



GLOBAL EXPERIENCES AND THE CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

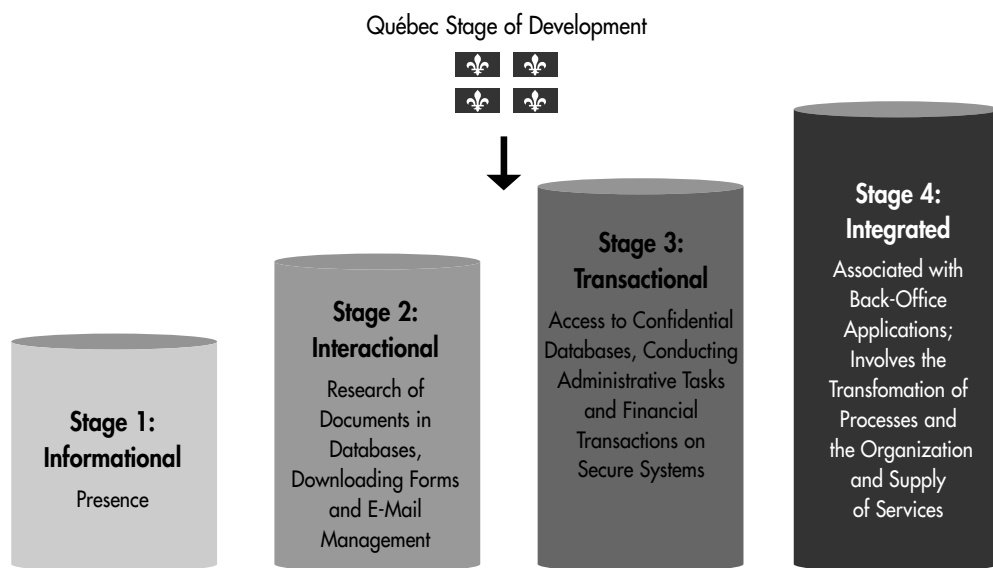
As stated in the introduction to this report, e-government can be viewed according to four major elements, i.e., citizens' access to State-held information about them, the increased use of information and communication technologies in the main areas of State activity, e-democracy and the delivery of e-services.

In defining e-government, many people focus on the delivery of e-services and often marginalize the other three elements of this concept. Accordingly, this component has been widely studied, among others, by the international consulting firm Gartner, which has developed a scale to measure the development stages of the delivery of e-services. This classification is generally accepted for evaluating progress made in the delivery of e-services. These development stages are: Informational, interational, transactional and integrated (see Figure 2 below).

The informational stage focuses solely on ensuring a presence with a Web site. The main objective is to disseminate basic information, such as a department's or agency's mission, its addresses, business hours and, on occasion, other official documents of relevance to the public.

The interational stage goes beyond the static presentation of general information to enable users to search documents and e-mail civil servants. Information on programs and services can be very detailed depending on the department/agency and the target clientele. On these sites, citizens should be able to find procedures to follow and whom to contact, as well as download the necessary forms for a specific program or service. The challenge in this stage is to implement powerful search tools and the most important processes for managing content and e-mails.

Figure 2: The Four Stages in the Development of E-Services



Source: Gartner

Focused on Citizens and Business based on Identified Needs



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The transactional stage focuses on conducting electronic transactions and eliminating most, if not all, interpersonal dealings with the government. Requests from users trigger a series of automated or semi-automated procedures until the transaction is completed. In a subsequent stage, it would be acceptable to duplicate information and periodically update it. The problems stemming from isolated applications and information sources become evident in the transactional stage. Accordingly, a cooperative environment must be implemented to allow for better integration of the government's internal activities, in this case, modernizing the way the government does business to serve its users more efficiently.

