P rogress in information and communication technologies now enables the State to deliver services that were previously unimaginable. Information is essential for government activities; the way in which it is handled largely determines the government's efficiency. However, the e-government project is not simply a matter of using ICTs to carry out government activities in the traditional way.

With its focus on the needs of citizens and businesses, the e-government project involves a profound change in the way the government does business. The entire mechanism is justified by an improvement in services to citizens. The programs proposed must be selected according to the needs of clients, citizens and businesses. In this context, ICTs are only one means of transforming relations between citizens and the State. By no means should they be considered an end in themselves. The e-government project also affects several other spheres of society, including the economy, employment, regional development and cultural diversity, which are only a few examples of the far-reaching impact of the increased use of ICTs.

Accordingly, an increased use of ICTs requires major changes within public administrations and society in general, which, as we have seen in the previous pages, are already in progress in most OECD countries. Not only is this new technology necessary to deal with global competition and the new demographic reality, it also appears to be something our fellow citizens want, in Québec as elsewhere.

As confirmed by a 2003 survey of Québec citizens, businesses and self-employed workers conducted by the *Centre francophone d'informatisation des organisations* (CEFRIO), Quebecers want the Internet to play an increasing part in their personal and professional lives; 60% of Québec adults already use the Internet on a regular basis.[15] Québec's e-government project therefore meets this collective desire.

Québec's e-government project revolves around four major elements (see Figure 3, page 44):

- The implementation of e-administration, which requires focusing government services on the needs of citizens and businesses;

- Access by citizens and businesses to State-held information about them;

- Generalized use of ICTs in the main sectors of State activity, i.e., health, education and justice, as well as within regions and municipalities;

- Improved democratic practices and government accountability through the new tools offered by ICTs (debate forums, consultations, transparent decisions).

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[15] This trend appears to apply across Canada: 73% of Canadian adults consider the Internet to be an essential part of their lives (CyberTENDANCES, November 2003).

A VISION FOR QUÉBEC (cont'd)

Figure 3: The Four Elements of E-Government
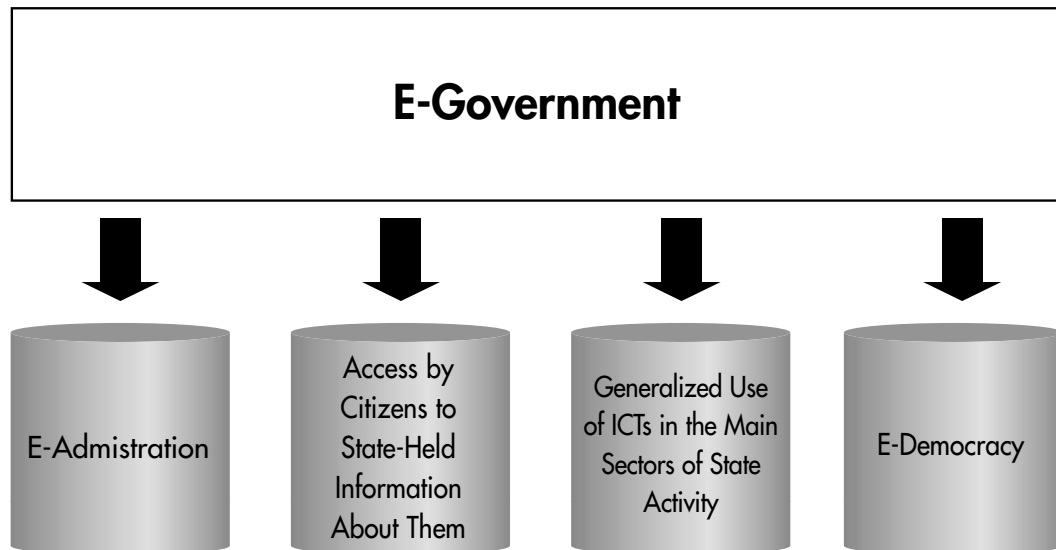
Québec Has Already Joined the Internet Age

- In early 2004, 60% of Québec adults were using the Internet (3.5 million) (CEFRIO-NeTendances);

- 1.8 million adults use the Internet at work and approximately 3 million have Internet access at home (CEFRIO-NeTendances);

- 80% of businesses with five or more employees are connected (CEFRIO-NetGouv 2003).

Government Sites: Resources Used

According to CEFRIO (NetGouv 2003), Québec government sites were consulted at least once by:

- 57% of businesses;

- 30% of citizens;

- 38% of self-employed workers.

Moreover, according to a Taylor Nelson Sofres poll conducted in collaboration with Léger Marketing (2003), 51% of adult Canadians used government e-services in the past twelve months.

1. E-Administration

One-Stop Portal for Government Services

E-administration consists in presenting information in a manner suited to the logic of users, citizens and businesses rather than of the government by providing accessible information and user-friendly electronic applications.

Currently, all government departments and agencies have Web sites comprising thousands of pages of detailed information on programs, services and activities. However, a citizen or business with a problem must search through all of these Web pages to find the relevant information, which is generally posted on more than one site. Despite several attempts by Communication-Québec, it becomes clear when browsing government Web sites that each department and agency still functions in isolation.

Baby Is on the Way: An Example of a Group of Services on the Government Portal (Communication-Québec), www.gouv.qc.ca

Communication-Québec has already grouped several services under major themes that correspond to life events, such as birth, death, moving, separation or a natural disaster. This initiative is the first step toward breaking down traditional administrative barriers and adopting a broader view of the delivery of services to citizens. For example, the "Baby Is on the Way" group of services includes information on parental leave, financial assistance for parents, daycare, special employment insurance benefits and registering births, as well as links to federal government Web sites. Certain applications can be made on-line in transactional mode. The services also include general information on parent-child relationships and the health of mothers and babies.

