

Websites help green government

The procurement practices of the Government of Canada, with annual spending of over \$10 billion on goods and services, impact the national economy, the products and services available in the market place and the environment. By influencing the selection and procurement of products, the government can minimize waste, energy consumption and resultant greenhouse gas emissions, as well as stimulate market growth.

Two federal websites, designed to engage and support government employees in their efforts to minimize the impact of government operations on the environment, are operational: the Greening Government (www.greeninggovernment.gc.ca) and Federal House in Order (www.fhio.gc.ca). They point to tools, best practices, and tips designed to improve environmental performance and increase awareness on the selection and procurement of environmentally responsible products.

The Greening Government website, established in May 2002, supports the Sustainable Development in Government Operations (SDGO) initiative whose objective is coordination of, and reporting upon, the federal government's effort to green its own operations, and to integrate sustainable approaches and actions into day-to-day activities such as procurement, real property and waste management, to name a few.

Since June 2001, the Federal House in Order website, has focused on the efforts and the actions of the federal government to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from its operations – buildings, fleets, procurement, etc.

Our actions impact the environment. You can reduce your environmental footprint. For further information, contact Susanne Turcotte (Federal House in Order, 819-953-4080) or Julie Daoust (Sustainable Development in Government Operations, 819-956-5936).

—submitted by *Environment Canada*

Join the trend to modernize travel procurement

The Government of Canada does about one-fifteenth of the travel volume in Canada and feels it is about time to reap the frequent traveler benefits that kind of volume entails. “We’re asking the industry to bring a wide range of travel components to the table to service the complete travel experience. This hasn’t been done before and will entail major changes on their part to meet our needs. In turn, it will mean huge savings and efficiencies on for both government and the travel industry,” says Peter Elias, Treasury Board’s director of the Travel Modernization Program.

This time the contract will also be structured to realize even greater economies of scale and efficiency in that other governments will be encouraged to enter into the federal government’s Travel Modernization Program. Bids were closed in September 2002 and despite the complexity of the procurement, it is anticipated that Treasury Board Ministers will have a proposed contract award on their desks early next year. More to come... —*Dave Newman*

Wanted: procurement policies

Ontario’s new *Municipal Act, 2001, Section 271*, requires every municipality to have policies regarding the procurement of goods and services in place by the end of 2004. Also, Subsection 271 (2) provides the minister of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs with regulatory powers that include “requiring a municipality and a local board to comply with the policies established by the minister when procuring goods and services.” The rationale behind the requirement is not clear, making it difficult to create a policy, but looking at cases of major complex and innovative procurements – those that worked and those that didn’t – may provide some insight.

Online roadmap to public sector opportunities

Knowing what government tenders are “on the street,” how to get the tender documents and when the tender closes is essential for businesses. Thanks to MERX and other electronic tendering services, information on most government procurement at the federal and provincial level can be readily located.

But what about the vast para-public (or MASH) sector, said to buy as much, if not more than the government sector itself? Where do you go to find this information? MARCAN (www.marcan.net) – a gateway website developed under the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT).

Short for “markets Canada” or “marchés canadiens,” MARCAN lists all the known Internet addresses where you may find the tender notices of federal and provincial governments as well as those of municipal governments and organizations, school boards and publicly funded academic, health and social service entities.

A simple search request for, say, “New Brunswick municipalities” reveals that they all use the provincial government site but one municipality also uses another. In each case, the url and a hotlink is provided.

MARCAN does not search other sites for you. But it does give you a roadmap and useful information on government procurement contacts, how to do business with individual governments, and links to other relevant sites.

The AIT commits Canadian governments to reduce or eliminate barriers to the free movement of persons, goods, services and investments within Canada. Signed by the federal government, the provinces and the two territories existing at the time, the Agreement came into effect in 1995.