Lastly, the integrated stage is in part an in-depth review of the government's activities, namely its interactions with citizens, businesses, its own employees and other government stakeholders, including the various service levels. The government will use the Internet, automated voice response systems and other technologies to review service delivery, voter participation and governance on a regular basis. Regarding its interactions with citizens, the focus will be on implementing interfaces that correspond to the logic of the people using the services. Two types of presentation are preferred: Theme portals that combine services addressing a specific category of citizen—aboriginals, the elderly, youth, etc.—or, alternatively, according to a citizen's life events—birth, education, job search, retirement, etc. The fourth stage of the Gartner model also includes electronic procurement, as well as the need for various government stakeholders to be able to exchange information to avoid situations in which users and public servants would have to reenter the same information.

E-Democracy

E-democracy is another important element of e-government which could contribute to strengthening the application of democratic values in Québec.

Parallel with the four development stages established by Gartner, initiatives to promote and solidify what is known as e-democracy comprise another level of development of e-government. E-democracy allows for better communication between governments and the public:

“Electronic democracy can be understood as the capacity of the new communications environment to enhance the degree and quality of public participation in government.”²

For its part, the Bertelsmann Foundation defines e-democracy as follows:

“E-democracy [is the] use of the Internet by government, political parties and advocacy groups to provide information, communicate, deliver services or boost participation to generate a more robust debate among citizens.”³

² Kakabadse, A., N. K. Kakabadse et A. Kouzmin, Reinventing the Democratic Governance Project through Information Technology? A Growing Agenda for Debate, *Public Administration Review*, January/February 2003, Vol. 63, No 1, p. 47.

³ Phil Noble & Associates, *E-Democracy around the World, A Survey for the Bertelsmann Foundation*, Summer 2001, p. 1.



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In this regard, several administrations have distinguished themselves by proposing initiatives to boost citizen participation and involvement in the democratic process, for example, by holding on-line consultations and even on-line voting. This is the case, among others, in Arizona, where an experiment enabled some 40,000 people to vote on-line during the March 2000 primaries, and in the city of Markham, Ontario, which experimented with Internet voting during municipal elections on November 10, 2003. Clearly, governments are using information and communication technologies to boost voter turnout through on-line voting.

Information and communication technologies can also be used to encourage communication between political leaders and citizens in order to raise citizens' interest and increase involvement in the political life of a given society. In terms of releasing information, e-mail is an inexpensive and highly effective communication tool that several progressive politicians have already put to successful use. The Prime Minister of Japan, Junichiro Koizumi, was one of the first to launch an e-mail magazine, which is estimated to have close to one million subscribers.⁴ The Premier of Québec, Jean Charest, recently started using this communication tool to send a weekly circular letter to interested citizens. The e-mailing of information by government officials appears to be a growing trend. This strategy enables them to circumvent traditional communication methods to address the population directly with messages that cannot be distorted.

ICTs can also be used to solicit citizens' opinions and to structure the information efficiently so that it features prominently in the development of public policy and the improvement of services to citizens. Increased participation on the part of citizens in the democratic process can be achieved through sites featuring newsgroups or on-line chat sessions with politicians heading up major projects. In fact, in France, Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin announced on April 21 that he planned to hold frequent chat sessions with his fellow citizens.⁵ More systematic public consultation can also be encouraged through on-line surveys, an inexpensive tool that can gather firsthand information on more specific issues. For example, last February, the New Brunswick government launched an on-line questionnaire to consult its citizens on the upcoming provincial budget.⁶ In summary, new information and communication technologies must be used to recreate a virtual agora that enables citizens to take part in debates on the issues facing the government.

This is how e-government promotes such exchanges between the State and its citizens. Public administrations are still at the experimental stage in this regard. Additional studies may be needed to determine the real benefits of these measures and the related costs. Nevertheless, e-government is still one of the most promising innovations of the future. This appears even more relevant in the current context, where a major portion of the population appears to have lost interest in politics. The initiatives to encourage citizens to participate in social debate could counter this trend to the benefit of the democratic health of our modern states.

⁴ Phil Noble & Associates, *E-Democracy around the World, A Survey for the Bertelsmann Foundation*, Summer 2001, p. 19.

⁵ Memo from the Prime Minister, April 21, 2004, <http://www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr> [on-line], site consulted April 23, 2004.