To better meet these needs, the Québec government will create a one-stop service portal where citizens or businesses can go to find the answers to all their questions. Government services and information about the services will no longer be organized according to the departments' missions, but rather according to the needs of citizens and businesses. Accordingly, services will be grouped under two major sections, i.e., the life events of citizens (birth, education, retirement, etc.) or businesses (start-up, merger, acquisition, etc.) and by specific theme or clientele (businesses, youth, education, justice, etc.). It will still be possible to access services on the department/agency Web sites. In this way, citizens will no longer have to deal with a complex government structure to find answers to their questions. They will be given a simple, comprehensive answer. It is the system, or the back-office functions, that will search the various department or agency databases on behalf of the citizen to find the information requested. In addition, information requested by the government, for example, a change of address, will no longer have to be provided more than once by citizens and businesses– the system will process the information to make it accessible to the corresponding departments.

A VISION FOR QUÉBEC (cont'd)

The portal will also include sections organized by specific themes, for example, a Business section, which is currently being developed, and a Youth section.

Government services will be accessible via several routes, namely the Internet, as well as more traditional methods, such as service counters, mail and telephone (see Figure 4 below). The multiservice centres to be set up across Québec, which will offer counter and telephone services, will be the method used to meet the needs and preferences of all citizens (the Communication-Québec offices and local employment centres seem to be the ideal network for this purpose[16]). However, while respecting the choice of citizens and businesses that wish to use traditional communication methods, it is desirable that the Internet become the main access to government services through a one-stop government portal. The design of the portal will be based on the needs and expectations of users. It will be organized by themes marking the life events of citizens and businesses (see Figure 5, page 48).

Certain current government sites are already transactional, i.e., citizens and businesses can fill out forms directly to pay their government bills on-line, as is the case with Clic Revenu. We want what is now the exception to become the rule; the greatest majority of transactions between citizens/businesses and the government must eventually be performed on-line.

Figure 4: Several Ways to Access Government Services

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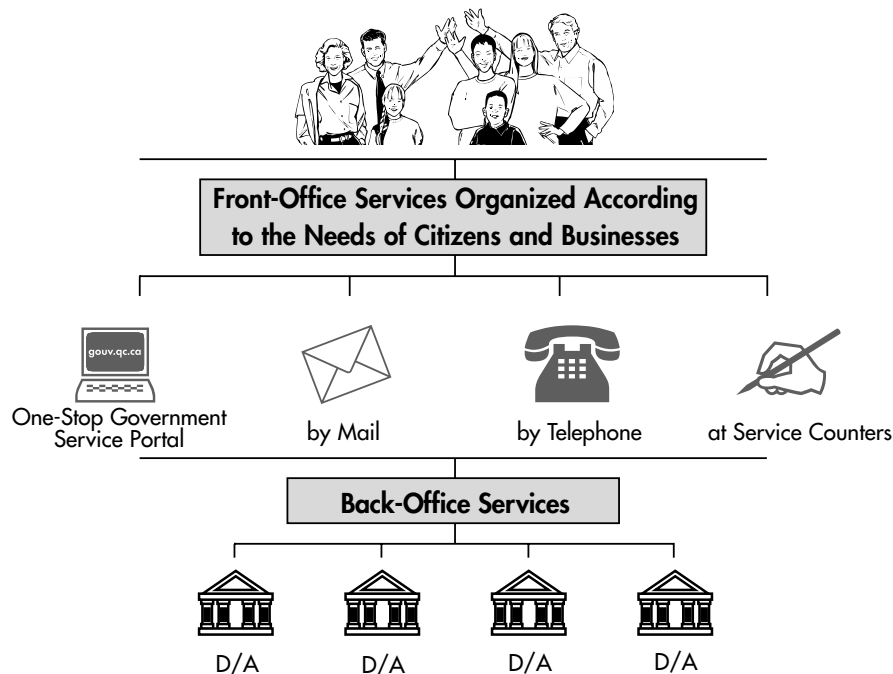
[16] The makeup of the network of multiservice centres will be addressed in Chapter 3.

Several Sites Are Already Transactional: The Example of Clic-Revenu (www.revenu.gouv.qc.ca)
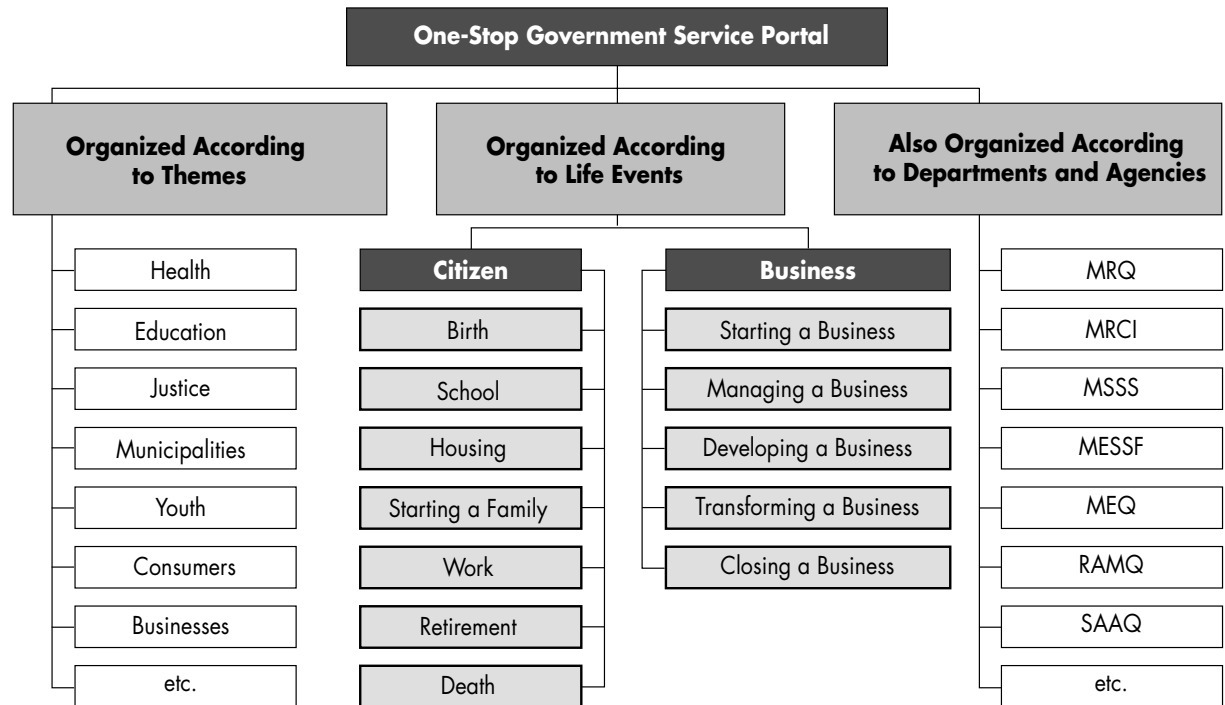
To facilitate relations between businesses and the government and, specifically, to simplify the administrative process they must follow, the *Ministère du Revenu* has created *Clic-Revenu*, an interactive transactional service. Using *Clic-Revenu*, businesses can consult their files on-line, send information about income tax and other taxes electronically (data are validated immediately) and even make payments on-line (depending on their financial institution). This system, which is based on a secure identification process, improves the quality of information sent and reduces processing time, which results in substantial savings in time and money, both for the government and the businesses.

