

E-GOVERNANCE
Theoretical foundations and practical implications

by

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ABSTRACT

Governments and public sector organizations around the world are faced with increasing requests to reform their public administration institutions and deliver more efficient and cost effective services, as well as better information and knowledge to their stakeholders. Increasingly governments use information and communication technology, especially Internet and web-based applications, to provide external services to citizens, businesses, and not-for-profit organizations. Related to this, internal government procedures and work methodologies are also undergoing substantial changes.

This research provides an overview of the basic theoretical and practical issues of e-governance regarded as a set of government policies and their practical applications based on the use of ICT tools for strengthening democracy and supporting development. It argues that e-governance, combined with democratic intent makes governments more responsive. Moreover, it can offer a connection with its citizens in order to effectively meet various development challenges, and ultimately, it tends to build a more sustainable future for the benefit of the whole of society and the world in which we live. Although the demand for e-governance comes from the necessity to achieve greater operational efficiency, and from a need to provide a better response to citizen's demand for improved public services, the policy externality is that e-governance relates more and more to democracy than to administrative reforms. What we discover is that the politics-administration dichotomy is actually related or converging in the sense that it is difficult to have administration in the absence of democracy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Research objectives	5
3. Research methodology	7
4. Democracy	7
4.1 Foundations of democracy	9
4.2 Limitations of democracy	13
5. E-governance concept	17
6. Areas of e-governance	25
6.1 E-democracy	26
6.2 E-government	27
6.3 E-business	29
7. Principles of e-governance	29
8. Dimensions of e-governance	33
8.1 Standards of behavior	33
8.2 Organizational structures and processes	34
8.3 Control	35
8.4 External reporting	36
9. Evolution of e-governance	37
10. Canada and e-governance	47
11. Conclusion	50
Bibliography	52

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of globalization, introduction of new information and communication technologies, and changing demographic and political requirements are redefining the role of governments and public sector organizations. In order to better serve the citizens that they represent, governments and the public sector in general, are looking for more efficient and effective ways to respond to these new challenges. E-governance offers an opportunity to successfully meet some of these challenges.

Rapid and revolutionary changes in technology have created an increasingly information-centric society. More and more governments are using information and communication technology, especially Internet and web-based applications, to provide services between government agencies and citizens, businesses, employees and not-for-profit sector. Across the world, public organizations are beginning an e-governance journey by publishing static information on the Internet, and establishing an on-line presence, in the hope that they too will experience increases in efficiency, effectiveness, and organizational performance (Melitski, 2001). The challenge for many governments today is to provide opportunities for citizens and businesses to actively participate in the delivery of democratic government services. E-governance is believed to have a potential to play a fundamental role towards this end.

Although the demand for e-governance came from the need to achieve greater operational efficiency and to respond better to citizens' demands for improved public services,

increasingly, e-governance has as much to do with democracy as with administrative reform.

More and more researchers and practitioners devote their time and energy to study e-governance issues and topics. E-governance may be defined as a continuum from information provision, when organizations and public agencies publish static information to the Internet, all the way to web-based interactive applications and e-transactions, as well as to one-stop integrated virtual governmental services. This research views e-governance as an instrument of an information-rich society, which follows main governance principles and strategies, and enables the use of information and communication technologies in interactions between and among the key members of the society – state, citizens, and businesses – with an aim of strengthening democracy and supporting development.

This research paper consists of ten chapters followed by some final comments in the Conclusions. After a brief introduction and a list of research objectives and methodology, attention is devoted to democracy, its foundations and limitations. It is followed by an attempt to define governance and good governance, as well as the term and concept of e-governance. Particular emphasis is given to the views expressed by international organizations and to the views expressed by leading researchers studying the topic of e-governance and its relation to democracy and the role of international organizations.

E-democracy, e-government, and e-business are topics of the following chapter entitled *Areas of E-governance*. The following two Chapters deal with an overview of e-governance principles as elaborated by the United Nations, OECD and European Union, and dimensions of e-governance, such as, standards of behavior, organizational structures and processes, control, and external reporting. The following Chapter on the evolution of e-governance is devoted to Gartner Group's e-governance maturity model and its four main phases, information, interaction, transaction, and transformation. Since Canada is a recognized leader in the area of e-governance, special attention is devoted to the Canadian Government On-Line initiative which is presented in Chapter Ten. Conclusions at the end of the paper express an optimistic belief that e-governance, combined with democratic intent, can make governments more responsive and assist with building a more sustainable future for the benefit of the whole of society and the world in which we live.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research begins with explanation of basic concept used during the study, such as democracy, governance and e-governance. It examines the constitutional elements of those concepts and their main characteristics with an aim of offering substantial ground for follow-up reasoning regarding practical and theoretical aspects of e-governance.