⁶ <http://www.gnb.ca/news/fin/2004e0186fn.htm> [on-line], site consulted April 23, 2004.



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1. A Global Trend

The number of Internet users is increasing yearly in most countries around the world, although the growth rate varies significantly from one region to another. The most significant increase in adult Internet users has been in Germany, Japan and urban areas of China.⁷ Several countries, provinces and states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are already committed to the “electronic revolution,” each one progressing according to its own timetable and priorities. By tapping into its significant knowledge in the field and committing concretely to e-government, Québec is in a position to catch up quickly to governments that are the most advanced in this sector and even become a world leader.

Since it has the necessary human and technical resources, Québec could quickly pick up the pace with the proper funding by relying on leaders in the field.

In moving toward e-government, Québec can learn from the example of several governments which have made impressive strides in the field. For example, France, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia are among the countries that are most often cited for the advancement of their e-government.

France (www.service-public.fr)



By creating the *Agence pour le développement de l'administration électronique (ADAE)* (e-government development agency), which reports directly to the Prime Minister, France developed a structure to provide the leadership needed to implement such a project. Adopted in fall 2003, the *Plan stratégique de l'administration électronique, RE/SO 2007* states that France will have developed e-services within the next four years. As part of this plan, several innovative projects have already been implemented, including the *carte de vie quotidienne* (everyday life card). This smart card makes citizens' lives easier by enabling them to obtain local services, such as registration for sports activities, school meal services, public transit, parking meters, etc. Based on the results of this pilot project, authorities will decide whether to implement an even larger project, the *carte citoyen* (citizenship card), a smart card encoding a citizen's name, address, passport number and driver's license. The site www.forum.gouv.fr is an interdepartmental platform managed by the government that aims to stimulate public debate. Citizens can express themselves on-line on various suggested topics and seek the opinions of their peers. Lastly, the Web site www.service-public.fr will allow individuals and professionals to create their own administrative space by customizing the home page of the French government portal according to their specific needs and by displaying the e-services and information that concern them. This customization will eventually enable them to track their dealings with the government and monitor exchanges of personal information between government bodies.

⁷ Respective growth of 40%, 37% and 35% from 2002 to 2003. With 128 million Internet users, which corresponds to 40% of the world adult Internet population, the United States remains the country most represented on the Web (Ipsos-Reid, *The Face of the Web*, January 2004).



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France adopts ADELE: *pour vous simplifier la vie*

Tabled by the Prime Minister in January 2004, project ADELE (*ADministration ELectronique 2004/2007 – ADELE pour vous simplifier la vie*) aims to provide a framework for the development of e-government in France. This project establishes four requirements for the government of the future: Constant listening to users, better access to services, creation of a relationship of trust with French citizens and better management of State spending. The project lists 140 measures for 300 new services, including, in addition to the measures mentioned above, a single telephone number to access public services, a national electronic identity card, an improved everyday life card (smart card that includes health information, i.e., insurance and medical files), a corporate employment service (single management centre for companies) and a geographic information system.

Source: *ADministration ELectronique 2004-2007, Projet ADELE: pour vous simplifier la vie*, press release, Prime Minister of France (<http://www.adae.gov.fr> [on-line], site consulted March 21, 2004).

The United Kingdom (www.direct.gov.uk)



The United Kingdom has set an ambitious goal of ensuring that 100% of government services are available on-line by the end of 2005. The implementation strategy is under the responsibility of the Office of e-Envoy, which reports directly to the Prime Minister. Several projects to improve services delivered to citizens have already been implemented, including UK Directgov (www.direct.gov.uk), a one-stop portal from which all government services can be accessed on-line; the Land Registry's Web site, which enables potential buyers to obtain information on the average property value in a given region (determined by a postal code); the Knowledge Network, which informs citizens about the protection of transactions, the use of intermediaries and other security-related issues; and finally, the e-procurement service, which enables citizens to obtain various forms electronically.