E-government will imply a profound change in how the public administration works. Information must circulate beyond the traditional barriers of government departments and major Crown corporations. We will move from a vertical structure based on an allocation of tasks among government service providers to a horizontal structure focused on the needs of applicants and the imperative to provide applicants with simple and consistent answers. Government employees must become actively involved in this shift.

With the goal of delivering services that best meet the needs of citizens and businesses, the one-stop government portal must, in the medium term, incorporate the services delivered by other levels of governments. Accordingly, we plan to make it possible for citizens to conduct a search via the central portal that includes related services that are a part of citizens' daily lives and that are provided by public administrations that offer direct services to citizens, businesses and municipalities. In this way, a citizen could locate his home on a map, and then access a section which provides links to local municipal services and community resources.

Figure 5: One-Stop Government Service Portal

One-Stop Government Service Portal		
Organized According to Themes	**Organized According to Life Events**	**Also Organized According to Departments and Agencies**

Themes	Citizen	Business	Departments/Agencies
Health	Birth	Starting a Business	MRQ
Education	School	Managing a Business	MRCI
Justice	Housing	Developing a Business	MSSS
Municipalities	Starting a Family	Transforming a Business	MESSF
Youth	Work	Closing a Business	MEQ
Consumers	Retirement		RAMQ
Businesses	Death		SAAQ
etc.			etc.

An Example of a Local Portal: Arrondissement.com (www.arrondissement.com)

Arrondissement.com, created with the financial support of the Québec government's *Fonds de l'autoroute de l'information*, among others, is the portal for residents of Montréal boroughs. The site posts services offered by all levels of government—municipal, provincial and federal—and also lists community and business resources for the specific boroughs. Citizens can conduct their searches under several different themes, such as employment, family, housing, health, culture, etc. The information comes from the sites of various public administrations and is posted on the portal in a user-friendly manner. In this way, users do not need to know which administration is responsible for a specific service. As an added benefit, the commercial and business sections are run by the organizations themselves, which access site management functions with a user name and password.

How Arrondissement.com Can Simplify Your Life: The Case of Marie-Ève

Marie-Ève, age 34, has decided to do something about her health. She goes to Arrondissement.com to search for sporting activities at her local recreational centre. She clicks on the *Santé* icon and obtains the list of all quit-smoking programs. While she is there, she discovers a discussion group on the subject and seeks the opinions of others, like her, who are also trying to quit. She clicks on the link *J'arrête: J'y gagne* and is immediately routed to this site to register. On returning to Arrondissement.com, she clicks on a heading about vegetarianism and notes the date of an upcoming lecture on the subject at her local community centre announced under the *Calendrier* heading. Imagine, all this on just one site!

2. Citizens' Access to State-Held Information About Them: The "My Gov. Info." Citizen's Page

The government holds a great deal of information which, in fact, belongs to citizens and businesses. The e-government project aims to make this information more accessible. Access to this information is particularly relevant when a citizen or business wants to use a government e-service. Accordingly, citizens and businesses must be able to access all State-held information about them.

Once citizens have properly identified themselves, they could access the specific information they need from among all the State-held personal information about them, whether this be their address, driver's license, medical files, status of a bursary application, etc. Similarly, businesses could access information about themselves, including grant applications or the status of a permit application. As we have already mentioned, certain department sites, specifically the Ministère du Revenu, already enable businesses to access their tax files. We simply need to generalize this procedure and incorporate access functions into one Web site. This is what we are suggesting with the "My Gov. Info." citizen's page.

