# MODERNIZING SERVICE DELIVERY: AN OVERVIEW

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# Modernizing Service Delivery:
# An Overview

# Foreword

I have dedicated my career, over 50 years so far, to the field of public administration both as a practitioner in Canada and abroad and by conducting research.

In 2023, I started to collect my documents for their transfer to and safe keeping by Library and Archives Canada. In the process, I realised that the public records on many issues are lacking a public service perspective, including about events and changes that have shaped the Public Service as an institution over the years. This is due to many factors, including that:

• Canada does not have a tradition of documenting historical events as is the case in Europe, the USA, and many Asian countries.
• Memoirs and biographies focus primarily on political events, leaving unanswered the question of how ideas came about and how they were achieved in practice.
• There is no rigour to the transfer of public records to Library and Archives. In most countries, it is mandatory after 20 years. In Canada, this is left to each organisation. By the time records are transferred, there may not be anyone left with direct knowledge of the context.

Colleagues I consulted argued that the transfer of my documents should be accompanied by a number of essays to guide future readers and researchers. This was a useful suggestion. For instance, many of my papers as Clerk of the Privy Council were not written as detailed agendas or articles. They were speeches, not intended for publication. Speeches are vignettes of an exchange between a speaker and the community it aspires to reach at a given point in time. They were aimed at public servants, people with insider knowledge of the situation prevailing in the public sector at that point in time. Therefore, they do not explain the context but go straight to discussing the challenges ahead to generate a common sense of purpose and encourage convergence across the public service. They made sense for people who were there at the time. But, many years later, readers may be unaware of the context, the aspirations, or the significance of the actions taken at the time.

Putting these records into context grew into a broad research and archival project, an effort to trace ideas and their development, to remember public service history from a public service perspective, and to draw lessons for serving and governing in the 21st century. The PGI team has conducted interviews, gathered and reviewed additional records, and worked to record history. This paper is a product of that work.

The Hon. Jocelyne Bourgon
President of PGI

# Introduction

In the earliest stages of Program Review, on June 22nd-23rd 1994, Jocelyne Bourgon held the first Deputy Ministers' Retreat of her time as Clerk of the Privy Council.  By the end of the meeting, attendees were to "have reached some conclusions about the work plan that would lead us into the fall."[1]  Bourgon's Public Policy Forum speech on October 13th 1994, four months later, reflects a key set of findings from the Retreat.  From her first days as Clerk, Bourgon spoke of strengthening a public service undergoing transformation.[2]  The PPF speech was more specific, laying out three goals to both mitigate the harm of a decade of continuous public service downsizing – something that, with Program Review underway, would continue – and to bring about a public service stronger than before: "to modernize our service delivery, strengthen our policy capacity and build a vibrant institution capable of serving today and in the future."[3]

In August of 1995, these three goals became a full chapter of Bourgon's first annual report on the public service, explored in greater depth,[4] and each was handled with its own initiative: in order, an effort to modernize service delivery, the Policy Research Initiative, and La Relève.

# Trying New Approaches

On November 30th, 1994, speaking at the first Assistant Deputy Ministers' Forum, Bourgon declared that as part of the renewal of the public sector, "we will need to reinvent the way we serve Canadians."[5]  There was room for making the public service's services more efficient, more flexible, and more responsive to citizens' needs.  Greater horizontal integration of client services, building on existing models such as the Canadian Business Service Centres and the structure of services at embassies, had the potential to satisfy citizens' needs more efficiently and effectively and to reduce the burden imposed on those using government services.[6]  She summarized her call:

> If clients can be better served through a more integrated approach, can we public servants not benefit as well by tearing down some of the walls between us?  The answer is yes.  Can you imagine, for example, how much money we would save, how much time we would have for other tasks, if the information we need to perform our work was collected only once and transferred to all the other users afterward?  I know the limitations.  I know the need for security measures, the need to protect privacy, to protect commercial information.  But let us be honest – we can do a lot better.  We can no longer afford the cost of duplication among us, and our clients are crying for help to reduce the burden we impose on them.  The fight against overlap and duplication should start at home – between each and every one of our organizations.  The common

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1.	Jocelyne Bourgon, "Government Priorities and Strategic Planning Role" (speech, Deputy Ministers' Retreat, Ottawa, ON, June 22, 1994), 1.