The United States (www.Firstgov.gov)



The U.S. federal government made a firm commitment to e-government by implementing a strategy to ensure easy access to government e-services, with the main objective being that citizens can access these services in only three clicks. In September 2000, the U.S. government launched the www.Firstgov.gov portal, which encompasses all government services, with several theme sites related to this central site, including www.GovBenefits.gov, www.Regulations.gov, www.GoLearn.gov, www.usafreedomcorps.gov, www.Volunteer.gov and www.Recreation.gov. By adopting the E-Government Act on December 17, 2002, the United States confirmed that e-government was one of its major priorities. This Act immediately gave rise to the Office of E-Government and Information Technology, which reports to the Office of Management and



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Budget and whose senior manager is appointed directly by the President of the United States. The E-Government Task Force, a group comprising some one hundred government managers responsible for identifying issues and selecting priority projects, was also created further to adoption of the Act in December 2002. Today, U.S. citizens can perform many transactions on-line, including income tax returns (IRS Free Filing program) and government employee payroll management (E-Payroll). For its part, the Federal Technical Data System (www.FedTeDS.gov) is used to send and release information securely that is related to the acquisition of goods and services, while the Past Performance Information Retrieval System (www.PPIRS.gov) provides background information on contractors' pasts for individuals interested in acquiring goods or services.

Australia (www.australia.gov.au)



The firm Accenture ranks Australia fourth in the world in the development of e-government.⁸ The new central government portal features services aimed at target clientele to facilitate transactions and the circulation of information to the various agencies. The government sites feature several transactional functions. For example, the Health Insurance Commission enables citizens to register on-line for organ donations in a secure manner. Parents can also access their children's vaccination records on-line to note the dates of booster shots, required doses, etc. Under the Government On-line Vision, each department and agency is responsible for posting its action plan on-line, as well as a project implementation schedule, which is updated regularly.

2. The Canadian Perspective

With 71% of its adults using the Internet,⁹ Canada is one of the countries with the most widespread use of the Internet. Governments appear to have kept pace with the population in adopting this new Internet technology. Accordingly, governments in Canada, specifically the federal government and the government of Ontario, rank far ahead of other countries in terms of e-government. A recent United Nations report ranks the Canadian government 6th worldwide in the delivery of e-services¹⁰ and 3rd worldwide in dialogue with citizens and participation in the democratic process.¹¹ In addition, according to the Center for Public Policy of Brown University, which established a list of 25 criteria for evaluating the national Web sites of 198 countries, Canada ranked 2nd, behind Taiwan and ahead of Chile.¹² The criteria used in this study were, specifically, the quality and accessibility of information, security and the protection of privacy, commercial annoyance and public outreach. The Accenture study, whose main criteria involved the scope and range of services, ranked Canada 1st, Singapore 2nd, and the United States 3rd. Note that the same study ranked the United Kingdom 6th. Lastly, a recent study by the Bertelsmann Foundation (an American-owned German company) on the benefits of Internet use (efficiency, transparency and participation) ranked the UK government site 1st, followed by the city of Seattle (the United States) and the Ontario government. The Canadian federal government site placed 5th.¹³

⁸ Accenture, *eGovernment Leadership-Realizing the Vision*, April 2002.

⁹ Ipsos-Reid, *The Face of the Web*, January 2004. This same study ranked South Korea 2nd, with 70% of its adults using the Internet, and the United States 3rd, with 68%.

¹⁰ United Nations, *World Public Sector Report 2003: E-Government at the Crossroads*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, October 2003, p. 129. The UN Study ranked the United States 1st, with Sweden, Australia, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Chile and Mexico following close behind.

¹¹ Called *e-participation*, the UK ranked 1st in this category, followed by the United States.

¹² <http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Taubman-Center/>, according to this study, the UK ranked 5th and the United States 9th.

¹³ Phil Noble & Associates, *E-Democracy around the World, A survey for the Bertelsmann Foundation*, Summer 2001.