The "My Gov. Info." citizen's page (see Figure 6, page 50) will enable citizens to consult information about them held by departments and agencies. For example, it would certainly be of interest to a person awaiting heart surgery to know the length of waiting lists for this surgery at each hospital in the province. But it would be much more useful to know where he ranks on the list and how quickly his case is moving along. This is what the "My Gov. Info." citizen's page will be able to do. It will also enable citizens to send information about themselves to anyone they wish. Similarly, we also foresee the day when citizens will be able to send their medical file to their new family physician via the "My Gov. Info." citizen's page. The basic principle behind this project, which will take several years to implement, is that citizens have the right not only to consult this information, but also to use it as they see fit. In addition, both citizens and businesses alike will be able to edit information about themselves directly on the "My Gov. Info." citizen's page, which will result in significant time savings for the public administration. Lastly, since it will be possible to edit the "My Gov.
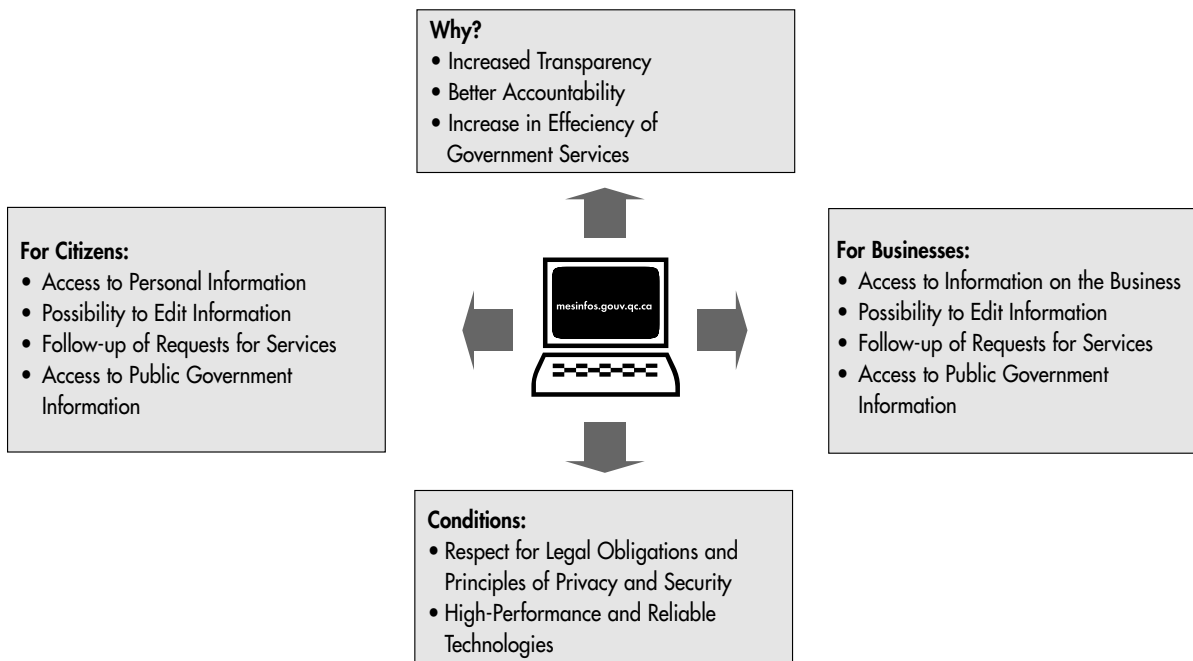
A VISION FOR QUÉBEC (cont'd)

Info." citizen's page, users will have easier access to public government information. By being able to view this information, use and edit it as needed, the stakeholders–both in society and in the public administration–will be held more accountable for its use. Lastly, since it will be possible to edit the "My Gov. Info." citizen's page, users will have easier access to public government information.

This large-scale project will clearly require the implementation of powerful, reliable technologies, in addition to operating rules and procedures to ensure the protection of personal information. Moreover, it is technically possible to implement the project without the need for the various departments and agencies to exchange personal information. In fact, once a citizen's/business's identity has been confirmed, he/it can access a search engine which goes through each government file for the information and displays it on the citizen's/business's home page, without duplication or copying of the files into databases. This would avoid the creation of megafiles of Orwellian proportions. In fact, according to the *Commission d'accès à l'information (CAI)*, citizens' access to State-held information about them can, on the contrary, increase the protection of private inform- ation by keeping citizens abreast of the use of this information: "[...] if each public agency could, at all times, through the delivery of e-services, keep citizens informed about the information held on them and its use and enable citizens to make on-line corrections to this information, we would have a model privacy protection regime."[17]

Figure 6: "My Gov. Info." Citizen's Page

Why?
- Increased Transparency
- Better Accountability
- Increase in Effeciency of Government Services

For Citizens:
- Access to Personal Information
- Possibility to Edit Information
- Follow-up of Requests for Services
- Access to Public Government Information

mesinfos.gouv.qc.ca

For Businesses:
- Access to Information on the Business
- Possibility to Edit Information
- Follow-up of Requests for Services
- Access to Public Government Information

Conditions:
- Respect for Legal Obligations and Principles of Privacy and Security
- High-Performance and Reliable Technologies

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[17] *Commission d'accès à l'information du Québec,* 2002 five-year report, <u>Une réforme de l'accès à l'information: le choix de la trans-parence</u>, CAI complementary document on public consultations by the Parliamentary committee, October 30, 2003, p. 37.

3. Generalized Use of ICTs in the Main Sectors of State Activity

The State is the main service provider in three key sectors: Health, education and justice. Moreover, its decentralization strategy grants significant importance to relations between regions and municipalities. For this reason, the current government must encourage the creation of theme information sites for citizens and businesses in each of these sectors. This initiative is in keeping with Québec's progression toward becoming a knowledge society. In such a society, information essentially becomes the "centre of gravity of the new economy."[18] This enables all players in society to exchange quality information more efficiently in order to make better, more informed decisions. Already, several social organizations have the expertise needed to provide quality content for these sites. This is why collaboration and partnerships between government bodies and these organizations could preserve the quality of information provided to citizens and businesses, while promoting systematic updates of the content. Citizens, as well as businesses, would therefore benefit from the knowledge of specialized resources.

The State must also use information and communication technologies to transform the services delivered to citizens and businesses, not only within the public administration itself, but also for all players in the health, education and justice networks (see Figure 7, page 54). By enabling better coherence and complementarity between the various entities, ICTs are contributing to improving services to citizens and businesses. This is how the technological revolution is promoting the competitiveness of our economy and the advantages that such competitiveness offers.