An important element of the AIT is the commitment by governments to ensure that Canadian suppliers, across the country, have equal access to government procurement opportunities above specified levels and that a fair and transparent process is used in such procurements. Since 1999, the para-public sector has also been subject to similar rules. For more information, visit the Internal Trade Secretariat at www.intra.sec.mb.ca.

—submitted by the *Internal Trade Secretariat*



Public-private partnerships in BC health care

The British Columbia Health Information Management Professionals Society (BCHIMPS, www.bchimps.bc.ca) held its fall education session October 17, 2002 at the University of BC Golf Club. The close to 100 attendees from the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island, other areas of BC, as well as Alberta and Ontario heard the latest on P3 (Public-Private Partnership) projects and opportunities in BC health care from three industry health care experts, well aware of the issues and the opportunities for P3 projects. Two of their key messages were that P3s are really about allocating risk and that there needs to be broader public awareness of P3s and their economic benefits.

Michael Marasco, chief project officer for the Fraser Health Region, is intimately involved with one of the major P3 projects likely to be developed under the BC government's new P3 capital program: a \$210 million capital project to build a new health centre (acute care and cancer treatment) in Abbotsford. Marasco focused on P3 procurement options, evaluation criteria (value for the money and risk assessment), equipment and IT/IM schemes as well as worldwide activity and trends in P3s.

Dr. John Rayson, president of PathNET Inc., presented a synopsis of a successful P3 between two private laboratories providing electronic delivery of diagnostic information to authorized caregivers anytime, anywhere to improve patient care. PathNET currently has 2,400 clients throughout BC and integrates with three different lab systems and numerous practice management systems. Rayson identified the challenges the partnership faced, consortium collaborations currently underway and the enhanced functionality PathNET will provide over the next 6 to 18 months.

Dr. David Ostrow, CIO, Vancouver Health Region overviewed completed or existing P3 projects within the health region and highlighted the principles this health region uses for P3 relationships. He focused on a P3 case study within the region, involving development and implementation of an Electronic Health Record (EHR). Ostrow reviewed their approach to the EHR, various architecture options, the many infrastructure components, where the P3 model fits and potential partners. The audience then participated in a discussion on how to build such partnerships. *—submitted by Lisa Marsh, BCHIMPS*

High tech training for military air traffic control

Canadian Forces Aerospace Control Officers and Operators are learning their trade using a world-class, state-of-the art control tower simulator.

The 360-degree simulator recently acquired by 16 Wing's Canadian Forces School of Aerospace Control Operations (CFSACO) located in Cornwall, Ontario is the first operational, 360-degree simulator utilizing voice-recognition/voice synthesis in the world. Smaller, 270-degree versions are being produced for the United States Air Force.

The most unique feature of the new equipment is the voice recognition software. A computer reacts to voice commands from the controller, responds accordingly, and generates a voice response. This feature saves CFSACO the cost of using pseudo pilots to make voice responses and turn the aircraft, although the system can be over-ridden to simulate pilot error or misunderstanding for training purposes.

Two classrooms and an adjoining hallway were required to house the simulator that projects graphics onto eight screens, offering a 360-degree horizontal and 35-degree vertical field of view.

According to school commandant LCol. Dean McConnell, using the new simulator is like upgrading from a game of "Pong" to a modern computer game. Realistic graphics display fog, heavy rain or snow and difficult runway conditions. Previously, CFSACO students were trained using NAV Canada Training Institute simulators. Graphics re-created civilian airports, and students learned generic air traffic control skills. The new simulator allows CFSACO to train students using graphics tailored to reflect a military environment, with Canadian Forces aircraft and hangars replacing civilian airport scenarios.

Included in the purchase was 3D generation software that will enable CFSACO to create a database of other CF aerodromes.