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The Canadian Federal Government (www.canada.gc.ca)



Having developed several features that incorporate new information and communication technologies, although in a more eclectic manner, Canada now intends to group these initiatives into a coherent policy. Two projects will further this objective: Service Canada and Government On-Line. Service Canada aims to provide Canadians with one-stop access to government services, be it in person, by telephone or electronically. Government On-Line aims to make all government services available on-line by 2005. Major efforts have already been made to create a portal that groups together government services according to target clientele: Canadian citizens, businesses and non-Canadians.

Several government services are already available in transactional mode, for example, on-line income tax returns, various permits, access to a job bank and an electronic placement service. Specific efforts have been made by the federal government to facilitate access to government e-services. Also, major investments have been made in recent years to provide Canadians with authentication mechanisms on the Internet, in particular the e-pass project. Finally, note that certain on-line consultation processes developed by the federal government make it one of the most innovative in the field. For example, citizens can give their opinion on-line of various working documents. The site <http://www.consultingcanadians.gc.ca> features a list of current consultations, some of which participants can comment on directly on the Web site (the comments gathered are automatically recorded in a database). We believe that these consultations contribute to Canada's ranking at the top of the list of OECD countries in terms of government Web sites (as is the case of the UN study). However, our own analysis indicates that current evaluation criteria in this regard could be adjusted to take into account the accessibility and user-friendliness of these sites, as well as efforts to promote them.

New Brunswick (www.snb.ca)



Showing remarkable innovation, the province of New Brunswick has created Service New Brunswick (SNB), a one-stop access to government services for citizens and businesses. Citizens can access government services at 36 SNB offices (service points located across the province) or on the Service New Brunswick Web site. As with the Canadian federal government, the Service New Brunswick site groups services according to the main clientele served: Citizens and businesses. Accordingly, 37% of transactions between citizens, businesses and the government are done electronically, whether it be consulting the land registry, registering property, paying taxes, renewing a driver's license, etc.¹⁴ The site also allows for on-line public consultation. For example, citizens can fill out an on-line pre-budget consultation questionnaire and, if desired, publish these comments on the Web site. The government is committed to considering these comments in preparing the budget.

¹⁴ 2002-2003 Annual Report, Service New Brunswick (<http://www.snb.ca> [on-line], site consulted March 5, 2004).



Service New Brunswick: A One-Stop Service Point at Counters, by Telephone or via the Internet

New Brunswick decided to mandate a provincial Crown corporation to manage public informational and transactional services through which citizens and businesses manage their private and professional lives. Service New Brunswick (SNB), a trademark of this corporation, also has a mission to ensure the accessibility of government services to all citizens and businesses. In addition to offering 176 government services on behalf of various departments and agencies, SNB provides property assessment and geographic information for the province and accepts payments for certain public service companies and 39 municipalities. This is how SNB is playing a role in modernizing the process of delivering government services and information.

Ontario (www.gov.on.ca)



A strong political willingness enabled Ontario to enter the electronic era of service delivery. In three years, 75% of government services have been made available on-line, ranking the province ahead of several jurisdictions in terms of e-government. The user-friendliness of the site was a major element of the strategy to convince citizens to use the Internet. In keeping with global trends, the province divided the services offered on its government site into two categories: The target audience and the stages of life (birth, education, job search, retirement, etc.). The Ontario government portal provides the necessary links with other levels of government and delivers several services in transactional mode, for example, course registration, payment of tuition fees and on-line application to eight business-oriented programs. On the subject of e-democracy, Ontario has already held several public consultations, notably on the integration of technology into education. The province decided to facilitate access to on-line services by installing interactive terminals throughout its territory. These initiatives seem to be yielding results, with 71% of users satisfied with the on-line services used.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 We recommend that the Québec government reaffirm the implementation of e-government as one of its priorities.
- 1.2 We recommend that the Québec government aim to make Québec a world leader in e-democracy and the delivery of e-services to citizens by 2007.
- 1.3 We recommend conducting strategic monitoring of e-government developments in Canada and abroad and releasing the results of such monitoring to Québec departments and agencies.