3.1 Health, Education and Justice Theme Sites

The government should encourage the creation of a **health theme site**, accessible via the one-stop portal for government services. The health theme site will initially provide general information: Awareness, information about diseases, treatment of minor problems, etc. This information is currently available on the Internet, but spread over a large number of sites, not all of which inspire the same degree of confidence. How can we be sure that health information found on the Internet is reliable? The government's health theme site will address these concerns. The objective of this site is twofold: Better public education and better service to address citizens' concerns more quickly. The health theme site will also provide citizens with information about the civil health network, for example, real-time information about waiting times in emergency rooms, the status of family medicine groups, etc. Sections featuring constantly changing information must be updated regularly. Throughout the implementation of the project, links must be established with other levels of government to share existing resources on the topic. Our intention is not to reinvent the wheel, but rather to take what already exists and make it better.

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[18] Michel Cartier, www.michelcartier.com

British Columbia Health Guide, A Health Portal for British Columbia Citizens

Québec would do well to follow the example of British Columbia in implementing a health theme portal. Under the BC HealthGuide project (http://www.bchealthguide.org), citizens in this province have access to information (verified by medical organizations) on prevention and awareness, as well as screening tests and first-aid procedures. The database, which includes 2,500 health topics, can be accessed by several methods, with the Internet being the preferred one. Citizens can also access this resource by telephone via the BC NurseLine. By calling a single number, they can speak to a nurse or a pharmacist depending on their needs. Finally, all households in the province have been given a paper version of the BC HealthGuide, which lists the most common health problems. The BC HealthGuide initiative helps citizens better manage their health, thereby making them informed partners in their province's healthcare system.

Similarly, the government should create an **education theme site**, which would include all information related to this major provincial jurisdiction: Information on training profiles, limited-access programs, extracurricular activities in each institution, etc. Project implementation will require sharing existing resources on current government Web sites. The education theme site could also include a list of distance learning programs, as well as inter-school collaboration pilot projects (with information and communication technologies) in schools in remote areas.

Inter-School Collaboration in Rural Regions

In the past two years, the *École éloignée en réseau* [remote school network] project, initiated by the CEFRIO and the *Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec*, has experimented with a new inter-school collaboration model using information and communication technologies (ICTs) in rural areas where population decline is a critical problem. The CEFRIO closely monitored the trial of a new collaboration model between school teams through the innovative use of ICTs with the aim of developing rural schools.

The model of the remote school network is not a distance learning approach. Rather, it is a new approach involving collaboration within a network which enables teachers and students to expand the horizons of the classroom and the school to improve the overall teaching environment. This project consolidates—and even accelerates— the teaching changes stipulated by the education reform and opens up new possibilities regarding the use of broadband communication in rural regions. It gives real meaning to a region's local development capacities, since it requires participation by community players to maintain and develop educational services in a remote region. The *Ministère de l'Éducation*, in collaboration with the CEFRIO, wants to expand the trials and give some 30 rural schools throughout Québec the opportunity to implement the remote school network model over the next two years.

> This type of project gives rural communities a chance to develop innovative approaches that go beyond net-worked educational services. They can seize the opportunity to develop an integrated vision of the use of broad-band in rural regions, whether in the area of health, municipal services, business services, community actions, recreation, adult education, etc.

In the longer term, the government should encourage implementation of a j**ustice theme site**, which would help citizens understand the inner workings of the legal system. This site would describe the jurisdictions of each court, indicate how to file a suit before each one and help citizens understand all related procedures. The Web sites of the non-profit organization *Éducaloi* (www.educaloi.qc.ca), funded in part by the *Barreau du Québec* and the federal and Québec governments, and of the *Droits sur Internet* (www.droitsurinternet.net), funded in part by the Québec government and the *Université de Montréal*, are a step in the right direction. Linking these sites to the justice theme site remains to be determined, although the goal is to improve existing resources.

Finally, in terms of **municipal services**, a partnership must be formed with the *Union des municipalités du Québec* and the *Fédération québécoise des municipalités* to facilitate integration between the municipal sites and those of the Québec government.

Experience has shown that a theme site that is not regularly updated quickly becomes obsolete and seldom visited. For this reason, the government must ensure that its theme sites are updated regularly. By using ICTs, existing resources in civil society (e.g., *Ordre des infirmières, Ordre professionnel des diététistes* and other non-profit organizations) could be used to validate and update Web site content with site information decentralized managing mechanisms. This type of updating mechanism is already being contemplated for the *Commission scolaire de la Beauce-Etchemin* (see insert) Web site and the government Youth portal project.

3.2 Using ICTs to Transform Services to Citizens

ICTs currently offer amazing possibilities that we could only dream of a few years ago. The integration of new technologies in the delivery of health, education, justice and municipal services to citizens is also part of the vast e-government project. Already, several pilot projects have confirmed that the appropriate use of these technologies results in much more efficient delivery of services. With e-government, we must go the extra mile and make the use of information and communication technologies the rule in order to improve services to citizens. We can imagine a time, for example, when a citizen could check the waiting time (in real time) at near-by hospitals before bringing his/her child to the emergency room, or when courses could be taken by computer in a virtual classroom and questions asked via chat sessions, or when evidence in a court case could be sent to the opposing party via the Internet, or when citizens could obtain municipal permits or pay municipal taxes on-line. The collaboration of civil organizations in the relevant networks is essential to achieving this goal.