Besides the objective of establishing a proper definition scope of e-governance, the research aims at three major objectives. The first objective of the research addresses the

understanding of areas of e-governance, such as, e-democracy, e-government, and e-business. The second objective is to define the principles of e-governance, namely openness, integrity, and accountability. And finally the last objective is to establish dimensions and offer their proper understanding in the contents of democratic public sector entities. The major dimensions being, standards of behavior; organizational structures and processes; control; and external reporting.

Although the demand for e-governance comes from the necessity to achieve greater operational efficiency, and from a need to provide a better response to citizen's demand for improved public services, the objective of this research was also to demonstrate that e-governance relates more and more to democracy than to administrative reforms. The research also attempts to show that the politics-administration dichotomy is actually related or converging in the sense that it is difficult to have administration in the absence of democracy¹.

¹ The role of the government administration in a democratic society has long been a matter of discussion. Public administration literature places this issue in the context of the policy-administration dichotomy and involves questions such as: Should public administration be involved in policy matters; Should public administration be active in the political processes; If the answer to the above question is positive, what should be the standards for their behavior? Max Weber discussed these issues in his writings and according to him administrations should be removed from politics and should serve as the neutral servants of their political masters. (Fry, B. & Nigro, L., 1996).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Information for this research was obtained mainly from academic journals, articles, books, reports, and materials available on the Internet. The focus was on literature review of published national and international information resources with special attention given to literature published by international organizations and national governments.

This paper did not have the intention to include all, or even a majority of research papers and other published materials related to e-governance. That would be very difficult having in mind the amount of publishing activity covering the topic of e-governance. So, the aim of the research was to cover, through literature review, major and most relevant papers and topics which would be regarded as sufficient for proper understanding of the studied phenomenon.

4. DEMOCRACY

The term democracy comes from the Greek term δημοκρατία (demokratia), which is a combination of words δημοσ (demos) *the common people*, the word κρατειν (kratein) *to rule*, and the suffix ία (ia). Its literal translation would be "the common people rule", or in more modern terms, the system where the population of a society controls the government.

The term was coined in ancient Athens in the 5th century BC. Athenian democracy is generally seen as one of the earliest examples of a system corresponding to *some* of the modern notions of democratic rule. Only a quarter of the whole adult male population of Athens could vote and speak in the Assembly. However, what was more important was a fact that they were able to do that however poor they were and that they were making decisions directly, rather than through voting for representatives (Wikipedia).

Over centuries, the meaning of democracy has changed, and the modern definition has largely evolved since the 18th century. Today, it describes a type of government where, if democratic, government serves the people, rather than ruling over them. It usually involves free elections and voting for some kind of representations, which by definition becomes indirect representation.

Democracy is often regarded as a form of government in which policy is decided by the preference of the real majority. It is usually done through elections or referenda which are open to all or most citizens. Democratic government and democratic society usually go hand in hand, but not necessarily all the time. It is possible to have a democratically elected and generally democratic government, but not really a democratic society. This can be demonstrated through weak protection of minorities or mistreatment of immigrants.

Liberal democracy, as a related term, implies individual liberty and individual responsibility of citizens. Its founding blocks are constitutional liberalism, personal

sovereignty and private property. In liberal democracy societies, sovereignty originates in the people and is delegated by them to the government. Most liberal-democracies are parliamentary representative democracies.

Economic systems are in theory distinct from political systems. The centrally planned economy, for example is regarded as incompatible with democracy. All modern democratic societies have a free-market economy, although not in the sense that pure liberal economists would accept. Theoretically speaking, it is possible for a democratic electorate to vote for a centrally planned economy what would be regarded as an absurd.

The term democratization is used in the contents of the replacement of non-democratic forms by a democracy. Some political thinkers believe that the process of democratization will make the liberal-democratic nation-states the standard form of human society.

The term 'democratic' is also used in a looser sense, to describe participatory decision-making in groups or organizations, such as the decision-making in not-for-profit organizations.

4.1 Foundations of Democracy

Real democracy, particularly as a form of government, consists of a number of building blocks. All of the blocks need to be present and properly combined to provide the foundation for successful democracy. The main building blocks of democracy are:

- ***Population or demos.*** A group of people that needs to make a decision, and does that through a process of collective decision-making. The demos can be a nation, citizenship, or the membership.
- ***Territory.*** The locality where the decisions are being applied, and where the demos reside. The territory is usually the nation-state and in that case the demos and the reach of the democracy coincide. However, in some cases, like with colonies or protectorates, demos and territory do not coincide, so there is no real democracy. Similar conclusion can be made also about the international not-for-profit organizations that go outside “their own territory” and make decision or take actions without proper legitimacy.
- ***Freedom.*** Presence of collective and individual freedoms, including the right for self expression, free speech, free choice, free election, the right to belong to or form a political or other organization, and many other freedoms characteristic for modern times, are required to have a democratic society.
- ***Sovereignty.*** This is directly related to both territory and the general concept of freedom. The state must be sovereign and the elections must be recognized. Otherwise, democratic elections are pointless if an outside authority can overrule the result (e.g., recent case with Palestinian Parliamentary elections).
- ***Decision-making procedure.*** Decisions can be made through direct decision-making procedures (e.g., a referendum); or indirect (e.g., election of a parliament). The procedure has to be legitimate, meaning that the demos is willing to accept the decision which can go against personal choices or interests. It also

has to be effective, meaning that the governing structure can be changed if there is a sufficient support for that change.