2.	Jocelyne Bourgon, "Change and Management in the Public Service" (speech, APEX, Ottawa, ON, May 11, 1994).

3.	Jocelyne Bourgon, "Key Challenges Facing Canada's Public Service" (speech, Public Policy Forum, Ottawa, ON, October 13, 1994), 4.

4.	Jocelyne Bourgon, *Third Annual Report to The Prime Minister on The Public Service of Canada* (Ottawa: Privy Council Office, 1995), 37-48

5.	Jocelyne Bourgon, "Beginning the Transformation: A Planning Agenda" (speech, Assistant Deputy Ministers' Forum, Ottawa, ON, November 30, 1994), 7.

6.	Ibid., 7-9

services model in place among some organizations is a step in the right direction, but we could do so much more.  Client service is one of the keys to the renewal of the public service.[7]

Bourgon's 1995 annual report featured a section on modernizing service delivery, reflecting her thoughts from November 1994.  Acknowledging the progress made in recent years, she set out three goals: "delivering service from a client perspective," "exploring new organizational models," and "optimizing the service delivery network."[8]  The first entailed rethinking how service delivery was organized – building on existing models of multi-departmental 'service clusters' – and reexamining how authority and accountability was organized.[9]  The second, considering "alternative institutional arrangements, such as agencies, tribunals, Crown corporations and special operating agencies."[10]  The third, a search for efficiencies, in part through single-window service delivery, in part through the use of rapidly advancing information technology.[11]  There was substantial overlap, particularly around single-window service delivery – an idea that fell into all three areas.

In 1995, the Clerk formed nine Deputy Minister Task Forces to probe various public service issues.[12]  Each of the coming initiatives found some foundation here.  While the service delivery modernization effort benefited from many of the task forces, the most important was Janet R. Smith's Task Force on Service Delivery Models.  The Smith task force's mandate was "to examine service delivery issues from a citizen's point of view."[13]  Their 1996 report was the longest of the DM Task Force reports, split into four volumes.  In addition to a review of key issues (Volume I), the report included 34 case studies (Volume II), a set of exploratory scenarios envisioning how service delivery could be reorganized in various areas (Volume III), and a set of supporting reviews and research reports (Volume IV).

In general, the project of modernizing service delivery can be understood in three strands, albeit highly overlapping, broadly in line with the sections in each of Bourgon's annual reports.  Each was a process that was in motion before Bourgon's time as Clerk, encouraged by Bourgon, and ongoing after Bourgon's time as Clerk: aligning service delivery with the citizen's perspective, using alternative service delivery structures and organizational models where helpful, and bringing optimizations and access through new information technologies.

# Citizen-Centricity and the Citizen's Perspective – Integrated Service Delivery

One central goal in modernizing service delivery was to align it with citizens' needs and citizens' perspectives.  Early on, in Bourgon's 1995 annual report, this was worded as "delivering service from a **client** perspective" (emphasis added).[14]  The 1996 report of the Smith Task Force on Service Delivery Models called for a change in terminology: as opposed to the business-linked terminology of 'clients', government had to think in terms of the needs and interests of **citizens**, actively involved in electing political leaders and with little option to take their

7.        Ibid., 9
8.        Bourgon, *Third Annual Report*, 38-43
9.        Ibid., 40-41
10.       Ibid., 41
11.       Ibid., 42
12.       A full list can be found in the preface of each Deputy Minister Task Force report.
13.       Task Force on Service Delivery Models, *Service Delivery Models* (Ottawa: CCMD, 1996), 1:preface
14.       Bourgon, *Third Annual Report*, 40

business elsewhere.[15]