The simulator and software contract were purchased under a sole source contract (CFSACO and the NAV Canada Training Institute share a training facility, and need compatible software) valued at \$1.7 million from Adacel Inc., a subsidiary of Australian Adacel Technologies Ltd. *—Gina Gillespie*



Cities move to e-billing

Ottawa recently became an *epost* (www.epost.ca) mailer, or corporate customer. Residents could already pay their bills online, but in late October the city announced that citizens could now receive their water and tax bills online. Other public sector mailers currently using *epost* are Thunder Bay, Toronto and Winnipeg, with Richmond, BC to be online soon, as well as some provincial organizations like BC Assessment and Manitoba Hydro. In the public sector, *epost* services are most likely to be used by municipal governments – according to Peter Melanson, president and CEO of *epost*,

“that is where most of the bills come from.”

To access the service, mailers pay a set-up fee based on the complexity of integrating the *epost* system with the mailer's legacy billing system. Fees are then on a per transaction basis – costing only \$.40 via *epost* as opposed to a traditional bill, which is anywhere from \$.75 to \$2.00 (includes paper, insertions, prep time, postage and envelopes). Savings to the mailers from this alone could be extensive, but realizing them depends heavily on the acceptance of the system by citizens. Typically take up is forecasted about 1-2 percent in the first year, ramping up more over time. Winnipeg's Water and

Wastewater Department, after one year, has had 1,479 residents choose the *epost* option. According to Melanson, most mailers recognize that, despite marketing efforts, they will not get 100 percent take up. The savings measured also come from reducing returned mail – a citizen's online mailbox remains at one permanent location even when the citizen moves – and the reduced environmental impact from virtual billing.

Currently, *epost* is free to citizens but Melanson said that at some point in time fees scaled to increased levels of service could be offered. *—Anne Phillips*

Sprucing up sponsorship files

Between May and July 2002, a Quick Response Team (QRT) struck by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) reviewed the over 700 sponsorship files of 1997/1998 and 1999/2000. From that group of files, Consulting and Audit Canada determined that 126 were of primary interest. The QRT identified several areas of concern:

- incomplete and complex project files making it difficult to determine whether deliverables were met;
- communications agencies changing names, mergers, affiliations;
- absence of reports in PWGSC files;
- possible over-billing and errors in rates of pay and inadequate reporting;
- potential breaches of government legislation and departmental policies; and
- non-competed subcontracting.



As a result, recovery of funds is being considered in some cases, in others verification audits are being performed, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Human Resources, PWGSC will investigate potential breaches of government legislation and policies and still others have been referred to the RCMP. PWGSC, in its Departmental Performance Report (DPR 201-2002) to Treasury Board states, "In addition, the Auditor General is undertaking a government-wide audit with respect to advertising and sponsorships, and the President of Treasury Board is reviewing the management framework and the governance system with respect to advertising, sponsorships and polling." More details are available at www.pwgsc.gc.ca/sponsorship.

According to the *Globe and Mail* (August 28) some of those changes may include allowing departments to use a different communications firm per campaign rather than one agency for several campaigns, and perhaps allowing firms not wholly Canadian-owned to bid for contracts.

It is interesting to note that this is not the first audit of sponsorship files in 2002. In March PWGSC's Audit and Ethics Branch (www.pwgsc.gc.ca/aeb) released its final report on a sample of 120 files of approved sponsorships, spanning May to September 2001, to assess whether documentation was adequate. It found that for the most part, Communication Canada had ensured that mandatory documentation was present. ❧

Online mapping makes life easier

Eleven BC municipalities – Nanaimo, New Westminster, Vancouver, North Saanich, Victoria, Penticton, Vernon, Delta, Prince George, Castlegar and Esquimalt – are working to improve delivery of their services using Autodesk Mapguide (www.autodesk.com). Usage varies, but they can now publish current city maps for zoning requests and provide information on city facilities, and can plan to provide information on waste/recycling/garbage collection, speed limits, parking and street cleaning. Employees share information internally through the Web-based system allowing them to track traffic patterns, permitting, property tax assessments, infrastructure management and even municipal elections. ❧