- ***Free market economy.*** Modern Western understanding of democracy includes also free market economy.
- ***Political pluralism.*** It is usually defined as the presence of multiple and distinct political parties.
- ***Existence of constitution.*** Existence of constitution which defines the democratic character of the state.
- ***Separation of executive,*** legislative and independent judiciary powers. This is required to provide a system of checks and balances between branches of government
- ***Rule of law.*** Once passed through democratically elected parliament, whatever the law might be, it must be applied and obeyed. Equality before the law and due process under the rule of law are also considered characteristics of liberal democracy
- ***Universal suffrage.*** Democracy also requires granting all citizens the right to vote regardless of race, gender or property ownership. However, the universality is relative. Many countries regarded as democratic have practiced various forms of exclusion from suffrage, or demand further qualifications (except for being a citizen), like a registration procedure to be allowed to vote. Voting rights are limited to those who are above a certain age, typically 18. In any case, decisions taken through elections are taken not by *all* of the citizens, but rather by those who choose to participate by voting.

- ***Human rights and freedoms.*** The most often quoted criteria for liberal democracy is existence of individual human rights and freedoms. They were originally considered essential for the *functioning* of a liberal democracy, but they have acquired such prominence in its definition, that many people now think they *are* democracy.

Political theorists have identified at least four major concepts of democracy:

- ***Minimalist democracy.*** A system in which citizens give political leaders the right to rule during the periods between elections. Citizens cannot and should not rule directly because on most issues, most of the time, they have no clear views (Schumpeter, 1950).
- ***Aggregative democracy.*** A system that produces laws and policies that conform to the vector-sum of citizens' preferences. A good democratic government is the one that produces laws and policies that are close to the views of the median voter - with half to his left and the other half to his right (Downs, 1997).
- ***Deliberate democracy.*** A system based on the notion that laws and policies should be based upon reasons that all citizens can accept. That is achieved through discussions where leaders and citizens make arguments, listen, and change their minds. Political thinkers dating back to ancient Athens have stressed the importance of public discourse and debate (e.g., Aristotle, Thucydides), as well as more modern ones (e.g. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill).

- ***Participatory democracy.*** A system which holds that in making decisions citizens should participate directly, not through their representatives. Proponents of participatory democracy offer varied reasons to support this view, such as, political activity can be valuable in itself, it socializes and educates citizens, and popular participation can check powerful elites. Most importantly, citizens do not really rule themselves unless they directly decide laws and policies (Roussopoulos & Benello, 2004).

4.2 Limitations of Democracy

By its definition, democracy has a number of limitations. The most famous is probably the one noted by Thomas Jefferson, who said that "a democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where fifty-one percent of the people may take away the rights of the other forty-nine".

'Tyranny of the majority' implies that a government reflecting the majority view can take action that oppresses a particular minority. In theory, the majority might decide that a certain minority benefits, characteristics, or privileges (e.g., religion, political belief, cultural right, or economic status) should be taken away or minimized. This undermines the idea of democracy as an empowerment of the demos as a whole.

The best known case of the 'tyranny of the majority' is that of Adolf Hitler who came to power by legitimate democratic procedures. The Nazi party gained the largest share of

votes in the democratic Weimar republic in 1933. However, his regime's large-scale human rights violations took place after the democratic system had been abolished.

Democracy, and especially liberal democracy, requires a sense of shared values in the demos. It requires the demos to act as a unit. However, many states lack the cultural and ethnic unity of the ideal nation-state because of ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural divisions. On the other hand, some of democracy limits are related to specific individual freedoms. Democratic theory explains these limits as a necessity to guarantee the existence of democracy, or the existence of the freedoms themselves. For example, should free speech opponents have a freedom to attack free speech? Or, should the enemies of democracy be given full freedom and their “democratic rights” to go against democracy?

General limitations or restrictions of democracy can be grouped in the following manner:

- ***Free speech, organization, assembly and protest.*** Restrictions can target anti-democratic organizations, gatherings and speech that attempts to undermine human rights, promotion or justification of terrorism. Recent examples include the Cold War restrictions which targeted communists, or restrictions now applied to radical Islamists. Several European countries have introduced bans even on personal religious symbols.
- ***Free press.*** Press censorship, satellite denial services, and website restrictions are just some of the examples of democracy limitations imposed in this area.