The Task Force on Service Delivery Models argued that, based on a number of surveys, the public was dissatisfied with government performance and with government service delivery – and that change was needed.[16] What was needed was citizen-centred service. The Task Force emphasized the use of integrated, clustered 'single window' service networks, with models including Service New Brunswick and the Canada Business Service Centres,[17] that would make services from several different departments, agencies, and/or levels of government available at a single location.[18] These could involve partnerships with the private sector, as in the case of ServiceOntario and its IBM-financed and IBM-owned service kiosks.[19] Why cluster services and use single windows? Separation of services across departmental lines, while important from a policy and organizational perspective, caused trouble from a citizen's perspective when extended into service delivery – "service delivery by those same departments of necessity makes the service appear fragmented and, as such, is a source of frustration to those we seek to serve."[20] Having to search for the right department, the right phone number, the right place to go and being bounced between desks was a frustrating, confusing, unhelpful experience.

Bourgon summarized the idea clearly in November 1996:

> [Canadians] want services organized around their needs, not the convenience of those supplying the service. And they want services organized around the totality of their needs. They have no tolerance for turf protection, federal provincial or interdepartmental wrangling. They do not want to be told to go back to the telephone book and call the next number, or go to the next organization. They are reminding us that government services are first and foremost about citizens. They demand an integrated approach to service delivery.[21]

By Bourgon's 1997 annual report, the Task Force's language of citizens had been taken up: "The public sector serves citizens rather than customers."[22] Single-window services, horizontal integration, and vertical integration were all areas of progress.[23] Her third annual report, 1998, declared that the Public Service of Canada would "continue our efforts to focus service delivery around citizens' needs and on improving citizens' access to government."[24]

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15.     Task Force on Service Delivery Models, *Discussion Paper*, 1:19-21
16.     Ibid., 1:9-13
17.     Several provincial and municipal precedents had launched in the early 1990s, and even before – see Brian Marson and Ralph Heintzman, *From Research to Results: A Decade of Results-Based Service Improvement in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Institute of Public Administration of Canada, 2009), 9
18.     Task Force on Service Delivery Models, *Discussion Paper*, 1:15-17
19.     Ibid., 1:17-18
20.     Ibid., 1:6
21.     Jocelyne Bourgon, "La Relève: Our Greatest Challenge" (speech, Human Resources Centre of Canada Conference, Cornwall, ON, November 6, 1996).
22.     Jocelyne Bourgon, *Fourth Annual Report to The Prime Minister on The Public Service of Canada* (Ottawa: Privy Council Office, 1997), 24
23.     Ibid., 19-21
24.     Jocelyne Bourgon, *Fifth Annual Report to The Prime Minister on The Public Service of Canada* (Ottawa: Privy Council Office, 1998), 13

# Research and Data: The Citizen-Centred Service Network[25]

As experiments were being conducted in service delivery, a research program was launched to support one element in particular: seeing from a citizen perspective. In July 1997, on Bourgon's recommendation,[26] a dedicated action-research effort was launched at the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD), linking federal, provincial, and municipal officals and academics across the country: the Citizen-Centred Service Network (CCSN). Its objective: "to improve public sector service delivery to Canadians."[27] It started with a two-day workshop – public servants from all three levels of government, as well as academics, met to discuss both how well Canada was doing and what research would be needed to do better. They concluded that there was a need for more knowledge on how satisfied Canadians were with service delivery.[28] They also recognized the need to cooperate further across levels of government, including uniting to jointly direct and support the development of common tools to assess citizen satisfaction.[29]

Across Canada, data was needed. The CCSN partnered with a firm that had done client satisfaction research for the Ontario government,[30] Erin Research Inc., to conduct a survey on citizen perspectives of Canadian government services. The first Citizens First survey, conducted in April 1998,[31] showed that citizens had high expectations of public sector services, but were broadly satisfied compared to similar private sector services. It also identified five core drivers of service satisfaction: in order of importance, timeliness, knowledge and competence, courtesy, fairness, and outcome, with timeliness being in particular need of improvement.[32] Later iterations of Citizens First showed slight changes in the drivers, and have explored per-service drivers in greater depth.[33]

