995-8020

**CAN 72**

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
Information & Directory of Parliament  
Toll only ..... Ottawa 995-4793  
Security Services ..... Ottawa 951-2171  
Tours of Parliament ..... Ottawa 996-0886

**CAN 73**

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT  
CANADA —Continued  
Ottawa  
St. Catharines 954-4055  
Human Resource Telemassage  
Employment Insurance and  
Social Insurance Number ..... Jull 953-6115  
No Charge-Dial ..... 1 800 388-1218  
Toll TTY  
No Charge-Dial ..... 1 800 528-6742  
Information on Record of Employment  
Jull 953-2838

Hull  
Village Place Center  
421 St JosephE ..... Jull 953-2838  
Human Resource Telemassage of Canada  
Employment Insurance and  
Social Insurance Number ..... Jull 953-6115  
No Charge-Dial ..... 1 800 388-1218  
Toll TTY  
No Charge-Dial ..... 1 800 528-6742  
Ottawa-Cardiff  
Employment Insurance  
Telemassage Inquiries  
Ottawa 952-1888  
Employment Telemassage  
Ottawa 941-8888  
Employer Ask Order Desk  
Ottawa 952-6874  
Records of Employment ..... Ottawa 998-1288  
Social Insurance Number  
Ottawa 952-1888  
Human Resources Centres  
Ottawa Centre ..... Ottawa 988-1288  
St. Catharines ..... Ottawa 998-8888  
Toll only ..... Ottawa 998-8888  
Ottawa East  
14 St Joseph ..... Gloucester 994-5188  
Toll only ..... Gloucester 994-5175  
Ottawa West  
Genesee WestE (Genesee)  
323 CarletonE ..... Ottawa 998-0188  
Toll only ..... Ottawa 998-0188  
Hudson Resources 128765 POK  
31108873  
Ottawa 993-8971  
May to September 421 St JosephE  
Jull 994-9413

May to September  
88 Bellmouth St 150  
St Catharines ..... 994-8884  
Geneseeq (Genesee Centre)  
300 Victoria  
Geneseeq ..... Ottawa 996-1188  
Geneseeq ..... Ottawa 996-1188  
Geneseeq ..... Ottawa 996-1188  
Geneseeq ..... Ottawa 996-1188  
Regional Economic ..... Ottawa 993-8218  
Director ..... Ottawa 991-0449  
RCRC SECURITY PROGRAM  
Canada Pension Plan and Old Age  
Security  
Ottawa 282 Sparks Level C2  
No Charge Dial ..... 1 800 277-9914  
SERVICE DELIVERY SUSTAIN ONTARIO  
Geneseeq  
952-Geneseeq  
Ottawa 996-5084  
Lafayette PROSQUER  
Hull Office  
St. Catharines 954-4055  
General Inquiries ..... St Catharines 996-4055  
Emergency Safety and Health ..... Ottawa  
Inquiries 404L Montreal 544-283-4239  
Workplace Information Directorate  
Jull 991-8111  
Mediation and Conciliation  
Hull 991-8283  
Arbitration Services ..... Jull 991-8037

Need help? See Helpful Hints and the Index starting on page 2.

**Exhibit 1.9**

**Examples of Innovation in Selected Service Lines**

Service Line	Innovation
<b>Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade — Passport Office</b>	<b>IRIS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an information system for capturing, archiving and retrieving digital images</li> <li>• designed to automate passport application and issuance</li> <li>• intended to benefit applicants by streamlining applications for passport renewal</li> <li>• intended to provide enhanced security, better on-line access to databases and compliance with international standards</li> </ul>
<b>Industry Canada and Partners — Canada Business Service Centres (CBSC)</b>	<b>Interactive Business Planner</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an interactive on-line tool that aids small businesses in preparing a comprehensive business plan</li> <li>• an entrepreneur’s plan can be saved on a server at the CBSC for up to 60 days and retrieved using a name and password 24 hours a day, seven days a week</li> </ul>
<b>Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (Customs)</b>	<b>CANPASS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to speed up the clearance of low-risk, frequent travellers entering Canada at major border crossings and at one airport, through a preapproval process</li> <li>• CANPASS(Highway) allows qualified Canadian and United States residents to enter Canada through a designated lane without normally being interviewed by a Customs inspector</li> <li>• performance targets to judge the success of the program just developed in 1999, eight years after it was introduced. A number of additional problems have been identified (see Chapter 5 of this Report — Travellers to Canada: Managing the Risks at Ports of Entry)</li> </ul>

**Source:** The above departments and agency

**Exhibit 1.10**

**Rethinking, Re-engineering and Restructuring the Service Approach at Citizenship and Immigration Canada**

In early 1995, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) decided to improve its methods of serving clients. Client services at that time were provided through 23 individual telecentres, case-processing centres and a network of offices across the country.

CIC’s Business Planning Re-engineering initiative examined the telecentre operations and concluded that all telephone operations required networking. It identified the additional benefits that networking would provide, such as the flexibility to grow or downsize as required. The initiative concluded that telecentres should respond to clients’ requests for information, and that other systems should support the telecentres. CIC decided that a small number of co-ordinated and integrated call centres would be a preferred configuration to improve client service.

Implementation of the consolidated call centres started in April 1996. CIC has undergone a complete transformation to implement a fully integrated call centre model. The new model was designed to make the call centres the first point of contact between clients and the Department, and to respond more quickly to changing service demands and priorities.

The 23 telecentres have been consolidated in three large call centres in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. At the time of our audit, the Department had just completed a national review of call centres. The review report, dated 4 November 1999, indicated that the consolidation had allowed CIC “to increase telephone accessibility from 30 percent to 70 percent”, but that “80 percent accessibility remains an unmet objective”. It also identified a number of issues that need to be resolved to move the call centres beyond the start-up stage, including customer satisfaction and continuous improvement, among other things.

**Source:** Citizenship and Immigration Canada

### **A shift toward a culture that fosters a focus on service and innovation**

**1.62** In 1998, Consulting and Audit Canada surveyed 55 services provided by 23 departments and agencies. The survey showed the emergence of a client-oriented service culture, “with service managers appearing to have a genuine desire to implement client-oriented service standards and satisfy clients.” The 1999 Public Service Survey supported this perception, with 75 percent of respondents agreeing that their work units had client service standards.