Figure 7: Generalization of ICTs Within the Main Sectors of State Activity
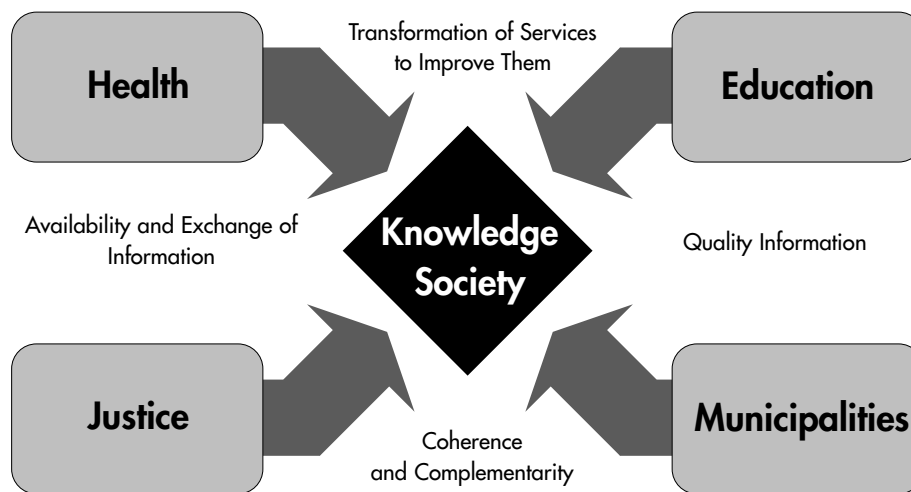
An Example of Telemedecine: The SCIAD Program (Remote, Intelligent Clinical Follow-Up) Within the Local Service Networks in Montérégie, Gaspésie and at the SRAD at Hôpital Maisonneuve-Rosemont in Montréal

With the SCIAD program, the result of a public-private partnership between the Verdun firm New IT and the Centre hospitalier Anna-Laberge, patients who would normally need to be hospitalized can remain in the comfort of their own homes and obtain remote clinical follow-up, similar to the care they would receive in hospital. Using a telemonitoring system connected to the Internet, patients can send their nurse information about their health, such as their pulse, blood pressure, glycemia levels and other signs and symptoms. The system triggers various alarms when data sent diverge from the established norms for the patient. Clinical protocols are established on a case-by-case basis, allowing for corrective measures or modification of the on-line treatment plan. This initiative enables patients to maintain a close relationship with their healthcare personnel. While nurses continue to provide homecare, the telemonitoring system helps them to set more effective treatment priorities according to anomalies reported by the computer system. According to initial statistics from these projects, the system enables healthcare workers to monitor patients more closely by sharing clinical information about them and to treat more patients. The quality of life of patients is improved since patients are able to remain in their own homes. Used mainly for chronic diseases, the system is easy to manipulate, even for a beginner who has never used new technologies. In fact, the average age of first-time users in the pilot project is over 67!

The Beauce on the Cusp of Network Learning (www.csbe.qc.ca)

The *Commission scolaire Beauce-Etchemin*, faithful to its reputation as a homegrown organization, has shown remarkable innovation by providing its students with new information and communication technologies. Several on-line learning projects have been implemented to boost enrollment in summer school and increase the pass rate. Students can now choose from a range of courses they can take at a distance, while obtaining personalized on-line teaching support. The program appears to be yielding results: students having taken this type of course score an average of 76% on *Ministère de l'Éducation* examinations.

Bromont: Connected City (www.bromont.net)

With 75% of its population regularly surfing the Web, the City of Bromont stands out clearly from other Québec municipalities for its use of ICTs. *The Bromont, ville branchée* [Bromont, Connected City] project is fully aware of this impressive usage rate. *Bromont, ville branchée* has a mission to permanently transform the way in which citizens communicate, live, govern themselves and do business. The project has four major components: E-government, the citizen, economic development and tourism. The goal of the e-government component is to place various municipal services on-line, such as municipal bylaws, permits, electronic payment of taxes and fees, an emergency measures plan, as well as access to elected officers and their debates. The second component, focused on citizens' needs, functions as a catalyst for community, social and cultural development. It includes all services offered by local institutions and organizations. The economic development component focuses on the integration of services provided by development agencies. Finally, the tourism component is a window on all activities in the territory.

In terms of e-government, the citizens of Bromont have access to information that enables them to play an informed role in the municipal decision-making process. Among others, they have access to meeting agendas, public notices and meeting minutes. More than half of the city's households are registered on a mailing list and receive the city's newsletter by e-mail. On-line consultations have also been set up and are becoming increasingly successful (for example, in March 2004, close to 400 citizens visited the section on the consultation to review the urban plan).

In summary, consulted heavily by many municipal administrators and elected officials in Québec, but also used as a reference for numerous international tribunals, *Bromont, ville branchée* serves as a model and is a clear leader in the area of municipal e-government.

Source: City of Bromont

Système intégré d'information de justice (SIIJ)

In March 2000, the *Ministère de la Justice* and the *Ministère de la Sécurité publique* tabled an opportunity study on the need to implement a *système intégré d'information de justice* (SIIJ). This study was followed in 2001-2002 by a preliminary analysis in collaboration with the *Ministère de la Santé et des services sociaux*, in addition to some twenty other agencies. The SIIJ will enable everyone involved in the administration of justice in Québec to produce and exchange the electronic information and documents they need for their work. The implementation of this system will also enable the main players in the justice system, more specifically the Courts, to offer on-line services to people appearing before the Courts and their legal advisors. Specifically, these services will allow for on-line filing of procedures before the Courts and remote consultation of documents. Moreover, it will give some 40,000 people working within the justice system the opportunity to use these services: Judges, attorneys, prosecutors, police officers, notaries, bailiffs, court personnel, Québec correctional services, the *Commission québécoise des libérations conditionnelles* and youth centres. The system will also make it possible for everyone involved in the justice system to obtain reliable information when they need it, thereby helping to improve public security and efficiency in the administration of justice. Lastly, the work of those involved in the justice system will be made easier and, ultimately, the system will contribute to sustainable development by reducing the volume of paper used.

4. E-Democracy

The establishment of e-government is also an opportunity to draw on the potential of new information and communication technologies to improve the democratic workings of our society. If used carefully, these technologies can improve government accountability to citizens, facilitate public consultation and stimulate political debate (see Figure 8, page 57).