Ownership of the media by the few may lead to more specific distortion of the electoral process and freedom of speech, since the media are themselves a vital element of that.

- ***Rule of law.*** Rule of international law was blatantly ignored in cases such as attacks on Iraq or Serbia. Very questionable justifications were given in the form of “existence” of weapons of mass destruction or “humanitarian war”. Possibility for a similar “justification for energy war” is also increasing now. Equality before the law and due process under the rule of law are considered characteristics of liberal democracy, but the United States holds certain categories of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, and possibly in other secret prisons, without trial, and without any specific grounds in domestic or international law. The prisoners are also excluded from any legal protection.
- ***Fair representation.*** Due to various difficulties some electoral systems do not offer proportional representation to all political, or minority groups in the nation's legislative bodies. Instead they go for majoritarian representation. Democracy is costly affair requiring substantial sums of money for elections and its functioning in general. The cost of political campaigning in representative democracies may mean that the system favors the rich, who may be a very small minority of the voters.

Representation is a key concept for every parliamentary democracy. There are four different meaning of representative democracy: Firstly, representative democracy is a depiction of the people's will. Secondly, it is a process of deliberation and negotiation.

Thirdly, representative democracy is the institutional linking mechanism between political power and political control. Fourthly, representative democracy is the constitution of democracy in the broad sense of a public domain with ‘checks and balances’ (Frissen, 2002).

Information technology developments play a catalyst for broader societal developments, thus causing serious flaws in the various perspectives on representative democracy. Frissen (2002) argues that in an information society three trends – horizontalization², deterritorialization³ and virtualization⁴ – are magnifying and radicalizing already existing flaws in the functioning of representative democracy. According to him, in an information society, representation must be reinvented.

Democracies are criticized for their tendency to brew bureaucracy, as well as for inefficient and sometimes ineffective decision-making, particularly in wartime. Regular, election-based, changes of government are also sometimes seen as a problem due to their short-term focus. However, such a system is still preferable to a system where political change takes place through violence. Special lobby and other interest groups promote their own ideas and can spread propaganda winning some part of demos to vote for their

² Horizontalization: Increased capacity of individual systems and networks to exchange information directly among them.

³ Deterritorialization; A dissociation of action and its physical place. Territory loses its limitations and its signifying meaning. What matters is no longer where I do things, but rather where my actions produce an effect. The virtual world is a reality without territory, without geography.

⁴ Virtualization: In virtual communities we are free to choose our own identity. Physical limitations fall away and thus also social, cultural, and moral boundaries.

cause, therefore gaining subsidies and benefits to them which might be harmful to society.

5. E-GOVERNANCE CONCEPT

The starting point for conceptual definition of electronic governance (e-governance⁵) is a notion of *governance*. The actual term governance comes from an ancient Greek word, *kebernon*, which means to steer (Youth I.N.C., 2005). In current usage, to govern means to steer, to control, and to influence from a position of authority. Therefore, governance is an exercise of power for steering social systems, as well as a process by which organizations are directed, controlled, and held to account. It is also regarded as a set of the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organization (Cornforth, 2003).

UNESCO (2005) regards governance as a basic concept which refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs, including citizens' articulation of their interests and exercise of their legal rights and obligations (UNESCO, 2005). Some authors regard this as public governance, or even the "government governance", in order to differentiate it from the corporate governance.

⁵ The term '*digital*' can be used instead; there is also another terms being increasingly introduced nowadays – '*mobile*', or '*m*' as a prefix meaning that mobile phone and wireless networks converged with the Internet are used for information transmission, for instance cellular phones or hand-held computers (PDAs) with built-in wireless functionality.

The World Bank in many of its working papers and documents emphasizes that governance covers structures and processes for decision-making, accountability, control and behavior at the top of organization and that it leads to better development, higher per capita income, lower infant mortality and higher literacy; builds confidence in public sector entities.

A more elaborate definition of governance is given by Dr. Perri in his book devoted to e-governance (2004). He defines governance as analysis and understanding of problems by elected and appointed politicians and their senior staff, the making of policy, the process of deliberation and cogitation, the process of exercising and cultivating political judgment, the making of decisions, and the oversight and scrutiny that other politicians and regulators exercise. Or, in short, the term governance is used to describe *exercise of public power for steering social systems*.

In practical terms governance for different organizations can be different depending on the circumstances:

- In a small community group governance might be about getting things in place, making sure it's clear what it is doing making sure they the organization is working together to a common cause.
- In local or county-wide organizations, governance might be about reviewing the relationship between the governing body and small staff team.

- In a large organization, such as a national organization governance might be about the need to demonstrate accountability to the public and stakeholders.