**1.63** Our own observations and interviews during our audit found a concern for service quality among public service managers and staff. Some initiatives designed to develop a stronger focus on service indicate a cultural shift. Several departments and agencies have found innovative ways to deliver services, ranging from technology applications to improvements in process. Exhibit 1.9 shows some examples.

**1.64** The search for more cost-effective ways of providing services has led some departments and agencies to rethink, re-engineer or restructure their approaches. Since 1996, for example, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has completely re-engineered its service operations. It has phased out most of its counter services and adopted telephone operations as its primary channel of information on service delivery. This has included consolidating 23 telecentres into three large call centres (see Exhibit 1.10).

### **Measures and Targets to Judge Performance**

#### **Accessibility and timeliness of service are most widely measured**

**1.65** In July 1997, the Canadian Centre for Management Development established the Citizen-Centred Service Network. This is a network of more than 200 officials from federal, provincial and

municipal governments, as well as academics and experts in public sector service delivery. One of its research initiatives, Citizens First, was an extensive survey of Canadians to see what they think of the quality of services their governments provide. Some 2,900 Canadians responded, and the October 1998 survey report identified timeliness as their most important gauge of service quality.

**1.66** In the 13 service lines we examined, we found a considerable emphasis on measuring both the accessibility and the timeliness of service delivery, especially telephone services (see Exhibit 1.11). As we have already noted, all six telephone operations have targets for accessibility and timeliness, often measuring performance by percentage of total calls answered, percentage of calls answered within a certain number of seconds or rings, and wait times in a queue (see Exhibit 1.7).

**1.67** Our 1996 audit report noted that service quality has other important dimensions. These include accuracy or reliability, courtesy and the service environment — the physical facilities where clients obtain service. In the current audit, we found that fewer service lines use targets and measures for these dimensions of service quality than for timeliness and accessibility.

**1.68** Among the 11 services delivered by means other than the telephone, only three measure the quality of the service environment and six measure accuracy or reliability. Among the telephone services, we found that Human Resources Development Canada has made little use of its accuracy measures. However, Taxation does have a target for accuracy; it has used an independent firm to measure the accuracy of responses provided by the General Enquiries and the Business Window telephone services. In 1999, for the first time in the past few

### **A stronger focus on service indicates a cultural shift.**

**There was a considerable emphasis on measuring both accessibility and timeliness of service delivery.**

**Few service lines measure other dimensions — accuracy or reliability, courtesy and the service environment.**

**Managers in several service lines have not explicitly considered client priorities in setting particular delivery targets.**

years, General Enquiries had an accuracy rate of over 80 percent.

**1.69** All of the large government telephone services we audited have some form of internal monitoring methods such as silent monitoring of live or taped calls, “mystery shopper” techniques and peer reviews. However, these are not yet fully developed monitoring systems. Most are not used systematically to monitor telephone contacts or provide feedback to call agents. Some rely on the voluntary participation of call agents.

**1.70** Departments and agencies should develop and implement systems to measure results for all aspects of quality that are important in delivering a particular service.

**Better consultation with clients needed to establish targets and measures**

**1.71** We recommended in 1996 that service managers ensure that delivery targets reflect clients’ priorities. In the current audit, we found that both the RCMP and the Consular Service of the

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade consult with clients before establishing targets. Three other services do this in part.

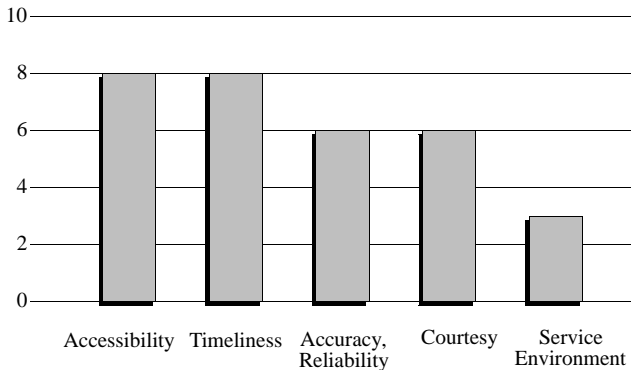
**1.72** Managers in 8 of the 13 service lines, however, have not explicitly considered client priorities in setting particular delivery targets. For example, telephone call centres generally set service targets for such aspects as accessibility and wait time in queue without first determining the specific needs and preferences of the service line’s clients.

**1.73** We also found that clients are not consulted enough to ensure that measures and targets are established for the dimensions of service quality that matter most to them. As an example, although call centres’ systems can readily provide information to measure performance in several aspects of service, measuring those aspects alone may jeopardize other dimensions of service that are not measured as easily but are important to clients. These might include courtesy, for example, or fully meeting the client’s needs in a single contact.

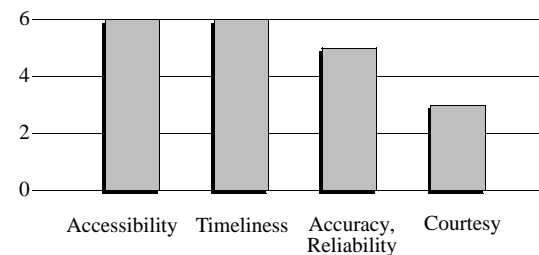
**Exhibit 1.11**

**Dimensions of Service Performance That Service Lines Measure**

**Number of Services by Other Than Telephone\***



**Number of Services by Telephone\***



\* Applicable to 11 service lines – Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Public Works and Government Services Canada (Reference Canada) provide only telephone services.

\* Applicable to 6 service lines.

**1.74** In some cases, the amount of time spent on each call (talk time) was used as an internal measure of performance. We believe that using this measure may put pressure on call agents to hurry the contact in order to reduce talk times. If so, clients may have to call again to deal with unresolved issues. Amex Canada Inc., which the National Quality Institute has recognized for its success in call centre operations, has consulted its clients and now focusses on resolving problems during the first call rather than measuring talk time. The Canada-Ontario Business Call Centre recognized the need

to respond more fully to client enquiries and has eliminated its talk-time target while maintaining service at established levels.

**1.75** More effective service by one agent on the first call can improve the client's view of service quality. However, this requires that call agents have on-line access to databases with up-to-date information on clients' claims or applications. We found that such access is currently limited in all of the large government telephone services we



*Call centre agents access on-line databases to respond to client enquiries (see paragraph 1.75).*



*A Passport Office's physical layout (service environment) facilitates service for applications and pickups (see paragraph 1.68).*



*Signs inform clients about services they need urgently (pilot project) and innovation (see paragraph 1.63).*

**Service lines have considerably improved their communication of pledges and delivery targets to clients.**

**Very few service lines provide clients with information on service costs or performance toward targets.**

audited. Call agents thus are not always able to answer enquiries about, for example, processing times.