At the per-organization level, common metrics were needed. The CCSN sponsored the design of a standard and consistent client satisfaction survey tool, one that could be customized for each public organization's needs while enabling comparisons over time and between organizations: the Common Measurements Tool.[34] Developed under the leadership of Faye Schmidt, at the time a BC government official, the CMT was a common question bank grounded in the drivers of citizen satisfaction, focused on measuring five broad variables in the service delivery process: client expectations, perceptions of service experience, level of importance, level of satisfaction, and priorities for improvement.[35] Since its release in December 1998, the CMT has continued to be developed, informed by findings from successive Citizens First surveys, and a municipality-oriented version has been created.[36]

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25.    For more detail on this subject, Brian Marson and Ralph Heintzman wrote an extensive paper well recommended: Brian Marson and Ralph Heintzman, *From Research to Results: A Decade of Results-Based Service Improvement in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Institute of Public Administration of Canada, 2009)

26.    Marson and Heintzman, *From Research to Results*, 10

27.    Canadian Centre for Management Development, *Citizen-Centred Service: Responding to the Needs of Canadians* (Ottawa: CCMD, 1999), 1

28.    Marson and Heintzman, *From Research to Results*, 10

29.    Ibid., 35; Faye Schmidt, email message to author, March 22, 2024

30.    Marson and Heintzman, *From Research to Results,* 41

31.    Erin Research Inc., *Citizens First* (Ottawa: CCMD, 1998), 3

32.    Marson and Heintzman, *From Research to Results*, 11-13

33.    Ibid., 23-24

34.    Faye Schmidt and Teresa Strickland, *Client Satisfaction Surveying: Common Measurements Tool* (Ottawa: CCMD, 1998), vii-viii

35.    Ibid., 9-11

36.    Marson and Heintzman, *From Research to Results*, 21; "Common Measurements Tool", Institute for

The CCSN summarized its work, including research into best practices in single-window service and in surveys, with a final handbook, published by the CCMD in 1999. "Citizen-centred service," the Network concluded, "describes what we have always known – our service improvement efforts should be rooted in citizens' and clients' priorities for improvement. We should, therefore, organize our services from their perspective, not from our organization's perspective."[37]

As the Citizen-Centred Service Network came to a close, efforts were taken to continue its work in some form. A forum of senior federal and provincial officials, initially called the Senior Service Delivery Officials Forum and renamed in December 2000 to the Public Sector Service Delivery Council (PSSDC), was formed to build on its work.[38] Alongside, as the CCSN recommended, an outside organization was established to house the Common Measurements Tool, continue research, and help develop expertise in citizen-centred service: the Institute for Citizen-Centred Service (ICCS). Overseen in part by the PSSDC and in part by a federal-provincial council of Chief Information Officers,[39] the ICCS is active to this day. Citizens First surveys are carried out every two years, and a business-focused satisfaction survey currently named Business First is fielded at a similar frequency. The CMT has been and continues to be licensed out both domestically and abroad, to New Zealand and several other countries.[40] The ICCS also offers professional training and certification programs for service delivery managers and frontline professionals, such as the Certified Service Manager program.[41]

## Service Canada

Building on the CCSN's findings and recommendations, in 1998, Treasury Board approved experiments in building a single window for federal government services: Service Canada. The long-term idea was to create a unified network of one-stop access points – online, by phone, and in-person – backed by a single organization. A Treasury Board Secretariat-housed team continued research into best practices and organized a pilot project, setting up a network of access counters across the country.[42]

In September 2005, after years of preparation and research, Service Canada was officially launched, housed under Human Resources and Social Development Canada and linking many departments' services.[43] From the start, it brought together a network of offices and in-person service desks across the country, telephone services and call centres, web service delivery, and in Manitoba, a vertically integrated municipal-provincial-federal set of official-language minority service centres.[44] In its first annual report, Service Canada cited *Citizens First 4*, and it announced an aim to "deliver seamless, citizen-centred service."[45] Service Canada remains to this day.