Related term, which recently came into public administration use, mainly because of the public sector reforms, is **good governance**. In e-governance electronic means support and stimulate good governance. Therefore, the objectives of e-governance are similar to the objectives of good governance which can be seen as an exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to better manage affairs of a country at all levels (Basu, 2004). Good governance comprises the processes and structures that guide political and socio-economic relationships, with particular reference to “commitment to democratic values, norms and practices; trusted services; and to just and honest business” (Okot-Uma, 2004). Main features of good governance are *participation*, *transparency* and *accountability*. The advances in communication technologies and the Internet provide opportunities to transform the relationship between governments and citizens in a new way, thus contributing to the achievement of good governance goals. Advantages for the government come from the fact that the government may provide better service in terms of time and effort, making governance more efficient and more effective. In addition, the transaction costs can be lowered and government services can become more accessible to its citizens.

There are many definitions of e-governance, and the term itself is not universally used. Definitions of e-governance range from ‘the use of information technology to free movement of information to overcome the physical bounds of traditional paper and

physical based systems' (Okot-Uma, 2004), to 'the use of technology to enhance the access to and delivery of government services to benefit citizens, business partners and employees' (Deloitte, 2003). The common theme behind these definitions is that e-governance involves the automation or computerization of existing paper-based procedures that will prompt new styles of leadership, new ways of debating and deciding strategies, new ways of transacting business, new ways of listening to citizens and communities, and new ways of organizing and delivering information (Okot-Uma, 2002).

Rao (2003) defined electronic governance as the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for the planning, implementation, and monitoring of government programs, projects and activities. E-governance may be understood as the performance of the public governance via the electronic medium in order to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information to the general public, and other agencies, and for performing government administration activities. The term refers to the process of using information technology, particularly the internet-based one, for automating and improving government operations. It covers both, internal and external operations of the government. Automation of internal government operations improves efficiency and effectiveness, while reducing the cost of governing. Automation of government external operations and their interactions with citizens also reduces the cost and improves the responsiveness bringing the benefits for both - the government and the citizens. For Ahmedabad (2003), e-governance is expected to help deliver cost-effective

and easy to access service to citizens, and improve processing of transactions both within the government, and between the government and other agencies.

According to UNESCO (2005), e-governance involves new styles of leadership, new ways of debating and deciding policy and investment, new ways of accessing education, new ways of listening to citizens and new ways of organizing and delivering information and services. The idea is to move beyond the passive information-giving to active citizen involvement in the decision-making process through the use of information and communication technologies. This is believed to be the core or essential benefit that introduction and use of e-governance can bring to the society.

Rogers O'W Okot-Uma (2004) explored the evolution of *the Commonwealth* towards the e-governance concept. According to him, the 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration committed member governments to the democratic process and institutions which reflect national circumstances, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, just and honest government, fundamental human rights, including equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, regardless of race, color, creed or political belief. As a goal and vision to be achieved in time, these intentions still remain the fundamental milestones for any public sector endeavor.

The **OECD** e-Government Project, defines the ‘e-government’ as the use of information and communication technologies and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government (OECD, 2003). Ultimately, e-governance aims to enhance access to and delivery of government services to benefit citizens. More importantly, it aims to help strengthen government’s drive toward effective governance and increased transparency to better manage a country’s social and economic resources for development. The differences are not just semantic and definitions and terms adopted by individual countries have shifted, as priorities have changed, and as progress has been made towards particular objectives.

The **European Union** laid the foundations of e-governance in its first action-plan called “Europe 2002, an Information Society for All” the first action plan of the European Union for the Society of Information, presented on 19 and 20 June 2000 at Feira European Council. That plan has been now substituted by “Europe 2005; an Information Society for All”, presented on 19 and 20 June 2000 at Feira European Council.

The European Union regards e-governance as a way for the modernization of public administration bringing it closer to civil society and businesses through the use of information and communication technologies. Its action plan, which was given the name of “e-Europe” and was launched at the Seville summit in 2000, envisages not only the development of high-speed access and the security of the network, trade and electronic

services, but also on-line access to public administrations. EU confirms that the information and communication technologies (ICT) can help public administrations to cope with many challenges. However, the focus should not be on ICT itself. Instead it should be on the use of ICT *combined with* organizational change and new skills in order to improve public services, democratic processes and public policies (EU, 2003). It considers e-government as a prerequisite for improving Europe's competitiveness in the 21st century.

According to the Council of Europe e-governance is about the use of information technology to raise the quality of the services governments deliver to citizens and businesses (COE #1). The concept of electronic governance covers the use of electronic technologies in three main areas of public action:

- Relations between the public authorities and civil society
- Functioning of the public authorities at all stages of the democratic process (electronic democracy)
- Provision of public services (electronic public services) (COE #2).

The Council of Europe is concerned about the ways for incorporating digital technology into exercise of power. Aware of the risks entailed in these technologies, the Council reaffirmed the need to strengthen democratic institutions and processes and to involve the public in political choices so that their needs and priorities are respected. Governments

should involve the whole population, in particular by ensuring that the largest possible number of citizens is educated in the use of computers.