**1.76 Departments and agencies should consult with clients to help establish delivery targets and to ensure that they manage and measure aspects of service that matter most to clients.**

**Some improvement in providing key information at points of service**

**1.77** Since 1996, service lines have considerably improved their communication of pledges and delivery targets to clients, in brochures and pamphlets made available at points of service (see Exhibit 1.12). The brochures and pamphlets usually describe the service, make pledges for matters such as fairness and courtesy, and set out their targets for service delivery. The service lines have also posted pledges and commitments to quality of service on their Web sites.

**1.78** In communicating other key information to clients at points of service, however, the service lines we audited have made less progress (see Exhibit 1.12). Although some service lines provide information on how clients can lodge

complaints and obtain redress, very few provide performance results against targets, or information on service costs.

**1.79 Departments and agencies should communicate to clients at points of service the results each service has achieved, the cost of providing it, and the complaint and redress mechanisms available to clients.**

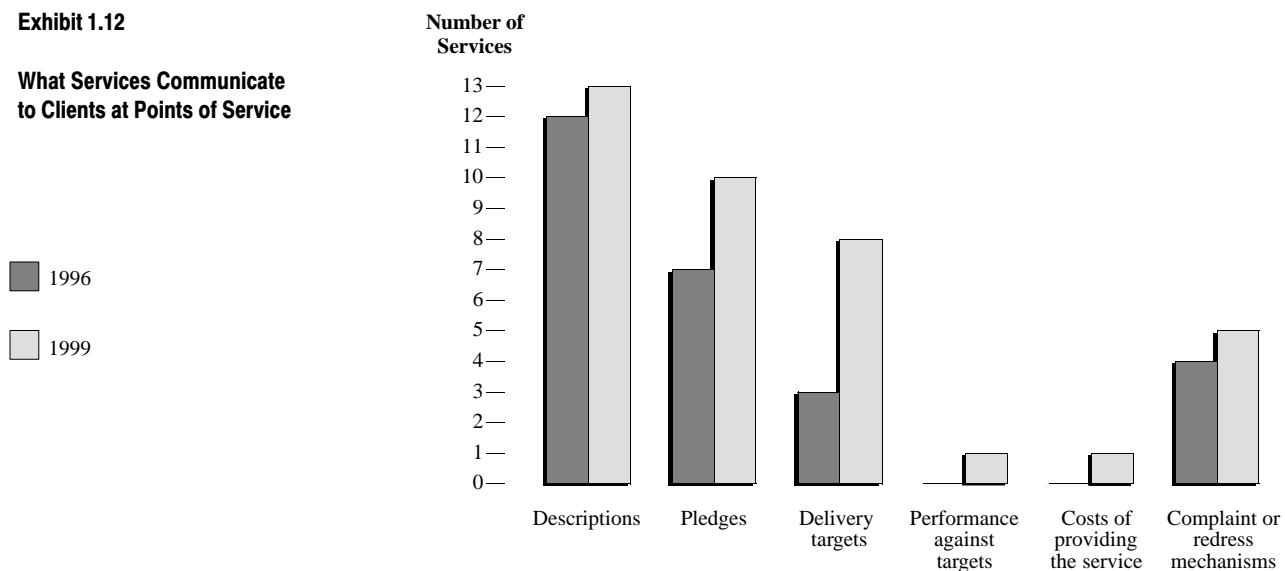
### Managing for Continuous Improvement in Service Performance

**1.80** We examined service managers' efforts to continue improving service quality. These included:

- conducting surveys of client satisfaction;
- conducting audits and evaluations;
- developing action plans for continuous improvement;
- benchmarking;
- establishing complaint and redress mechanisms; and
- analyzing and using performance data.

**Exhibit 1.12**

**What Services Communicate to Clients at Points of Service**





**1.81** We found that the use of these techniques for continuous improvement varies (see Exhibit 1.13). Several service lines — the Passport Office, Taxation, Customs, Environment Canada and the RCMP — have made consistent efforts using almost all of the techniques to identify areas that need to improve.

**Increased use of surveys and reviews to help identify areas for improvement**

**1.82** We found that client satisfaction surveys have been widely used at varying intervals and on a national, local or case-by-case basis. Apart from Customs, Taxation and Statistics Canada, however, service managers generally were not using the surveys to ask clients about their priorities or to help identify the dimensions of service quality that are key to client satisfaction.

**1.83** Parks Canada has monitored visitor satisfaction for several years by such means as visitor feedback cards, formal surveys and, occasionally, public consultation. However, client satisfaction surveys in the 9 parks we examined had uneven coverage of service dimensions. The surveys covered courtesy in 6 of the 9 parks and the service environment in 7, but none covered all dimensions of service. Parks Canada recognizes the need to improve its measuring of visitor

satisfaction. It has piloted a series of standardized surveys that it is now introducing in all parks.

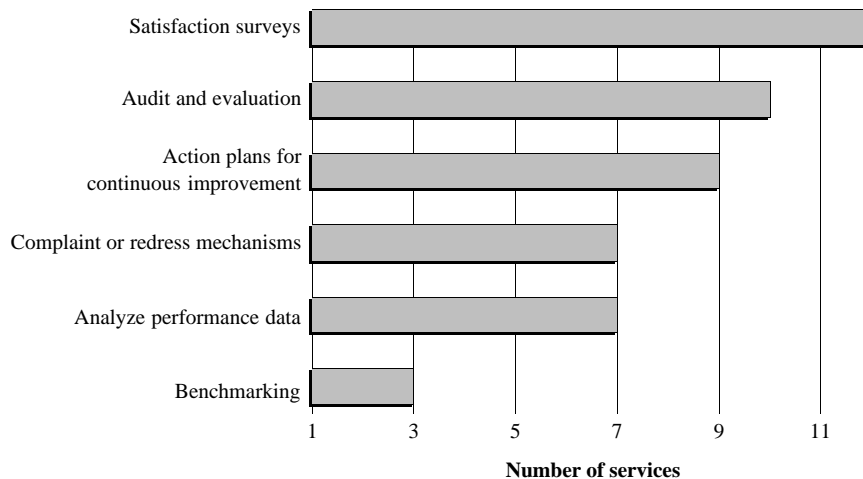
**1.84** Ten of the 13 service lines we examined have carried out reviews (audits or evaluations) of service delivery. However, we noted that most of the reviews have not adequately assessed systems and practices for measuring service performance; nor have they reported the results they have achieved toward established targets.

