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by *Summit* staff

It is a sure sign of fall in Ottawa when GTEC, a large conference and trade show focused on information technology, opens its doors to government staff. The Westin Hotel was buzzing with attendees, presenters and exhibitors for several days in early October. This year's theme was Mashups – which could not have been more appropriate since mashup means combining several elements from multiple sources and producing something new that adds value and is innovative. Creating a space for a variety of experts – vendors and government staff – to come together to learn and

share required diligent staff and lots of technology.

Early Tuesday morning, October 6, keynote speaker, Minister of State Science and Technology, the Honourable Gary Goodyear, expressed the federal government's ongoing support for the ICT sector and its recognition as a key factor in a successful Canadian economy. Goodyear stated that the current government has invested over \$10 billion in the sector – more than any other government at any time.

Summit: Canada's magazine on public sector purchasing

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Following the minister was Corinne Charette, CIO Government of Canada.

Charette is fairly new to her position, just 5 months into the job, but she too

recognized the support of the government and the excellence of the governments' IM/IT professionals, saying she was "impressed with the professionalism and talent."

Charette also spoke of the importance of mashups to government as she sees that government will have to use all the tools and resources available to re-use rather than reinvent and to do so more quickly than is its usual habit. She says IM/IT staff will have to use every "asset at your disposal to produce new results" and will need to work together even more than before, as Canada will need to "tighten its belt in the future."

Collaborating with the provinces could capitalize on the good work being done there as well. Charette says that, "The Government of Canada continues to waste too much time and money in the implementation of the same systems over and over again." Multiple flavours of the same system is not a practical approach and her focus will be interoperability and the mitigation of cyber security. In her own words, she will be "judicious and passionate" when choosing initiatives.

In such a large organization as the GoC, setting priorities will be difficult. Charette says she will focus on joint plans and delivery, address the effective management of IM/IT, improve the transparency of IM/IT spending across

government and seek excellence in project delivery. In this area she says that procurement strategies must be adapted to allow for smaller projects before the government commits to major solutions.

In closing, Charette challenged the IM/IT community to reclaim their position in relation to other countries and do it without compromising service delivery or quality of work.

Greg Parsons from Accenture had some ideas about that. His presentation on the Global Cities Forum examined the relationship between citizens and government, and government services – both type and quality – play a key role. He says that the GoC should focus on outcomes and be able to measure these so they can show citizens the value created. He outlined four guiding principles: outcomes, balance, engagement and accountability, that will help improve the perspective that citizens hold of their governments.

His survey results show that Canada is good at providing quality information, but lags in the area of coordinated services and quick responses and there are gaps in accountability and seeking citizen views. Parsons pointed to the BC government portal for immigrants as an example of providing targeted service based on an understanding of individual immigrant demographic groups. Singapore's REACH program, the NYC 311, the District of Columbia's Digital Square and the new White House portal are all examples of utilizing technology to help solve some of these challenges. The challenge for government is how to introduce and manage the technologies and their implications for work structure, collaboration and consultation in such a large organization that is structurally and culturally

diverse, not to mention the change they will bring to the relationship between the government service provider and the citizen.

An example of how technology can stimulate new ideas came from the presentation delivered by Loyalist College and the Canada Border Services Agency. When he took his position at Loyalist, a small college located in Belleville, Ontario, Ken Hudson was given a mandate to “make things happen.” He discovered Second Life, a 3-D virtual world, that allowed him (through his avatar) to work with students from Harvard. Hudson confessed that he thought that was pretty cool so he eventually established a virtual Loyalist College on Second Life. In January 2007, Loyalist began to teach students in that space.

Loyalist was teaching students how to be a border guard. At one time, the students used to do a field placement; however, this was discontinued and replaced by classroom role playing. Not satisfied with that, Second Life simulation was thought to be a teaching option, so using photos and Google Maps the Landsdowne Border Crossing was recreated. Students were able to practice their roles as border guards in the simulated situation that

allowed them to not only use the material they studied, but encouraged them to be more observant of the person in the vehicle they were interviewing. Sessions stimulated class discussion and heightened the confidence of students, providing a 37 percent increase in grades over two years. The expertise gained at Loyalist in simulation led to the creation of infiniteSpaces, Virtual World Design Centre (www.infinitespaces.ca), which according to the website creates “immersive world environments and experiences for business, education and government.”

Working with Loyalist, Leszek Nowosielski from Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) tested integrating the simulated border training into the CBSA recruit training program. He noted that they did experience some technical difficulties as each recruit has their own personal computer, but the results showed increased confidence and faster pace of learning, not to mention the decrease in costs. He says the next step for CBSA is to do an in-house pilot and build a business case to use the tool.

You could see others at this presentation speculating on how this simulation technology could benefit them. They were not alone; Public Works and Government Services Canada has released a request for information on building a virtual world inside the government firewall.

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