

Canada

The Government online Initiative

Executive Summary

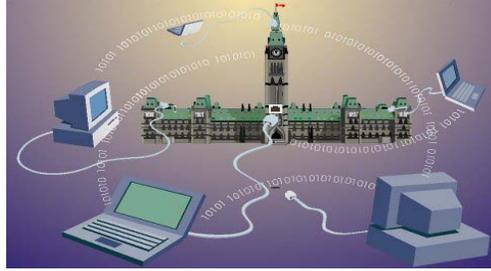
The tempo of modern life in a knowledge-based economy and society means that more than ever, Canadians expect to be able to interact with their government with ease. They want convenient, accurate, quick, one-stop service access. They prefer doing simple transactions themselves but get personalized service from public servants for more complex needs. Canadians want their government to use information productively, in ways that will add value without compromising privacy, to support improved service, and to deliver better policy outcomes for their benefit. Thanks to Government On-Line, we are now headed in this direction - we have fundamentally changed the way the Government of Canada interacts with citizens and businesses. It all began with a vision to change the nature of the government's relationship with its citizens by using technology.

The Government On-Line initiative has succeeded in making the Canadian government the world's most connected country to its citizens. Throughout the initiative, the objectives remained focused on:

- providing clients with a more accessible government, where information and services are organized according to clients' needs, and are available 24/7 around the world, in English or French;
- delivering better and more responsive services by implementing more efficient and timely electronic services;
- building trust and confidence in on-line service delivery by ensuring that electronic transactions are protected and secure, and that personal information is safeguarded.

Two basic principles guided efforts to use the Internet to benefit Canadians, Canadian businesses and international clients:

- group information and services around clients' needs and priorities, NOT around the organization of governments;
- build partnerships among federal departments and agencies and with other levels of governments to cluster services for the benefit of clients, NOT according to jurisdictions.



The Government On-Line initiative allowed 34 departments and agencies to:

- accelerate the design and delivery of 130 of the most commonly used services on-line;
- fundamentally re-think how they used the e-channel to provide information and services to clients;
- collaborate to offer "no wrong door" access to government services;
- share experiences, approaches, learning and tools while becoming more client-centric;
- build a secure and robust electronic infrastructure capable of expanding to support steadily more sophisticated on-line transactions in the future.

It also allowed important policy-related work to be undertaken to fundamentally transform the ways in which government interacts with citizens.

For the past five years, Accenture's independent assessments have ranked Canada number one e-government in the world. Released in April 2005, the latest Accenture study ⁽²⁸⁾ cited the Government of Canada's leadership in customer service and its significant efforts in informing and educating citizens about its offerings as a reason for Canada's continued success. Today, countries look to Canada's leadership and accomplishments in implementing electronic service delivery.

With strategic use of limited funds, the Government On-Line initiative has been a catalyst for change to improve government services and multi-channel service delivery.



Description of the Hierarchy Diagram

An investment totalling \$880 million was provided for the Government On-Line initiative over six years to help accelerate the development of on-line services.

Departments, agencies and other partners also invested their own funds, which resulted in improved service delivery of many programs through the Internet to individuals and businesses. Client benefits include a significant reduction in compliance costs for businesses, simplified transactions, improved access and more timely service. Departments and agencies also benefit through improved productivity and efficiency gains through the re-use of solutions where applicable or use of common solutions. This can also be seen at the government-wide level in better coordination and linkages amongst federal programs, as well as with programs in other levels of government.

Everyone involved in this initiative took a "whole-of-government" approach, working in partnership, to break down silos instead of focussing solely on their project, program or organization. The horizontal approach so vital to this initiative had to live and function in the vertical world of government authorities and processes, thus requiring strong leadership at all levels. It represented a considerable culture shift making the initiative a catalyst of change.

A governance structure of committees was established in response to the changing needs of e-government, and to address potential high-level risks that required the attention of senior management at the appropriate level. Guided by horizontal governance at the deputy minister level, the Government On-Line Office has played a strong leadership role in maintaining momentum and consistency through uncharted paths. Creativity, partnership, teamwork and cooperation were the basic principles of the Government On-Line community.