**More action plans for continuous improvement**

**1.85** We recommended in 1996 that service managers develop and follow action plans to improve service. In the current audit we found some progress: 9 of the 13 service lines have some form of action plan for continuous improvement. However, some of the plans take the form of fairly general information on future activities, reported in departmental or business line plans. Those plans lack specific details on their implementation, timelines, responsibilities and budgets.

**1.86** We are encouraged to note that the interdepartmental Assistant Deputy Minister Advisory Committee on Service and Innovation, led by the Treasury Board Secretariat, undertook a project in 1998 to

**Several service lines have made consistent efforts, using a variety of techniques, to identify areas that need to improve.**



**Exhibit 1.13**

**Methods Managers Use to Improve Service Quality**

**Call centres have not compared their performance with “best in class” results elsewhere.**

**The majority of the 13 service lines were collecting at least some data on service performance and analyzing it to help identify opportunities for improvement.**

assist departments in designing and implementing service improvement plans.

#### **Little use of benchmarking**

**1.87** Three of the service lines make systematic use of benchmarking to compare their practices and performance with similar organizations in other jurisdictions or in the private sector. We noted, however, that service managers in call centres we examined have not compared their performance with “best in class” results elsewhere.

**1.88** The use of effective scheduling tools can improve the management of call centres. Unlike Amex Canada Inc., the call centres we examined have not adopted computerized scheduling systems to forecast workload and deploy call agents. In service lines where the demand for telephone services is volatile, scheduling can be critical. Exhibit 1.14 shows accessibility (calls answered) in Taxation over the past three years. While it is encouraging to note that the underlying trend in the proportion of calls answered climbed steadily from April 1996 to March 1999, the proportion continues to fluctuate widely.

**1.89** **Departments and agencies should use benchmarking as a source of learning about good practices to help identify opportunities for continuous improvement.**

#### **Complaint and redress mechanisms need improvement**

**1.90** In 1996 we recommended that service managers systematically collect and analyze complaint data and other feedback from clients, and devise methods to prevent mistakes from recurring.

**1.91** The current audit found that complaint and redress mechanisms are still inadequate. Clients need to know the names and addresses of officials responsible for receiving complaints about service quality. For example, at certain

border ports of entry, Customs has provided complainants with addressed envelopes. However, more than half of the service lines do not provide adequate information to clients at points of service on how to lodge a complaint. Further, without good mechanisms to collect data on complaints systematically, there is little opportunity for analyzing complaints as a way to identify opportunities for improvement.

**1.92** **Departments and agencies should demonstrate their commitment to service quality by informing clients at points of service on how they can lodge and resolve complaints.**

#### **Some progress in analyzing and using information on service performance**

**1.93** We recommended in 1996 that service managers collect, analyze and use information on service and cost performance to determine the highest quality of service they can provide at an affordable cost. We found that some have made progress since then. The majority of the 13 service lines were collecting at least some data on service performance and analyzing it to help identify opportunities for improvement.

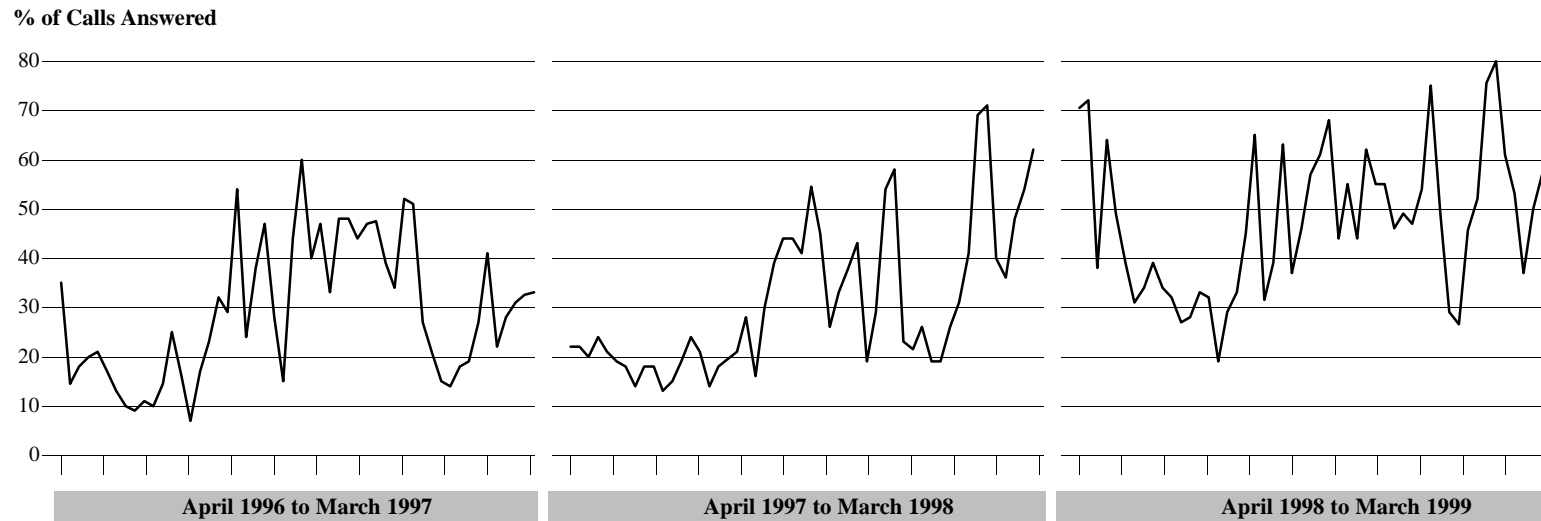
**1.94** We also recommended in 1996 that service managers (including telephone centre managers) collect and use performance data to analyze persistent problems of accessibility and to devise appropriate remedies. In the current audit we found that only three of the six telephone operations — Taxation, and Human Resources Development Canada’s Employment Insurance and Income Security programs — have made satisfactory progress in responding to this recommendation.