Currently, most departments and agencies post their activity reports on their Web sites, which is already a major step toward accountability. However, these documents make for heavy reading for citizens who want to consult them. E-democracy must offer much more–not only must information be organized and presented according to the needs of citizens and businesses, but the latter must also be able to question the government and get answers to the questions. The systematic use of e-mail is one of the first steps in increasing efficiency in communications between citizens and the government. A clear commitment must be made to answer any e-mail sent to a department or agency within a maximum of 72 hours.[19] The implementation of new communication methods also means that the government must justify its choices and decisions to citizens. In short, e-government is a government accountable to its citizens.

In particular, citizens will be able to give their opinion of the quality of services received from the government. In the private sector, these quality controls by clients have generally contributed to improving the final product. In this case, the process should also lead to improved services.

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[19] Note that this is a minimum requirement and that certain departments and agencies have set even more stringent deadlines, which we strongly encourage.

The democratic debate must not be limited to simple interaction between citizens and the government. The government must also implement the tools that will facilitate public debate between citizens on major social issues. Discussion groups can be created for public discussions and broader public debate. To guarantee the non-involvement of government in debates, the discussion groups must be governed by an independent authority. This is a vast undertaking that will involve all of Québec society.

Finally, the electoral process is one of the most fundamental elements of a democracy. Again, the use of information and communication technologies can facilitate this process in the long term. Registering on the list of electors over the Internet and possibly voting on-line are objectives that could be achieved once certain technical issues have been resolved and several societal issues addressed. Specifically, the matter of identification must be dealt with in order to guarantee a completely safe and secure process. Also, consideration must be given to aspects related to the public's trust in these new democratic processes.

Figure 8: E-Democracy
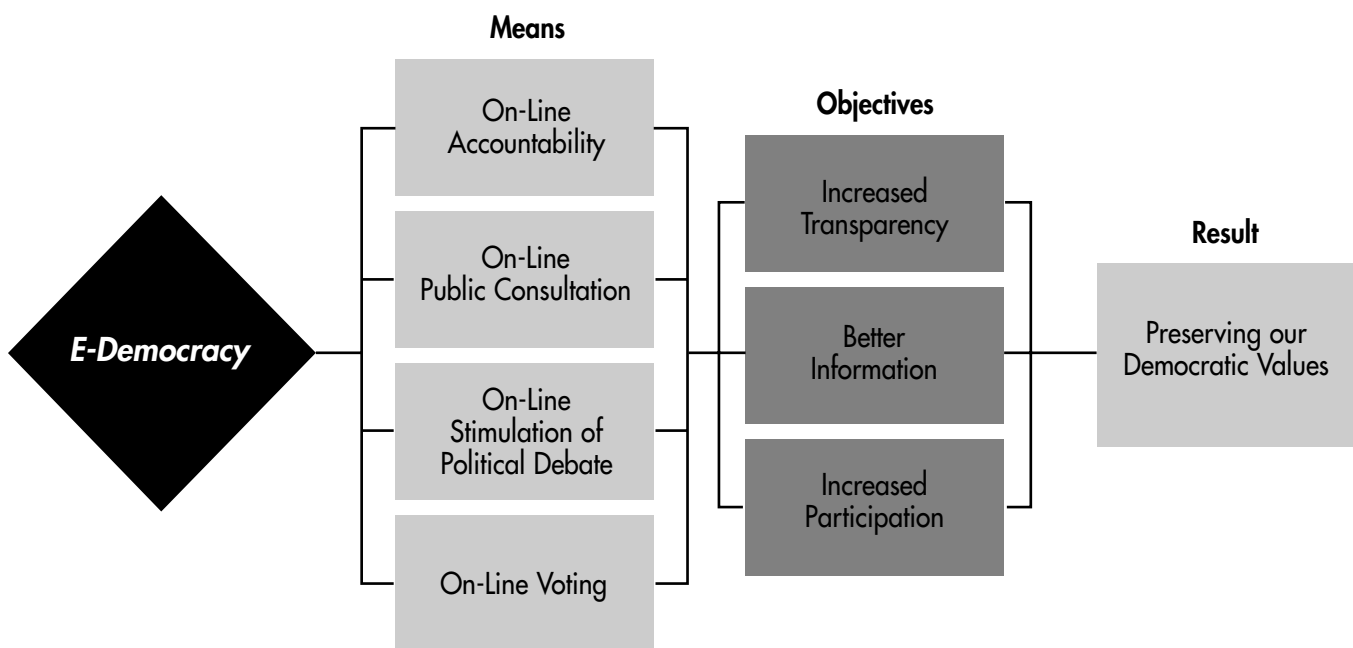
5. Québec's Place on the World Stage

In addition to taking the necessary measures to implement the four elements of e-government, Québec must also take its place on the world stage in order to help combat the digital divide and to promote the use of French on the Web and the general preservation of strong cultural diversity on the Internet.

A VISION FOR QUÉBEC (cont'd)

5.1 Québec's Contribution to Fighting the Digital Divide Between Developed and Developing Countries

Many developing countries still have very limited Internet access, specifically countries in the Southern Hemisphere and in Africa. For the sake of comparison, 483 out of every 1,000 Canadians and 538 out of every 1,000 Americans have Internet access, while only 16 out of every 1,000 residents of North African countries and two out of every 1,000 residents of Sub-Saharan countries can say the same.[20] This reality is known as the "digital divide." At the first session of the World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva in December 2003 (the second session is scheduled for November 2005 in Tunis), southern countries appealed directly to northern countries to help them bridge this digital divide, which can only drive them further into poverty. In this vein, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan declared at the World Summit on the Information Society in December 2003: "From trade to telemedicine, from education to environmental protection, we have in our hands, on our desktops and in the skies above the ability to improve standards of living for millions upon millions of people. But an open, inclusive information society that benefits all people will not emerge without sustained commitment and investment."[21]

Québec, like Canada, is well positioned on the world stage in terms of the development of new information and communication technologies. Whether in the area of e-administration, the democratization of access to information or, more generally, the development of new technologies to improve citizens' quality of life, we have the responsibility to combat the digital divide between Northern and Southern Hemisphere countries. Accordingly, Québec, as the largest French-speaking society in the Americas, must, through its expertise, take its place on the international scene and actively participate in making the Internet the foundation of the knowledge society. Specifically, Québec should become actively involved in the work of the World Summit on the Information Society, especially since discussions held at this summit directly affect Québec's spheres of competence, i.e., with respect to cultural diversity, governance and the legal and regulatory framework of the Internet, etc. Québec must also apply its expertise in ICT guidelines to projects in numerous fields such as health, education and justice, and use the resources of its experts–in the public service, civil society and the private sector–to prepare the final phase of the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Tunis in 2005.