Citizen-Centred Service, accessed December 6 2023, https://citizenfirst.ca/our-work/measure-and-benchmark/new-common-measurement-tool

37.     Canadian Centre for Management Development, *Responding to the Needs*, 1
38.     Marson and Heintzman, *From Research to Results*, 18
39.     Ibid., 20-21
40.     For some, see the ICCS's annual reports: "Annual Reports", Institute for Citizen-Centred Service, accessed December 5 2023, https://citizenfirst.ca/our-story/corporate-reports/annual-reports
41.     "Learning and Training", Institute for Citizen-Centred Service, accessed April 11 2023, https://citizenfirst.ca/our-work/learning-and-development
42.     Marson and Heintzman, *From Research to Results*, 15-16
43.     Ibid., 33; Service Canada, *Service Canada Annual Report 2005-2006* (Ottawa, ON: PWGSC, 2006), 6-7
44.     Service Canada, *Service Canada Annual Report 2005-2006*, 7
45.     Ibid., 6-8

# New and Alternative Service Delivery Structures

Bourgon's 1995 annual report declared that "new organizational models for service delivery need to be explored" – "agencies, tribunals, Crown corporations and special operating agencies," etc.[46] This would require "rigorous accountability frameworks," "careful consideration of how best to manage portfolios and a redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of departments, agencies, boards, and other entities within the portfolio responsibility of a single minister."[47] The Public Service was already experimenting with some of the diverse array of alternatives to traditional service delivery models, recognizing the equally diverse array of needs – the Air Navigation System's commercialization in progress, for instance, and the rising number of special operating agencies[48] – and there was more to come.

A year later, Treasury Board Secretariat formally published a framework for alternative service delivery. It tied the effort to Program Review and laid out several broad strategies and a set of four key principles: public interest, service quality and client orientation, resource management, and human resources. It also listed several possible alternative methods of service delivery: "establishing more service-oriented and businesslike special operating agencies (SOAs) and other flexible service delivery arrangements; establishing new forms of cooperation among departments such as sharing the provision of administration services at the local level; setting up Crown corporations; negotiating partnering arrangements with other levels of government and the private and voluntary sectors; devolving programs and services to the provinces; commercializing government services to improve efficiency while protecting the public interest; and privatizing government programs and services that no longer serve a public policy purpose."[49]

The June 1996 Deputy Ministers' Retreat focused on alternative service delivery. In Bourgon's words, as laid out there, alternative service delivery "involves using different institutional models for different purposes and granting enhanced flexibility in exchange for accountability for results."[50] Already, there was a range of structures in government – "24 departments, 37 Crown corporations, 26 tribunals and quasi-judicial bodies, and 48 service agencies."[51] The key question was whether the right balance had been reached, particularly with the new priority of integrated service delivery. Bourgon noted that "the government has signalled the desire to explore a new kind of agency, one that would favour horizontal integration among departments, vertical integration among governments, and partnership."[52] Participants in the Retreat were asked to consider where alternative service delivery may help, and how it might be managed and supported. They were also, notably, asked to discuss the implications for accountability and ministerial responsibility – both how alternative service delivery could strengthen ministerial accountability and how challenges could arise from multiple lines of

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46.    Bourgon, *Third Annual Report*, 41

47.    Ibid., 41

48.    Ibid., 25-26

49.    Treasury Board Secretariat, *Framework for Alternative Program Delivery* (Ottawa, ON: Treasury Board Secretariat, 1996), archived September 1 2000 at the Wayback Machine, https://web.archive.org/web/20000901071933/http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/Pubs_pol/opepubs/TB_B4/FR_e.html

50.    Jocelyne Bourgon, "The Many Faces of Alternative Service Delivery" (speech, Deputy Ministers' Retreat, Ottawa, ON, June 13, 1996)

51.    Ibid.

52.    Ibid.

authority/accountability.[53]

