



Institute for
Citizen-Centred
Service

L'Institut des
services axés
sur les citoyens

IPAC

The Institute of
Public Administration of Canada



IAPC

L'Institut d'administration
publique du Canada

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (*Disponible en français*)

April 22, 2003

Canadians Say Government Service Improving- Higher Ratings Linked to Greater Confidence in Government Institutions

Toronto, ON – The Institute for Citizen-Centred Service (ICCS) and the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) today released *Citizens First 3*, the latest in a series of world-class research initiatives offering an invaluable understanding of what Canadians expect and experience with respect to public-sector service delivery. Based on a representative sample of 9,000 Canadians from every province and territory, *Citizens First 3* breaks new ground by:

- showing that Canadians see significant improvements in service performance by the public sector since 1998; and
- establishing a clear relationship between service quality and confidence in government institutions.

The results of *Citizens First 3* suggest that governments across Canada are succeeding in their efforts to improve service quality. The *Citizens First* research initiative has been tracking public-sector service quality ratings since 1998, and at all three levels of government (municipal, provincial/territorial, and federal), *Citizens First 3* reveals significant improvement. By way of comparison, the American Customer Satisfaction Index reports no significant increase in satisfaction ratings for U.S. federal government services since 1999.

Moreover, citizens who feel they receive high quality service when accessing public services have more confidence in their democratic institutions. “In the private sector, service quality is an important competitive factor in attracting and retaining customers,” notes Nicholas Prychodko, Program Director of the ICCS. “Similarly, in the public sector, service quality is critical to building and maintaining the confidence of citizens. Citizens are quick to object when they have to stand in line for extended periods at a government office or when their garbage does not get picked up on time. Through *Citizens First 3*, we now have clear evidence highlighting the significant role service plays in giving citizens confidence in their democratic institutions.”

The challenge now is to continue to improve service quality in an increasingly complex service environment where citizens are using new electronic service channels such as the Internet and email. According to *Citizens First 3*, half of all public-sector service experiences now combine two or more service channels. “Today Canadians expect to access government services when and where they want,” explains Joseph Galimberti, Executive Director of IPAC. “They may start by downloading a form before putting it in the mail, or they may make a telephone call to get information before going into an office. Channel choice is good for citizens, but providing consistent, seamless service across different service channels presents an increasingly complex challenge for governments.”

The *Citizens First 3* project is sponsored by fifteen jurisdictions: the Government of Canada, eight provinces, one territory, and five municipalities. The research was undertaken by Erin Research for The Institute for Citizen-Centred Service (ICCS) and the Institute of Public Administration Canada (IPAC), who commissioned and managed the project.

For more information, visit the [ICCS website \(www.iccs-isac.org\)](http://www.iccs-isac.org).

-30-

Contacts:

Charles Vincent, ICCS
(416) 325-5062

charles.vincent@iccs-isac.org

Patrice Dutil, IPAC
(416) 924-8787

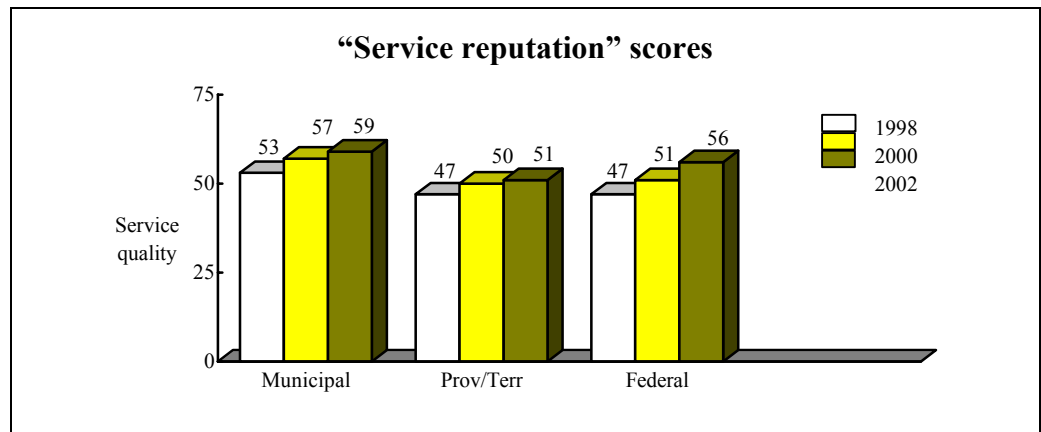
pdutil@ipaciapc.ca



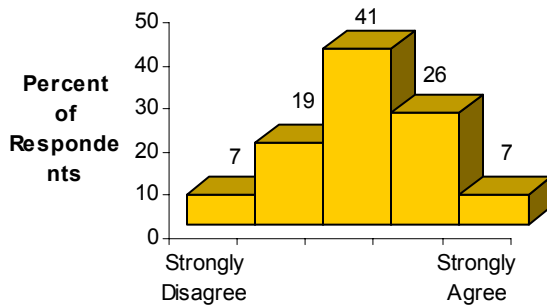
Backgrounder: Citizens First 3 Results *(Disponible en français)*

Service Quality Ratings are Improving

Scores on service quality reputation – the overall ratings of satisfaction – are going up for all levels of government. In addition, ratings for many specific services have also improved.