A great emphasis was placed on polling and focus group research to determine how individuals and businesses would like to see government information

structured and grouped based on their needs and preferences. This led to the creation of a series of subject and audience portals ensuring "no wrong door" for users and to the implementation of a number of "joined-up" services.

On-going collaboration and partnership were key success factors in developing and implementing integrated and common solutions that spanned across departments and often jurisdictions in order to provide a better service for clients. This required continuous monitoring of the development of services and projects and pro-active problem resolution to mitigate risks. At every stage, a collective effort was critical to meet client expectations and deliver "whole-of-government" solutions while aiming to provide efficient, reliable, and responsive services to citizens, not only on-line but also across all delivery channels.

The significant and increasing use of on-line services by citizens and businesses today demonstrates the success of the initiative. In 2005, 130 of the most commonly used services were available on-line complementing the more traditional service delivery channels (in-person, telephone, mail). Seventy-one percent of Internet users visited a government of Canada Web site in the last twelve months and reported a high level of satisfaction. All interactions with the Government of Canada went from approximately 470 million in 2001 to almost 1.1 billion in 2005. On-line transactions now account for 30% of all transactions. Canadians, businesses and international clients access many services on-line, anytime, anywhere and in both official languages. The expectations of Canadians are being met. This can be seen from the increasing use of the on-line channel and from departmental survey data showing that 94% of on-line users are satisfied with the service.

At the core of on-line service delivery is the Secure Channel, which provides Canadians with trust and confidence in client security and privacy on-line, and provides a common infrastructure to departments and agencies. Because of the expertise Canada has developed, it is now recognized as a world leader in protecting citizens' privacy. Policies are now in place to ensure that:

- all services have a common look and feel;
- access is available to persons with disabilities;
- privacy issues are addressed;
- information is managed effectively to ensure quality;
- a human resources management model supports managers and specialists in information management, information technology and service delivery.

Over the course of Government On-Line, the government has developed a much deeper understanding of how best to use the electronic channel as the enabler for multi-channel service improvement. A mature service transformation agenda has emerged through Government On-Line funded activities. This agenda now spans a common, robust and sophisticated electronic infrastructure capable of

supporting complex transactions in real time; the development of internal services offered by shared services organizations; and a one-stop service access for Canadians to information and services provided by a multitude of different departments and agencies through the newly created Service Canada. While the Government On-Line initiative sunsets in 2006, its legacy is the foundation for the future--enabling the transformation of government services.

This report contains three sections, which document the activities undertaken through the Government On-Line initiative from 1999 until 2006:

the first reports on the progress achieved, guided by public opinion research, to improve accessibility, increase service responsiveness, build trust and confidence in e-services, and pursue an integrated multi-channel service delivery model;

the second describes the critical building blocks (i.e. modules) that underpin the government's current state of service transformation readiness, namely international collaboration, inter-jurisdictional partnerships, client-centric gateways and clusters, common secure infrastructure, coordinated leadership and management, and foundational policies;

the third contains appendices on the allocation of central funds, the 130 most commonly used services that are now on-line and a bibliography of key documents.

Overarching Principles and Key Areas of Activities

Government On-Line is meant to stimulate the provision of better, faster, trusted and more convenient and accessible government services over the Internet. It complies with two overarching principles:

1. first and foremost, client-centricity, which is organizing electronic service delivery according to clients' needs and priorities. In other words, when Canadians, Canadian businesses and international clients are looking for a service, they don't have to know which department or agency is mandated to deliver it;
2. as a corollary to that first principle, services must be delivered using a whole-of-government approach; that is, services must be integrated as opposed to simply being grouped together in order to holistically satisfy the expressed needs of clients, regardless of organizational boundaries and jurisdictions.

Guided by these two principles, a strategy is adopted revolving around five key areas:

the electronic delivery of services;

the building of a common infrastructure to provide the necessary security;

the update of various policies and standards covering issues such as privacy, security, authentication of identity, and information management;

the ability to measure citizen and business expectations and experiences of electronic service delivery;

the corporate management of human resources to ensure that the government can retrain, recruit and retain employees with the skills that are needed for electronic service delivery.