Elsewhere, the same month, Bourgon highlighted four examples of alternative service delivery announced in the 1996 Speech from the Throne, all cases of service delivery integration across the federal government and/or between federal and provincial governments: the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Canadian Securities Commission, National Revenue Commission, and Parks Canada. The four would "fulfill a public sector mandate provided by public sector institutions in accordance with public sector values and public sector management practices," "respect the fundamental principles of responsible government and ministerial accountability," "reaffirm the commitment to service," "signal that service is improved by an integrated approach among departments and among governments," and "signal a desire to renew the Canadian federation through an approach based on partnership among governments."[54]

By May 1997, to Bourgon, "the realignment of roles by all governments in Canada [had] substantially reduced the degree of overlap and duplication among governments." 'Single window' services linking federal and provincial departments and agencies and giving citizens a common point to seek services were growing more common, as were partnership arrangements with groups outside government.[55] The result was striking:

> This is leading to an explosion of institutional models unknown even a few years ago. If your vision of the organization of government today is the traditional departmental model, look again — you were probably out of the country or on sabbatical during the last few years. You will find government agencies providing services on behalf of several departments or several governments. The new Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the upcoming revenue agency are two examples. You will find not-for-profit organizations as a form of private-public partnership. The Air Navigation System is a multiple public and private partnership. Forintek is a multiple partnership involving the Government of Canada, six provinces and 155 private companies. You will find virtual organizations — a service agency without walls and without staff, one business plan, one budget, and one report to Parliament on behalf of departments working together in a co-ordinated fashion.
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> The transformation is not without problems. But the trend is here to stay.[56]

All of this would, by her third annual report in 1998, be laid out as results of an overarching goal: "focusing on citizens' needs."[57]

## Canadian Food Inspection Agency

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), announced in 1996 and officially formed in 1997, was a recurring example both of integrated, citizen-centred service and of the potential of alternative service delivery structures. The CFIA horizontally unified federal food safety inspection, previously split between several relevant departments (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Health Canada, and Industry Canada), under one agency.[58]

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53.    Ibid.

54.    Jocelyne Bourgon, "New Ways of Serving Canadians" (speech, Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada, Ottawa, ON, June 4, 1996)

55.    Jocelyne Bourgon, "Canada's Competitive Edge: The Role of the Public Sector" (speech, Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada, Ottawa, ON, May 27, 1997)

56.    Ibid.

57.    Bourgon, *Fifth Annual Report*, 12

58.    Canadian Food Inspection Agency, *Performance Report For the period ending March 31, 1998* (Ottawa,

To this day, the underlying Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act grants the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food the power to form agreements with provincial governments to fulfill the agency's mandate, and to implement these agreements through jointly arranged corporations – a level of vertical integration.[59]  To ensure accountability to Ministers and Parliament, it is required to produce a business plan every five years and a yearly performance report, the latter assessed by the Auditor General of Canada.[60]

## Signs of Risks

In November 1999, the Auditor General released a report on the use of new governance arrangements outside the traditional model of ministerial accountability to Parliament – those arrangements in which key planning and/or operational decisions are made by parties outside the federal government.  The report raised red flags.  The Treasury Board Secretariat's framework was little-used.[61]  Unlike new service agencies such as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, many new collaborative or delegated arrangements – independent foundations, collaborative programs, etc. – lacked substantial oversight and accountability mechanisms.[62] The AG "found limited reporting of performance, many weak accountability mechanisms, and inadequate attention to transparency and protection of the public interest."[63]  There was cause for caution.