**1.95** Service managers have established credible performance measures for some aspects of service quality. Frequently, however, they lack enough good information on costs to

Exhibit 1.14

**National Variation in Accessibility of Telephone Services  
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (Taxation)**

April 1996 to March 1999\*



\* Drawn from weekly data

Source: Canada Customs and Revenue Agency

assess the cost effectiveness of the level of service quality they have achieved.

**1.96** We found that where a service involves user fees or cost recovery, better cost information is generally available. For example:

- Parks Canada established a revenue policy in May 1998 requiring that direct, indirect and capital costs be included in determining the cost of services.
- The \$25 service fee included in the cost of a passport is based on both direct and indirect costs of consular services.
- The Passport Office is self-funding: it recovers its costs from the fees it collects for passport services. It also uses accrual accounting in its financial reporting systems.
- Statistics Canada collects information on direct and indirect costs and analyzes it to determine the cost of its products.

**1.97** We are concerned that without good cost information, service managers do not have the information they need to provide the highest quality of service at the lowest possible cost.

**1.98** For example, we noted that because Public Works and Government Services Canada pays for their facilities, departments and agencies do not always include facility costs in the cost of providing their services. Departments or agencies with telephone operations have their own call centres, and they may have overlooked opportunities to save costs by sharing facilities. Furthermore, major government call centres we visited in Toronto and Vancouver are located downtown, where costs are high. By comparison, Amex Canada Inc. has located its only call centre well outside of downtown Toronto.

**1.99** **Departments and agencies should collect, systematically analyze and use performance information,**

**including cost information, to manage performance and continuous improvement.**

## **Reporting to Parliament on Service Quality**

**1.100** In 1996 we found that departments and agencies needed to improve their reporting of service performance. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts also recommended that in their Performance Reports, departments and agencies include information on their service performance.

**1.101** In its 1998 response to the Public Accounts Committee, the government committed itself to “ensuring that solid performance information on service delivery [is] available to Parliament and the public through Departmental Performance Reports and the Reports on Plans and Priorities.” In our view, this means that departments are to report clearly on how well they are serving Canadians.

**1.102** Departments and agencies are also required to report on how they are implementing the Quality Services Initiative. In particular, guidance from the Treasury Board Secretariat states that they should “tell the performance story” of service delivery. They are expected to make this a primary focus of their Performance Reports. Departments are also asked to report their progress toward focussing on the needs of citizens and clients.

**1.103** We examined the performance information published on the 13 service lines in Reports on Plans and Priorities and Departmental Performance Reports for 1997 through 1999. We also examined the President of the Treasury Board’s annual report to Parliament for those years. We classified the service quality information in those reports as expectations (or objectives), descriptions or results. We distinguished between general information on results and

**Without good cost information, service managers do not have the information they need to provide the highest quality of service at the lowest possible cost.**

information linked directly or indirectly to previously stated expectations.

**1.104** We expected that departments would tell in their Reports on Plans and Priorities how and to what extent they intended to improve service quality. We also expected that they would focus on the key service accomplishments and report them in their Performance Reports against previously stated expectations.

**Reporting to Parliament on service quality has improved**

**1.105** The Reports on Plans and Priorities and Departmental Performance Reports were introduced only recently. Managers told us that performance reporting is still evolving and they plan to improve their information on service performance in the coming years.

**1.106** Some improvements are already evident. In particular, the amount of information reported to Parliament on service performance increased significantly between 1997 and 1999. In our judgment, the information is also more meaningful. As Exhibit 1.15 shows, the proportion of information on results that we could link to expectations increased from 37 percent in 1997 to 64 percent in 1999 (although it decreased

somewhat from 1998 to 1999). However, the links between results and expectations were not always explicit and we had to analyze the documents closely to identify some of them.

**Several areas need more attention**

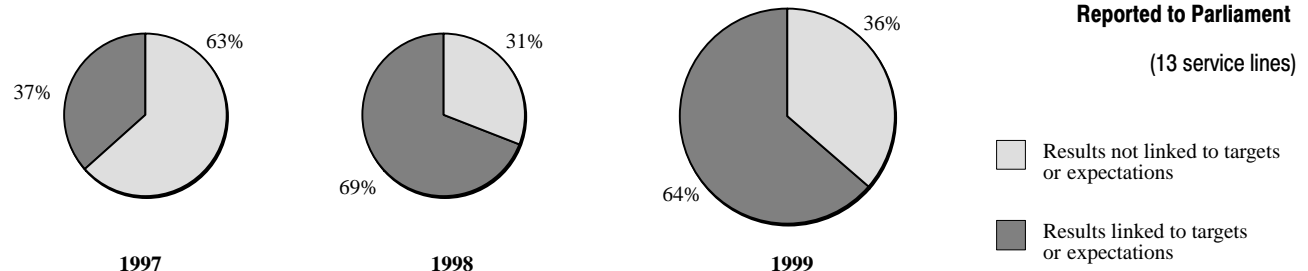
**1.107** We identified areas where departments and agencies still need to improve their reporting to Parliament on service quality.

- To show the progress they have made, departments and agencies need to report trends in service performance and adequately explain changes over time. We found that they have reported very little information on trends, although slightly more in 1999 than in 1997. The departments and agencies delivering 6 of the 13 services we examined had included some limited information on trends in their 1997 Performance Reports. By 1999, 8 of the services were reporting such information.

- Balanced reporting — reporting that shows both strong and weak performance — enhances credibility. We found that this area needs attention. Negative aspects of service performance or service quality initiatives are seldom reported. The RCMP Performance Reports, which

**The amount of information reported to Parliament on service performance increased significantly between 1997 and 1999. The information is also more meaningful.**

**Negative aspects of service performance or service quality initiatives are seldom reported.**



**Note:** Changes in size of “pie charts” reflect changes in the amount of service performance information reported.

**Source:** Office of the Auditor General analysis of Departmental Performance Reports

discuss weaknesses in tracking client satisfaction, are an exception.

- The reporting of cost information is an area of significant weakness. We found almost no information on the costs of specific initiatives to improve service quality, nor cost information that would help put results into perspective.

- Information on service quality must be understandable and placed in context to be useful to parliamentarians. We found that departments and agencies tend to present general information about services clearly, but are less clear in explaining expected and actual results. For example, the impact of external factors on service outcomes is often not explained.