E-Governance is regarded as an ICT-based tool for strengthening democracy and supporting development. Proponents of e-governance concept argue that e-governance, combined with democratic intent, can make governments more responsive, can connect with citizens to effectively meet public challenges, and ultimately, can build a more sustainable future for the benefit of the whole of society and the world in which we live. Although the demand for e-governance came from the need to achieve greater operational efficiency, and from a need to provide a better response to citizen demands for improved public services, e-governance is being related more and more to democracy than to administrative reforms.

This research paper follows the view that e-governance comprises of a set of governance principles, strategies, systems and tools that enable the use of ICT in interactions between the key members of the society – state, citizens, and businesses, ***to strengthen democracy and support development.*** The United Nations World Public Sector Report (2003) notes that e-governance is justified if it enhances the capacity of public administration to increase the supply of public value, i.e., the things that people want.

6. AREAS OF E-GOVERNANCE

E-governance is generally considered as a wider concept than e-government, since it can bring about a change in the way how citizens relate to governments and to each other. E-governance can bring forth new concepts of citizenship, both in terms of citizen needs and responsibilities. Its objective is to engage, enable and empower the citizens.

E-commerce allows businesses to communicate with each other more efficiently (B2B) and it brings customers closer to businesses (B2C). Similarly, e-governance aims to enable the interaction between government and citizens (G2C) (*i.e., e-democracy*); improve interagency relationships (G2G) (*i.e., e-government*); and establish efficient relationship between the government and business enterprises (G2B) (*i.e., e-business*) (Fung, 2002). Therefore, the main segments of e-governance are e-democracy, e-government, and e-business.

Perri (2004) offers a similar division, but with four distinct areas of activity, namely e-democracy, e-service provision, e-management and e-governance. Although they are distinct, there are important relationships between them since they are not designed to function effectively in isolation from one another. There is a requirement for their system integration in order to achieve greater control, quality and rationality in public sector decision making.

6.1 E-democracy

The term e-democracy refers to the processes and structures that encompass all forms of electronic interaction between the Government (elected representatives) and the citizens (electorate) (Backus, 2001). Online democracy includes access to elected officials, availability and use of discussion forums (e-participation), access to meetings and meeting documentation, voter registration, and ultimately online voting, also known as e-voting. UK Government hopes to use e-voting in order to bring youth into the democratic process since their participation in elections was regarded as very low (Riley, 2003). It implies greater and more active citizen participation and involvement enabled by ICT in the decision-making process.

Backus (2001) grouped objectives of e-democracy in the following two categories:

a) *Passive access related objectives:* To provide citizens access to information and knowledge about the political process, about services and about choices available.

b) *Active access related objectives:* To make possible the transition from passive information access to active citizen participation by:

- Informing the citizen
- Representing the citizen
- Encouraging the citizen to vote
- Consulting the citizen
- Involving the citizen.

Besides all these potentially positive outcomes of various e-governance initiatives, particularly e-democracy, some serious caution needs to be exercised. That was well emphasized by Hoff et al. (2003) in their article on the state of e-democracy in Denmark. They clearly stated that expectations for the potential of information technology to promote participation in democracy were extremely high. However, according to them and some other researches as well, information technology will not automatically result in increased democratic participation. Hoff et al. gave a number of examples which demonstrated Danish Government reluctance to engage in any sort of e-democracy. Even the Government's belief in future of e-democracy was very weak as explicitly stated in the Government latest strategy plan from 2002 - *IT for All: Denmark's Future*. That strategy did not bring up the issue of e-democracy at all. It was only mentioned once in a sentence in the foreword where it said that electronic debate forums were of no value if ordinary people were unwilling to let their opinions be known (Denmark, 2002).

6.2 E-government

According to Al-Tawil and Said (2002) Electronic government (e-government) is the transformation of public sector's internal and external relationship through Internet-enabled operations, thereby strategically deploying ICT to optimize government service delivery and governance. E-governance is the development, deployment and enforcement of the policies, laws and regulations necessary to support the functioning of an e-government.

Okot-Uma (2004) assumes that e-government, includes two basic components: delivery of services to the public, also know as *e-services*, and administration processes of government, known as e-administration. E-government implies dissemination of information and provision of public services through improved government processes using new information and communication technologies.

External delivery of e-government services (front-office) has the goal of satisfying immediate public's needs and expectations and to simplifying their interaction with various online services. The use of internet and information technology in government operations facilitates speedy, transparent, accountable, efficient and effective interaction with the public, citizens, business and other agencies.

Internal delivery of e-government services (back-office), as its strategic objective, sets creation of fast, transparent, accountable, efficient and effective processes for performing government administration activities. Usually, some significant cost savings in government operations are expected as its outcome.