# Technology and e-Government

The 1990s saw the birth of the World Wide Web and a rapid rise in general public internet access.  Before Bourgon became Clerk, the government was already working on garnering the benefits of technological change.  In 1993, the Treasury Board established a leadership position for information technology in government, the Chief Informatics Officer (CIO),[64] and in early 1994, just as Bourgon was entering her new position, the Treasury Board Secretariat released a framework document laying out plans for IT-based government service renewal.  With the Treasury Board Secretariat and the CIO coordinating, a broad vision of technology-enhanced service was in place.[65]

In her first annual report in 1995, Bourgon emphasized the benefits for government service delivery that could come from new information technologies, both in enabling collaboration across organizational boundaries and in responding to citizens' needs, and identified it as a major area of improvement and experimentation – under the general leadership of the Treasury Board Secretariat.[66]

ON: PWGSC, 1998), 9-10

59.	Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act, SC 1997, c 6, s 20-21

60.	Ibid., 22-23; CFIA, *Performance Report For the period ending March 31, 1998*, 24

61.	The Treasury Board Secretariat noted, in response, that a review of the framework was underway - Office of the Auditor General of Canada, "Involving Others in Governing: Accountability at Risk," in *Report of the Auditor General of Canada* (Ottawa, ON: Office of the Auditor General, 1999), 31-32

62.	Ibid., 4-8

63.	Ibid., 5

64.	Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Treasury Board Secretariat - Renewing Government Services Using Information Technology* (Ottawa, ON: Office of the Auditor General, 1996), archived October 15 1997 at the Wayback Machine, https://web.archive.org/web/19971015000306/http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/oag-bvg/rep96/1996e/html/9616e/ch9616e.html

65.	Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Blueprint for Renewing Government Services Using Information Technology*, April 1, 1994, https://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pubs_pol/ciopubs/tb_oimp/uit-ati/uit-atitb-eng.asp

66.	Bourgon, *Third Annual Report*, 42-43

The next annual report continued on the theme, highlighting areas of success. The 1997 report showed off two areas of improvement: "*Technology* is being used to *better serve citizens*" through the provision of computer-based services, including electronic tax return filing and goods/services purchasing, and "*information technology* is being used *to reach out and better inform Canadians about government services*," examples including Industry Canada's SchoolNet school connectivity effort and Strategis business information service.[67]

Between Bourgon's second and third annual reports, Governor General LeBlanc's September 1997 Speech from the Throne marked a strengthening of Canada's commitment to digitalization. There were high ambitions: "Canada is well-positioned to be a world leader in the global knowledge-based economy of the 21st century. We have the talent, we have the resources, we have the technology, and we have the institutions." There were also commitments to achieve those ambitions: notably, to "make the information and knowledge infrastructure accessible to all Canadians by the year 2000, thereby making Canada the most connected nation in the world."[68]

A month later, Bourgon celebrated years of progress in a speech, and laid out priorities for further work. She highlighted Human Resources Development Canada's network of electronic service delivery kiosks around the country, an example of technology allowing governments "to be present, relevant and adapted to local needs." Electronic transactions – payments and customs clearances – also had attention, as did the federal government's e-mail system and the millions of hits per month for both the main Canada web site and that of Strategis. What was needed for the future? Horizontal integration across departments and agencies for service delivery, vertical integration and cooperation between levels of government, and a clear idea of the roles of the public and private sectors in the coming knowledge-based society.[69]

Her third annual report, 1998, highlighted success again with another nod to Strategis, and again looked to the future: "Today, information technology is giving us the means to put the institutional knowledge that is currently in the hands of three levels of government at the service of Canadians and their communities. It could profoundly alter the relationship between governments and citizens."[70]

## Y2K

In the late 1990s, the looming threat of the year 2000 problem served as an opportunity for information technology improvements. As the turn of the millennium grew closer and closer, futureproofing Canadian government computer systems grew more and more urgent. Primary responsibility was placed outside the PCO. In 1996, the Year 2000 Project Office was launched under the Treasury Board Secretariat; in the summer of 1998, the Office was put in charge of coordinating the government's Y2K response. By April 2000, $1.9 billion had gone into Y2K remediation and mitigation.[71] Measures to prepare for Y2K and mitigate the bug had value

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67.     Bourgon, *Fourth Annual Report*, 21-22