**1.108** We recognize that performance reporting is evolving, and that service quality is only one element that departments report to Parliament. Nonetheless, the government has committed itself to improving service quality and is accountable to Parliament and the public for results.

**1.109** **Departments and agencies should clearly show in their Reports on Plans and Priorities the results they expect in service performance. In the corresponding Performance Reports, they should link those expected results to clear statements of the results they have actually achieved.**

**1.110** **Departments and agencies should provide more balanced and complete information to Parliament on the results of their service performance. This should include information on both strong and weak performance, on trends, on costs and on external factors that affect service outcomes.**

### **Guidance and Support by the Treasury Board Secretariat**

**1.111** In our 1996 audit report we outlined the Treasury Board Secretariat's responsibilities for the government's

quality service initiatives. The Secretariat's approach at the time involved providing departments with support in meeting their performance objectives, acting as a catalyst to remove constraints, and celebrating innovation and success. We recognized the value of the Secretariat's activities in providing departments and agencies with guidance that clearly presented the quality management approach.

**1.112** We recommended that the Secretariat encourage departments to take key steps toward a focus on clients and improved service quality. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommended that the Secretariat publish a framework for implementing the Quality Services Initiative, set a final date for its completion and provide departments with guidance and incentives to ensure its successful completion. In its April 1998 response to the Committee, the government did not accept the recommendation to set a final completion date. It stated that it was "continuously improving the quality of services to Canadians, [which] cannot receive attention for a fixed period of time only."

**1.113** In 1997, a progress report from the President of the Treasury Board described the Quality Services Initiative as a three-year strategy to improve client satisfaction with the quality of service delivery. In its April 1998 response to the Public Accounts Committee, the government made a commitment to citizen-centred service delivery that would "broaden the former quality services initiative...to include new integrated approaches to service delivery such as single windows and partnerships."

**The Treasury Board Secretariat's guidance and support has been uneven**

**1.114** The Secretariat has supported service quality initiatives in a number of ways since our last audit, and has continued some actions that were under way at that time. It continued its guidance

**Departments and agencies have reported very little information on trends in performance.**

**The Secretariat provided guidance and support to departments but was generally less active in 1996-97 and 1997-98 than since early 1998.**

and support to departments but was generally less active in 1996–97 and 1997–98 than since early 1998.

**1.115** The following paragraphs set out some of the key guidance and support activities of the Secretariat since 1996. Exhibit 1.16 provides additional information.

**1.116** In late 1997, the Secretariat and the National Quality Institute together developed a self-assessment tool called “Achieving Citizen/Client Focused

Service Delivery, A Framework for Effective Public Service Organizations — The Quality Fitness Test.” Its purpose was to help public servants and departments assess how well they were applying principles of service quality. Secretariat officials told us that in 1998–99 approximately 600 public servants were trained to use the Framework.

**1.117** The Secretariat has continued since 1996 to support interdepartmental co-ordinating and working committees. It provides advice and guidance through an

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**Exhibit 1.16**
**Selected Activities by Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) to Support Service Quality Since April 1996**

Date	Continued* or New	Activities
Since April 1996	Continued	Assistant Deputy Minister Advisory Committee on Quality Service — key co-ordinating committee.
Since April 1996	Continued & New	Interdepartmental Quality Network — now Interdepartmental Service and Innovation Network with greater regional involvement.
Since April 1996	Continued	TBS call letters/guidelines — departments to provide service quality information in Business Plans, and in Estimates documents reported to Parliament.
September 1996	Continued	Quality Services guides — last guide in the series issued and distributed to departments.
October 1996	New	Telephone services/call centre interdepartmental working groups.
March 1997	New	Quality Services — A Progress Report 1996 (public, but not tabled in Parliament).
November 1997	New	National Quality Institute and TBS published <i>Achieving Citizen/Client Focussed Service Delivery, A Framework for Effective Public Service Organizations, The Quality Fitness Test</i> .
February 1998	New	TBS reorganization established Service and Innovation Sector.
June 1998	New	Survey of Departmental Progress in Developing and Implementing Service Standards.
December 1998	New	Initial funding approved for Service Canada.
December 1998	New	Common Measurements Tool developed for CCMD, TBS encouraging its use.
February 1999	New	Service Improvement Planning — TBS initiated work with departments to develop guidelines.
July 1999	New	Service Canada development phase — pilot projects.
November 1999	New	InnoService — Web site (under construction) to provide public service information on improving service quality.

\* Action continued from period prior to April 1996.

**Source:** Treasury Board Secretariat documentation

**To report at a government-wide level, the Secretariat needs to monitor the progress of departments and agencies in implementing initiatives and improving service quality.**

advisory committee of assistant deputy ministers. The committee met infrequently in 1996–97 and 1997–98. Since September 1998, it has met regularly and has co-ordinated a number of projects.

**1.118** The Secretariat has given support to other quality networks, including the specialized Interdepartmental Call Centre Network and the Interdepartmental Service and Innovation Network. The latter was established to provide leadership for service improvement by sharing expertise among departments and fostering regional input.

**1.119** The Secretariat has continued to sponsor regular events (such as “quality month”), to publish newsletters and to arrange visits and exchanges with other jurisdictions. These activities have contributed to interdepartmental communication, identification of best practices and celebration of success.

**1.120** In early 1998, the Secretariat established a Service and Innovation Sector, with a mandate to focus on government-wide approaches. It then developed an action plan to advance citizen-centred service delivery, based on increasing Canadians’ access to service and improving service performance.

**1.121** In December 1998, Service Canada was established as a unit to provide Canadians with one-stop access to a range of government services in person, by telephone or electronically through the Internet (see Exhibit 1.3). At the time of our audit, the Secretariat was also developing InnoService — a Web site designed to inform public servants on how to improve service delivery.

**1.122** Because departments’ actions to improve service quality form part of a government-wide initiative, central co-ordination is required. Service Canada was established in response to this need. The Treasury Board Secretariat, as the responsible central agency, has accepted a role in providing guidance and support to

departments and agencies. It needs to sustain a high level of attention to improve Canadians’ satisfaction with the services they receive.

## **Reporting on Government-Wide Progress**

**1.123** In our 1996 audit report, we noted that the Treasury Board Secretariat was responsible for assessing progress in improving service quality and for reporting that progress to Cabinet and Parliament. At the time, it had provided little information to Parliament and we recommended that it report clearly to Parliament on the government’s progress. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts also recommended that the Secretariat report progress annually to Parliament.

