

# **SFTO Launch Session**

## **Questions & Answers**

**Dec 5, 2003**

- 1) **Q:** Will the new solution allow for public transparency with regard to travel expenses being disclosed?
- A:** TBS plans to publish executive travel expenditures in the near future. The new solution could eventually be used as a vehicle for reporting travel expenses publicly, but that type of reporting will have to be addressed in the future once all issues regarding privacy have been addressed.
- 2) **Q:** The MOU that was sent to the top travel spending departments and agencies forces those departments to make commitments without knowing the specific details such as the dollar value associated with the project. When can more information be expected, especially with regards to funding?
- A:** GTMO has not been able to openly share details of the project, especially details concerning funding, due to the contract negotiations. Now that the contract has been signed, GTMO and the Contractor will be meeting with departments and agencies to assist them with training, change management, and business process reengineering. Information with respect to the Business Case is available and can be shared with departments at that time.
- 3) **Q:** Why are departments now responsible for paying delinquent accounts? Will GTMO be supporting departments in preparing policy to deal with delinquent accounts?
- A:** The collection process during the first 90 days for amounts owing on the credit card are the same as before. For those circumstances when employees do not pay their American Express (AMEX) credit card bill within 90 days, the department will be responsible for making those payments to AMEX on behalf of the employee. The department will then take action to recover those monies from the employee as a debt to the Crown, either by recovering the debt via paycheques or through other reasonable means.
- 4 a) **Q:** Why hasn't any mention to the cost of this project been openly discussed yet?
- A:** The costing details of this project have been provided to ADMs at the ADM Advisory Committee of May 2003 and confirmed in a subsequent meeting. The GTMO will provide information to departments upon request.
- 4 b) **Q:** What is the cost to departments for implementing STSI?
- At this point in time GTMO cannot associate a fixed cost for implementing the STSI throughout departments; however, GTMO will work closely with departments to identify any unique implementation needs they may have. It should be noted that implementation costs will vary based on the specific needs of the department. Costs will be based on time and resources required by the department to implement the STSI, as well as in some cases where additional

costs would be required for implementing on-site travel agencies. It should also be noted that the GTMO, on behalf of Canada, is purchasing a service, not a product, therefore departments will not have to pay for any type of software or licensing fees associated with this new solution.

- 4 c) **Q:** What kind of service charges would departments have to pay for this new service?  
**A:** A \$19M loan will contribute to operating costs and services provided by the GTMO. A \$15 service charge will be paid by departments for the first four years of the project for any air or rail booking made in order to help GTMO pay off the loan.
- 5) **Q:** Departments were under the impression that funding for this project would be provided by GTMO. Is this correct?  
**A:** No. All departments are responsible for their own implementation costs above and beyond normal operational expenditures as discussed with ADMs, with exception to the vanguard departments who will be piloting the expense management component of the new travel service.
- 6) **Q:** Is there a way to book special travel needs required by judges and other senior level travellers (i.e. special security requirements, first class, etc.)?  
**A:** A customized VIP and executive travel service will be available via dedicated phone lines and resources assigned to help those travellers. GTMO and the contractor will work with departments during the implementation stage to identify those travellers and populate their travel profile as such. Individuals with special needs will also be addressed and accommodated.
- 7) **Q:** Will the STSI solution be piloted in a small organization to ensure the costing is appropriate and the overall solution can be supported within those smaller organizations?  
**A:** The National Energy Board is one of the vanguard departments that will be piloted to ensure the new travel service is compatible with smaller organizations. Costing for this solution is on a per transaction basis with no software costs and no connectivity fees. This means that the cost of this service will depend on how much travel is done within a particular organization. Furthermore, GTMO will provide smaller organizations with extensive training support such as group training sessions with other organizations.
- 8) **Q:** With regards to the data feed, how will departments manage the commitment and expenditure information?  
**A:** The travel service will generate financial commitment and expense data, which can be imported by departments into their Departmental Financial Management System (DFMS). More specifically, a commitment transaction will be generated upon proper authorization of the travel plan and the related expense will be generated upon the proper authorization of the expense report for that travel plan. Departments will be given orientation and support to properly use

their business intelligence tools so that commitment and expenditure data can be more easily managed within the department.

9) **Q:** Does every department have to sign an MOU?

**A:** MOUs were prepared for the 30 top travel spend departments as per the Effective Project Approval (EPA). There is no requirement for other departments to sign an MOU.

10) **Q:** How do departments apply policy exceptions to the travel service?

**A:** The travel service will be rules-driven in accordance with the following Treasury Board (TB) policies:

- Minister's Guidelines
- PCO's Terms & Conditions for Governor In Council Appointees
- Special Travel Authorities
- Travel Directive

Any authorization requests or expense claims falling outside the boundaries of the above-mentioned policies will automatically be red-flagged by the system and individuals will be asked for validation. Expense reports falling outside TB policies will have to be reviewed manually to ensure compliance within departments not following the TB policies.

11) **Q:** Will the expense management tool compare any exceptions made by the manager during the authorization stage?

**A:** Yes. The expense management tool will incorporate any exceptions or special notes made during the authorization stage and will not reject a prior approval.

12) **Q:** Are departments obliged to use common services?

**A:** According to the Financial Administration Act (FAA), the Common Services Policy applies to all Schedule 1, 1.1 and 2 departments; therefore, those departments must use the common services.

13) **Q:** Where can more information regarding this meeting and the project be found?

**A:** All information is listed on the GTMO web site: [www.gtmo.gc.ca](http://www.gtmo.gc.ca).

14) **Q:** Will the AMEX credit card provide local rates and fares for DFAIT missions and DND personnel travelling internationally?

**A:** International travellers will have access to international services. Separate consultations with those departments will take place.

15) **Q:** Will AMEX provide the lowest possible fare when booking travel for the Government of Canada?

**A:** Yes. AMEX will provide the lowest possible fare as long as it is available to them at the time of booking. If individuals feel as though they did not receive the lowest possible fare, there are customer support centres within both

PWGSC and within AMEX that can address those issues.

- 16) **Q:** The AMEX credit card is not accepted globally. What are the next steps to deal with this issue?  
**A:** Unfortunately no one credit card is accepted worldwide; however, GTMO's Change Management team is setting up International Task Force workshops in January for special international travel to look at this issue, as well as other issues surrounding international travel.
- 17) **Q:** The list of VIPs and delegated signing authority within departments will cause problems for the travel service due to employee turnover. How will travellers be able to identify their supervisor?  
**A:** The travel service will be customized to deal with those situations.
- 18) **Q:** Will organizations currently using an on-site agency be able to continue with that service?  
**A:** Yes. Inspections for current on-sites will be conducted. In conjunction with GTMO, departments will have to evaluate their need for an on-site agency, as they will be responsible for paying for their on-site needs.
- 19) **Q:** Will the portal be accessible internationally?  
**A:** Yes. As long as the employee has access to the secure network, they will have access to the portal.
- 20) **Q:** Can departments force employees to use the travel card as per the Travel Directive?  
**A:** No, but this issue is not closed. We can, however, advise employees of the benefits of using the travel card, such as:
- The rebates received by the departments based on the number of cards, the average spend and the volume of transactions;
  - The enhanced insurance options;
  - Expenses are pre-populated into the expense claims management system;
  - The choice of loyalty programs