68.     Roméo LeBlanc, "Speech from the Throne to Open the First Session Thirty-Sixth Parliament of Canada" (speech, House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, September 23, 1997), https://lop.parl.ca/sites/ParlInfo/default/en_CA/Parliament/throneSpeech/speech362

69.     Jocelyne Bourgon, "Connecting Canadians: Public Service in the Information Age" (speech, Technology in Government Week, Ottawa, ON, October 20, 1997)

70.     Bourgon, *Fifth Annual Report*, 13-14

71.     Treasury Board Secretariat, "Year 2000 Post Implementation Assessment – Final Report," July 5th 2000, archived August 18th 2000 at the Wayback Machine, https://web.archive.org/web/20000818071246/http://www.info2000.gc.ca/WhatsNew/pia_e.htm

beyond the immediate problem – a chance to futureproof for Y2K was, in some respects, a chance to futureproof more generally.  The 1998 La Relève information community progress report gives an example: measures to recruit information technology professionals and give specialized training to fix the Y2K bug "serve[d] a dual purpose, contributing to the government's year 2000 solution and providing lessons learned and a solid foundation for more general community renewal activities."[72]

## SchoolNet

One of the earliest programs in the 1990s wave of digitalization served as a constant example: SchoolNet.  Launched in 1993 as a collaboration between Industry Canada, provincial/territorial governments, education associations, and relevant parts of the private sector, SchoolNet was an effort to both connect all schools and public libraries across Canada to the Internet and to achieve new information technologies' educational potential.  The initiative developed services, tools, and content for schools and educators; conducted and disseminated research; and provided advice internationally on education networking.[73]  By November 1995, the program had earned praise from Microsoft founder Bill Gates as "the leading program in the world in terms of letting kids get out and use computers."[74]

By March 31st 1999, SchoolNet had achieved its headline goal: Canada was the first country in the world where all schools and public libraries were connected to the Internet.[75]  The program continued for some time afterwards, eventually concluding in 2007.[76]  A component focused on First Nations communities, First Nations SchoolNet, spun off from and outlasted the main SchoolNet program;[77] it is not clear how long this spinoff lasted.

## Overall Results in e-Government

In the inaugural 2001 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs index of e-government development and capacity, Canada was sixth in the world.[78]  It had "perhaps one of the most comprehensive e-government programs" – "a wide range of services in a highly efficient and user-friendly manner" that "reflect the government's unremitting commitment to improvement and to providing the best product to Canadian citizens and international users."[79]  The report suggested that Canada "will be a case study on e-gov success for years to come."[80]  Canada was, as the 1997 Speech from the Throne promised, a world leader.  It would not last forever – by 2022, Canada was only 32nd in the world on the E-Government

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72.      La Relève Task Force, *First Progress Report on La Relève: Detailed Reports* (Ottawa, ON: Privy Council Office, 1998), 135

73.      "FAQ Answers," Canada's SchoolNet, archived July 11th 2000 at the Wayback Machine, https://web.archive.org/web/20000711005945/http://www.schoolnet.ca/home/e/help/faq.html

74.      Quoted in Chris Cobb, "Cyberschool; Canada leads the world with an on-line educational network called Schoolnet," *Ottawa Citizen* (Ottawa, ON), Nov. 26, 1995

75.      Industry Canada, *Performance Report For the period ending March 31, 1999* (Ottawa, ON: PWGSC, 1999), 17

76.      "Canada's SchoolNet", Canada's SchoolNet, archived June 17th 2007 at the Wayback Machine, https://web.archive.org/web/20070617193457/http://www.schoolnet.ca:80/home/e

77.      Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, *Evaluation of the First Nations SchoolNet Program – Final Report* (Ottawa, ON: INAC, 2009)

78.      United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Benchmarking E-government: A Global Perspective*. (New York, NY: United Nations, 2002), 7

79.      Ibid., 20.

80.      Ibid., 36

Development Index[81] – but for a time, Canada was at the forefront of e-government.

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81.     United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *E-Government Survey 2022: The Future of Digital Government*. (New York, NY: United Nations, 2022), 66

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