**1.124** To report at a government-wide level, the Secretariat needs to monitor the progress of departments and agencies in implementing initiatives and improving service quality. In its response to the Public Accounts Committee, the government stated that it was important to monitor progress regularly and that the Secretariat would be “studying appropriate ways of monitoring departmental performance and reporting on progress to improve service delivery for the government as a whole.”

### **Government-wide progress has not been monitored systematically**

**1.125** Until recently, the Treasury Board Secretariat relied on departmental business plans for information on service quality. However, the nature of the information it requested varied from year to year. To obtain a government-wide view, the Secretariat identified service delivery as one of several issues to be given special attention in the 1998–99 business plans. It also set out its expectations in greater detail than it had in previous years. However, annual business plans cannot be used to monitor progress



now that departments are no longer required to submit them.

**1.126** In the spring of 1997, Statistics Canada repeated a survey it had done in 1995 on behalf of the Secretariat. The survey showed that the federal public service was now making more use of practices designed to improve or maintain the quality of services. Consulting and Audit Canada carried out a survey for the Secretariat in the winter of 1998. That survey found that 48 of the 56 service providers who responded had standards in place for their services, and another 5 planned to have them later that year. These surveys, though potentially useful elements of a monitoring strategy, did not provide the information needed to assess departments' improvement of service quality.

**1.127** In our view, the Secretariat has not adopted a systematic approach to monitoring the government's progress in improving service quality. This lack of systematic monitoring has impeded the Secretariat's ability to report results to Parliament.

**1.128** Information on the progress departments and agencies are making is required not only for reporting but also to co-ordinate the government-wide initiative on service quality. Specifically, information on progress is needed to assess whether the government is meeting its commitments and to provide a sound basis for corrective action where progress is inadequate. In addition, the Secretariat needs to monitor progress in order to provide departments and agencies with appropriate guidance and support.

#### **Treasury Board Secretariat needs to improve its reporting to Parliament**

**1.129** In March 1997, the President of the Treasury Board published a progress report on the Quality Services Initiative. The report provided an overview of the government's progress and made

recommendations to departments. It stated that the Secretariat would monitor progress on those recommendations and would report in 1997–98. The Secretariat did not table this progress report in Parliament and has produced no further reports of this nature.

**1.130** The Secretariat's own annual Performance Reports have provided Parliament with some useful information on service quality — for example, summaries of surveys on service delivery to the public. In the Performance Report it tabled in 1997, the Secretariat committed itself to include in future reports its analyses of the extent to which departments have integrated service quality into their operations. Although it reiterated this commitment in its Performance Report the following year, neither its 1998 nor its 1999 report presented any such analysis.

**1.131** The President of the Treasury Board's Annual Report to Parliament, "Managing for Results 1999", noted the need to improve reporting to Parliament on matters that involve many departments. The Report also says, "Progress in achieving the goal of improved citizen satisfaction with service delivery will be measured through surveys of citizens' expectations and satisfaction undertaken every two years in co-operation with provincial governments." Results from such a survey are expected to be available in the fall of 2000.

**1.132** Although these developments are promising, in our opinion the information so far reported by the Secretariat has not been adequate to give Parliament a clear indication of the government's progress in improving service quality.

**1.133** **The Treasury Board Secretariat should develop effective ways to monitor systematically and report to Parliament the government's progress in improving the delivery of services to Canadians.**

**The information so far reported by the Secretariat has not been adequate to provide Parliament with a clear indication of the government's progress in improving service quality.**

## Conclusion

**Service quality has shown some improvement since our 1996 audit.**

**None of the recommendations from our 1996 audit has been implemented fully.**

**More effort is needed to achieve continuous improvement in service delivery.**

### **1.134 Nature and extent of progress.**

We concluded that service quality has shown some improvement since our 1996 audit. Improvements were most evident in telephone operations, where performance is more likely to be measured systematically. Despite the improvements in service, however, telephone operations still need work. The proportion of calls that are not answered remains high, and delivery targets for aspects of service like wait time in queue are not always met.

**1.135** We were discouraged to find slow progress on the project to improve the government's telephone directory listings (the Blue Pages). In our view, it will be difficult for the government to meet its target of completing the project by the end of 2000.

**1.136** With the exception of the Passport Office, which has improved the timeliness of its service since 1996, we were unable to obtain the information needed to measure changes in the quality of services provided by means other than the telephone. These other services have taken steps to deliver services in more cost-effective and innovative ways but have not adequately measured the results.

**1.137 Measuring and reporting service results.** All telephone operations we examined have established measures and targets for accessibility and timeliness. However, departments and agencies do not always set targets for other aspects of service quality or measure client satisfaction.

**1.138** We concluded that clients were not consulted sufficiently to ensure that measures of performance would be in place for those aspects of service that matter most to them, or that delivery targets take clients' expectations and priorities into account. There has been some improvement since 1996 in communicating key information to clients

at points of service. However, more needs to be done to inform clients about whether results have met targets, how much it costs to provide a service, and how to lodge a complaint and obtain redress.

**1.139** We found that since our last audit, Parliament has been given more information on service performance and the information is more likely to be meaningful and to help put results into perspective. However, improvement is needed in reporting performance trends, providing more balanced information and reporting costs.

**1.140 The role of the Treasury Board Secretariat.** The Treasury Board Secretariat has provided departments and agencies with guidance and support that has become more active since 1998.

However, we concluded that it has not systematically monitored the government's progress in implementing service quality initiatives and improving service quality. As a result, the information it reports to Parliament has not been adequate to clearly indicate the government's progress in improving the quality of services to Canadians.

**1.141 Implementation of 1996 recommendations.** The Treasury Board Secretariat and other departments and agencies have acted to some extent on all of the recommendations we made in 1996. However, the response has been uneven and none of the recommendations has been implemented fully.

**1.142** Managers of the service lines we examined have used several techniques for continuously improving service delivery. These include conducting client satisfaction surveys and reviews and establishing action plans. We concluded that more effort is needed to collect, analyze and use performance information (including cost information) in managing performance and continuous improvement. In addition, benchmarking would be a way to learn about good

practices in other organizations, and better use could be made of data on complaints.