It should be noted that e-governance is more than just a government website on the Internet. Besides technological aspects, more important are political, social, and economic aspects which determine e-governance.

6.3 E-business

Electronic business (e-business) refers to the processes and structures that define the relationship between governments and the markets; the processes and structures that define the relationship between governments and the private sector. At the same time, it includes the Business-to-Government relationship model which refers to those services consumed by entrepreneurs, businesses, and corporations, for a commercial purpose. These include filing statements of incorporation, obtaining business licenses, assistance with site locations, obtaining workforce information, and others (Fung, 2002).

7. PRINCIPLES OF E-GOVERNANCE

The Cudbury Report (1992) defined corporate governance as “the system by which organizations are directed and controlled”. It identified three basic principles of corporate governance which are also relevant to public sector entities, as they are to private sector entities. The principles are: openness, integrity, and accountability. IFAC Study (2001) adopted the same principles and made them the fundamental principles of governance in the public sector.

Openness is one of the fundamental principles required to ensure that stakeholders can have confidence in the decision-making processes and actions of public sector entities. It also helps with the general confidence in the management of public organizations, and in

the individuals within them. Openness is achieved through meaningful consultation with stakeholders and communication of full, accurate and clear information.

Integrity requires straightforward dealing and completeness. It is based upon honesty and objectivity, and high standards of propriety and probity in the stewardship of public funds and resources, and management of an entity's affairs. Integrity is dependent on the effectiveness of the control framework and on the personal standards and professionalism of the individuals within the entity. It is reflected both in the entity's decision-making procedures and in the quality of its financial and performance reporting.

Accountability is the process whereby public sector entities, and the individuals within them, are responsible for their decisions and actions, including their stewardship of public funds and all aspects of performance, and submit themselves to appropriate external scrutiny. It is achieved by all parties having a clear understanding of those responsibilities, and having clearly defined roles through a robust structure. In effect, accountability is the obligation to answer for a responsibility conferred (IFAC, 2001).

For Canada, principles of e-governance are very clear. Covert decision making is not appropriate. Canadians demand greater transparency, openness and accountability. These principles seem as imperatives, driven in part by disappointment with the failures of governments, by a genuine desire to be better informed about what governments are doing, and by the desire for a voice in shaping public policy decisions (Lynn & Sanders,

2004). The same principles are often found in other countries and their understandings of e-governance.

In 2002 the United Nations conducted a study (UN, 2002) of 190 member states. This represents the largest and most comprehensive study done so far regarding the global e-governance issues. Based on the survey results, the UN established five guiding principles of e-governance:

- Building services around citizens' choices
- Making government and its services more accessible
- Social inclusion
- Providing information responsibly
- Using IT and human resources effectively and efficiently.

Besides the United Nations, many other international organizations have studied e-governance. One of them is the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In one of its studies (OECD, 2002), it established a list of 10 recommended principles:

- Commitment – proclaim feasible goals and provide financial support
- Rights – assure access, privacy and confidentiality to all users
- Clarity – adopt measurement standards for electronic service delivery
- Time – provide long-term time frames and avoid artificial deadlines

- Objectivity – set criteria for network performance and user satisfaction
- Resources – hire skilled personnel to design, implement and operate facilities
- Co-ordination – use common look and feel, and document content control
- Accountability – be accountable for electronic service quality and quantity
- Evaluation – conduct annual e-government audits and performance reviews
- Active citizenship – encourage active use and incorporate suggested improvements.

European Union has established its own key principles of e-governance (UNDP, 2003).

They include:

- Universal access to information
- Openness and transparency
- Participation
- Equality
- Accountability
- Effectiveness (reduced transaction costs)
- Interoperability
- Coherence and quality
- Protection of privacy, consumer rights, and intellectual property rights.

The above mentioned principles set by the UN, OECD, and EU are very general. However, they offer some road signs for design and implementation of various e-governance initiatives and projects around developed and developing world.

8. DIMENSIONS OF E-GOVERNANCE

Basic principles of e-governance in the public sector, as elaborated in the previous chapter, are reflected also in four different dimensions of the e-governance of public sector entities, namely, standards of behavior; organizational structures and processes; control; and external reporting.

8.1 Standards of behavior

Standards of behavior are related directly to the ways the management exercises leadership in determining the values and standards, which define the culture of the organization and the behavior of everyone within it. More specifically, standards of behavior are directly related to:

a. Leadership

Members of governing bodies need to conduct themselves in accordance with high standards of behavior, as role models.

b. Codes of conduct

Public sector organizations need to adopt a formal code of conduct defining standards of behavior mandatory for all employees and members of the governing body – employees, managers, and governing board members. The codes of conduct should include parts dealing with:

- **Propriety** (care in safeguarding property, assets and confidential information).
- **Objectivity, integrity and honesty** (elimination of prejudice, bias, conflicts of interest).
- **Relationships** (including the ones outside the organization, as well as the outside ones. Both types of relationships should be helpful, courteous, reliable, confidential, honest, and open).