“I can readily access any government service that I need”



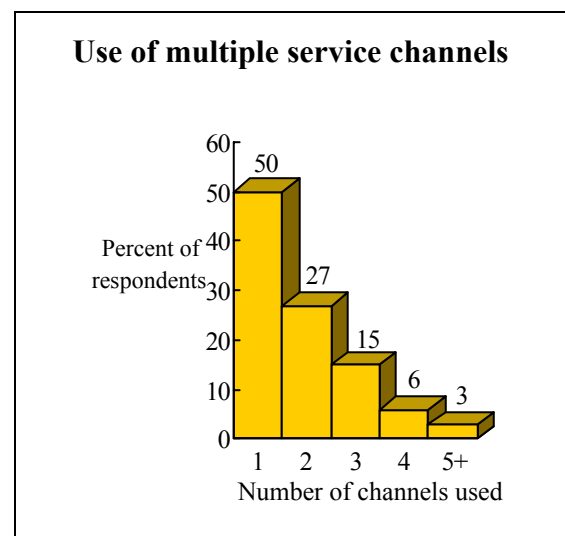
Access to Government Service Continues to be a Challenge

Citizens say that access is one of the biggest barriers to getting government services. In their comments, citizens frequently and spontaneously express real frustration with the busy telephone lines, automated voice systems, wait times, and being bounced from person to person. It appears that once citizens get to the service, they generally experience courteous, helpful, and knowledgeable government staff – it’s just getting there that can be so fraught with difficulty.

Multiple Service Channels are now the Norm

In half of all attempts to obtain government services, citizens use two or more channels (up from 26% in 2000). These results show a high level of multiple channel activity and emphasize that understanding the relationship between channels and the service experience is critical to service improvement.

As one example, a client who calls on the phone may simultaneously be looking at the organization’s website. Clearly, the person who takes the phone call needs to know everything that is (and is not) available on line. Modern call centres and service counters are now designed to integrate multiple channels, but creating an environment of seamless channel transitions remains a challenge in almost every service area.





Backgrounder: Citizens First Initiative (*Disponible en français*)

Citizens First 3 is the third in a series of biennial studies providing fresh insights and comprehensive information on how citizens and clients of the Canadian public sector perceive the services they receive from governments at the municipal, provincial/territorial, and federal levels. *Citizens First 3* builds on and extends the citizen-centred research agenda that is a cornerstone of the Canadian approach to public service improvement.

Citizens First 1998 and 2000

The original *Citizens First* studies in 1998 and 2000 asked Canadians across the country what they thought about the delivery of public services, what expectations they held, and what they saw as the priorities for improvement. The results defined three new perspectives on service quality:

- They challenged the widely held view that government services are second rate by showing how polls have often underrated citizens' perceptions of government services;
- They identified the five drivers of service quality that most strongly affect citizens' perceptions of service delivery; and
- They offered managers and service providers clear direction for improving services.

The *Citizens First* initiative achieved national and international recognition when the Citizen-Centred Service Network (CCSN) won the prestigious Gold Award for Innovative Management from the Institute of Public Administration Canada (IPAC) in 1999 and the Silver Medal for International Innovation in Management from the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) in 2000.

Citizens First 3

Citizens First 3 replicates and extends both of these previous studies and addresses important, emerging issues in service delivery and service improvement.

- An investigation of the intriguing link between satisfaction with public services and confidence in government, which other research has suggested but not defined; and
- An examination of how citizens use both single and multiple channels to obtain government services.

Citizens First 3 was undertaken by Erin Research for the Institute for Citizen-Centred Service (ICCS) and the Institute of Public Administration Canada (IPAC).

The Institute for Citizen-Centred Service

The mission of the Institute for Citizen-Centred Service is to promote high levels of citizen satisfaction with public-sector service delivery. The ICCS achieves its mission by undertaking research to identify citizens' service needs and expectations, and by assisting the public sector in applying innovative solutions which support service quality.

The Institute of Public Administration of Canada

The Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) is a leading Canadian organization concerned with the theory and practice of public management. Its scope covers governance from the local to the global level. It is an association with active regional groups across the country. The Institute recognizes and fosters both official languages of Canada.