5.2 Québec's Contribution to Preserving Cultural Diversity

In the area of information and communication technologies in general and the Internet in particular, the use of English tends to dominate, which could have the long-term consequence of diluting the French language and culture. In this respect, the government must play a leading role in the use and promotion of French in information and communications technologies. To this end, Québec adopted the *Politique d'utilisation de français dans les technologies de l'information* in June 1992, which aims to "generalize the use of French in

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[20] L'État du monde, Annuaire économique géopolitique mondial, *2004, Éditions la Découverte, Éditions du Boréal, Montreal.*

[21] Press release, ITU Secretary-General Opens First Global Information Summit, Geneva, December 10, 2003, (http://www.itu.int/wsis/geneva/newsroom/press_releases/wsisopen.html [on-line], site consulted March 5, 2004).

information technologies as the language of design, use, dissemination and training."[22] The policy testifies to the economic, social and cultural reach of French in information and communications technologies. The *Office québécoise de la langue française* (OQLF) must play an important advisory role in applying this policy. In 1997, the *Office* produced a guide called *Le français dans les technologies de l'information*. The government must not only take the necessary measures to ensure that the strategies stated in this guide and those set out in the policy are applied by all departments and agencies, but also ensure that they are embraced by all organizations in Québec. Accordingly, the government must encourage the development of Web sites with Québec content.

As the only French-speaking society in North America, Québec also has an important role to play in terms of respect for cultural diversity. As Québec has stated countless times to UNESCO, it must work with the rest of Canada and the international community to create a range of tools to ensure that its beliefs in terms of cultural diversity are respected. Québec must also encourage inter-cultural dialogue within the digital society in order to guarantee fair and equitable development. At the Johannesburg/Paris meeting in 2002, UNESCO declared cultural diversity to be essential to sustainable development.[23]

Finally, the government must continue the efforts undertaken by various forums, such as the Canadian Forum on Cultural Enterprise or UNESCO's Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity, to preserve and reinforce the institutional frameworks that protect copyright and intellectual property in the digital era.

6. Implementation Timeline – Horizon 2007

In summary, the objectives of e-government in Québec are divided into four categories, each of which corresponds to major work areas to be completed by the end of 2007:

1. E-administration: Via a one-stop portal for governmental services, provide easy access to services delivered by Québec departments and agencies, while maintaining the necessary links with federal and municipal administrations that deliver complementary or parallel services. Ensure that on-line delivery of services respects basic privacy rules. Create theme sites according to target clientele or life events. Propose transactional applications and projects for citizens.

2. Citizens' access to State-held information about them: Allow citizens to access State-held information about them whether or not this information is confidential via the "My Gov. Info." citizen's page, whether or not this information is confidential.

3. More generalized use of ICTs in the health, education, justice and municipal sectors: Systematically use ICTs to modernize the State's role in the essential sectors of health, education, justice and the municipal networks by promoting the implementation of pilot projects and encouraging the creation of theme information sites for these four sectors.

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[22] *Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor, Politique d'utilisation du français dans les technologies de l'information*, Cabinet, November 25, 1992, No. 92-262, Introduction 3.

[23] http://portal.unesco.org/ [on-line], site consulted April 21, 2004.

4. E-democracy: Promote public participation in democratic debate by facilitating consultation on major government projects by encouraging debate and the expression of opinions on the part of the public and by exploring options for conducting on-line elections.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Our goal is to complete these work areas by the end of 2007; e-government will be a reality for Quebecers by 2008 as a result.

2.2 We recommend that the government gradually implement projects in the short term (i.e., starting next year) that improve services to citizens in a concrete manner in order to rapidly produce tangible results for citizens and win their support for this social project.

2.3 We recommend that over its first mandate, i.e., before the end of 2007, the government implement e-government according to the following four principles:

- The creation of a one-stop government service portal;
- The creation of a "My Gov. Info." citizen's page for each citizen;
- The generalized use of ICTs in the main government sectors of activity (health, education, justice), as well as in municipalities;
- The implementation of e-democracy.

2.4 In terms of e-administration, we recommend:

- Grouping all department and agency services under a one-stop government service portal;
- Ensuring the portal presents the services according to the needs of citizens and major life events;
- Integrating sub-portals on related services into the government portal;
- Taking into account citizens who do not have Internet access by providing other means of accessing government services (services at counters and by telephone).

2.5 We recommend that each citizen be given the means to create his/her own "My Gov. Info." citizen's page that provides access to personal information held by the government.

2.6 We recommend that the government accelerate the deployment of information and communication technologies in the health, education, justice and municipal sectors. We also recommend that theme sites be created on the first three sectors and that partnerships be formed to facilitate interactions between government sites and municipal sites.

2.7 We recommend that citizens be systematically consulted through information and communication technologies and that alternate ways to participate be provided for those who do not have access to ICTs.

2.8 We recommend mandating an agency independent from the government but reporting to the National Assembly to monitor public debate and consultations on e-democracy.

2.9 We recommend pursuing initiatives that will allow Québec to take its place on the world stage at events related to the Internet and e-government through the participation of Québec experts.