**Government's overall response:** *We agree that client satisfaction is an essential element for the provision of services offered by the government to the public. The government is committed to meeting client needs and expectations and we trust that this chapter will further our joint goals to improve the quality of service offered to Canadians.*

*Service improvement in all areas of government operations continues to be a major priority of the Treasury Board Secretariat and all government departments. The Secretariat emphasized this imperative with the creation in 1998 of the Service and Innovation Sector as a Policy Centre within government, to lead government-wide initiatives to improve the delivery of services to Canadians. The Sector is building on the initial work done under the Quality Services Initiative to develop a broader, citizen-centred approach to service improvement. For this purpose, the Sector is working closely with the leaders of service delivery across the government.*

*The chapter indicates that the number of telephone calls received by government in the 13 service lines examined rose from 36 million in 1996 to 56 million in 1999, a 54 percent increase in three years. We are pleased to note that the audit revealed that "the most significant improvement in*

*service quality" has occurred in the area of telephone accessibility.*

*An important element of the government's commitment to make service more citizen-centred is Blue Pages redesign. Canada has become a leader in the field of redesigning government telephone listings in public directories by successfully integrating all levels of government into one easy-to-read directory format. Implementation of the new directory format will occur according to publication schedules established in co-operation with the telecommunications industry and with provincial and municipal governments.*

*The Secretariat agrees with the Auditor General's recommendations on measurement, client satisfaction and reporting. Much good work has been done by many departments in these areas. The Secretariat will continue to work with departments to assist them in monitoring and reporting on service quality in an integrated way, together with other information on results and performance, through the annual planning and reporting process.*

*The Secretariat is also working with departments to develop an approach to planning and implementing service improvement that will promote continuous improvement in service delivery across the government.*



## About the Audit

### Objectives

The objectives of the audit were to determine:

- the nature and extent of progress made by departments and agencies in improving the quality of their services since our 1996 audit;
- whether departments and agencies have measured results and reported them to Parliament;
- whether the Treasury Board Secretariat has assisted departments and agencies in implementing the government's commitments to service quality, and whether it has reported to Parliament on the government's progress in improving service; and
- whether departments and agencies have acted on our 1996 audit recommendations and on related recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

### Scope

The scope of the audit included the Treasury Board Secretariat and 10 departments and agencies, focussing on the 13 services that we examined in our 1996 audit.

We placed particular emphasis on performance results. The audit covered the period from 31 March 1996 to 31 October 1999.

### Approach

We first collected performance data and supporting documentation from departments and agencies, and then analyzed that information. We reviewed the performance information and assessed it in light of our audit criteria; we did not audit its accuracy. Where necessary, we discussed the data and reports with service managers and staff and carried out follow-up interviews.

We conducted on-site visits to observe the front-line operations of several high-volume service centres. In addition, we reviewed information reported to Parliament from 1997 to 1999 on the performance of the 13 service lines. We also examined the part the Treasury Board Secretariat has played in promoting and supporting government-wide initiatives for service quality.

### Criteria

We expected that:

- departments and agencies would have made improvements over time in providing cost-effective services to Canadians;
- departments and agencies would have delivery targets that address key aspects of service delivery, reflect client priorities and are communicated to clients;
- measures of the quality of services delivered, and of costs incurred, would be credible and allow a determination of the extent to which performance targets have been met;

- departments and agencies would tell clients what the service costs, and use service and cost performance information as a basis for determining the highest-quality service that can be provided at an affordable cost;
- departments and agencies would measure performance against delivery targets, report it to clients and use performance information to improve service results;
- departments and agencies would establish adequate complaint and redress mechanisms;
- performance information reported by departments and agencies to Parliament would be relevant, understandable and balanced, and would include associated costs;
- the Treasury Board Secretariat would provide guidance and support to departments and agencies in implementing the government's commitments to improve the delivery of services to Canadians; and
- the Treasury Board Secretariat would monitor progress and report to Parliament on the government's progress in improving service delivery.

### **Audit Team**

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## Appendix A

### Recommendations of the 1996 Audit

*(Excerpts from the September 1996 Report of the Auditor General to the House of Commons, Chapter 14, Service Quality)*

Service managers should ensure that delivery targets reflect client priorities.

The Treasury Board should encourage departments to publish service standards and to report performance against them at points of service.

Service managers should collect, analyze and use service and cost performance information as a basis for determining the highest-quality service that can be provided at an affordable cost.

Service managers should clearly communicate to clients how complaints can be made and how they will be redressed. Service managers should also systematically collect and analyze complaint data and devise methods to prevent mistakes from recurring.

Service managers (including telephone centre managers) should collect and use performance data to carry out systematic root-cause analyses, and devise appropriate remedies for resolving persistent problems of accessibility.

Deputy ministers should ensure that departments focus efforts on major services and should make senior officials accountable for implementing service standards.

Service managers should develop and follow action plans that include all key features for the implementation of service standards.

Treasury Board Secretariat should report clearly to Parliament the government's progress in implementing the Service Standards Initiative.

## Appendix B

### Recommendations of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

*(Excerpts from the Fifth Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, April 1997)*

The Committee recommends:

That Treasury Board Secretariat develop and make public its implementation framework for the Quality Services Initiative by 30 September 1997. Particular reference must be made to achieving service standards within the context of the Initiative.

That Treasury Board Secretariat lead the Quality Services Initiative by establishing, in co-operation with the departments, a final target completion date for the entire initiative, and by providing guidance and incentives to the departments to ensure that this initiative is completed successfully.

That by 30 September 1997 Treasury Board Secretariat make public the target implementation date for the Quality Services Initiative.

That all departments delivering services directly to Canadians establish plans for implementing the Quality Services Initiative. These plans must include a timetable for full implementation, including target dates for publication of service standards, and must be made available to Parliament and the public.

That departments, as an integral part of establishing standards for the services they provide, consult those receiving services and take their needs into account before final implementation occurs.

That departments make public the standards they have established for the services they deliver to Canadians and report performance against these standards in either Part III of their Estimates, or when appropriate, in performance reports tabled in the House of Commons in the fall.

That Treasury Board Secretariat report annually to Parliament on the progress being made in the development and implementation of service standards throughout government, either in Part III of its Estimates, in its performance report, or in a separate document designated for this purpose.

That departments with telephone services publish service standards governing accessibility and accuracy of answers, that they collect and analyse client complaints about telephone services, and that they regularly measure and publicly report performance against the standards they have established.

That departments engaged in paying benefits continue with efforts to enhance the use of direct deposits as the principal means of payment.