8.2 Organizational structures and processes

Principles related to organizational structures and process deal with the ways the top management is appointed and organized, how its responsibilities are defined, and how it is held accountable. These principles encompass:

- a. Statutory accountability** (establishment of effective arrangements for compliance with status and regulations, best practices achieved by other public organizations).
- b. Accountability for public money** (funds and resources need to be safeguarded, used economically, efficiently, effectively).

- c. Communication with stakeholders** (clear communication on its mission, roles, objectives, performance, appointments, commitment to openness and transparency).
- d. Roles and responsibilities** - need to be clearly defined and include the following:
 - Balance of power and authority
 - The Governing body
 - The Chairperson
 - Non-executive Governing body members
 - Executive management
 - Remuneration policy

4.3 Control

Properly put in place, a control dimension requires a set of tools and methods for supporting objectives, effectiveness and efficiency, compliance with applicable laws, regulations and internal policies.

- a. Risk management** (impact of risks associated with achieving the objectives; quantify potential liabilities and opportunities).
- b. Internal audit** (needs to be professional, operationally independent and objective).
- c. Audit committees** (independent of organization's executive management).

- d. Internal control** (a process designed to provide reasonable assurance for achieving objectives in effective and efficient operations, reliable reporting, compliance with laws and regulations).
- e. Budgeting** (integrated with accounting, financial reporting and evaluation).
- f. Financial management** (supports management in deployment of limited resources).
- g. Staff training** (quality of financial and other management is directly related to qualified staff).

4.4 External reporting

Top management needs to demonstrate its financial accountability for the stewardship of public money and its performance in the use of resources. It is usually done using the following means:

- a. Annual reporting** (needs to be timely, to include financial statements and its position, performance and its prospects).
- b. Use of appropriate accounting standards** (e.g., International Public Sector Accounting Standards - IPSAS).
- c. Performance measures** (accrual instead of cash accounting combined with non-monetary performance measurement: what is delivered - outputs, what it is costing - inputs, what is achieved - outputs).

- d. **External audit** (objective and professional relationship with the external auditors, usually through an audit committee).

9. EVOLUTION OF E-GOVERNANCE

E-governance means more than making a government website available on the Internet. There are two popular models for measuring progress towards e-governance and determining its actual development phase. One model was developed by the United Nations, while the other one was elaborated by the Gartner Group,⁶ a well-known consultancy organization.

The UN established five categories for measuring progress towards e-governance (UN, 2002). They are:

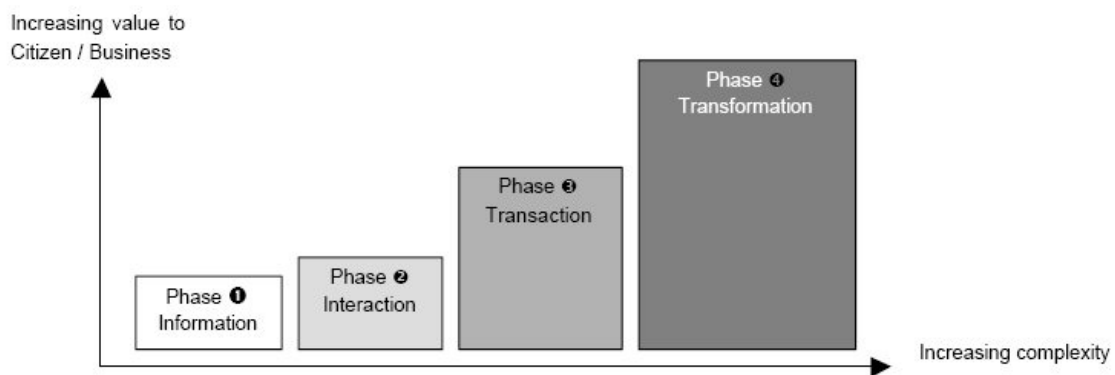
1. Emerging Web presence: one or a few websites offering static information
2. Enhanced Web presence: growing numbers of web pages offering dynamic information
3. Interactive Web presence: exchanges between users and governments (electronic forms)
4. Transactional Web presence: services such as purchases (licenses) and payments (taxes)
5. Fully integrated Web presence: combination of information, exchanges, and services.

⁶ <http://www.gartner.com/>

Gartner Group formulated a four-phase e-governance model. This e-governance model can serve as a reference for governments to position where a project fits in the overall evolution of an e-governance strategy. In most cases, governments start with the delivery of online information, but soon public demand and internal efficiency ask for more complex services. This change takes effect gradually with some services coming online earlier than other services. In some cases the public demand is the driving force; in other cases cost saving aspects for the government are leading.

E-Governance Maturity Model (Gartner)

Early 90's	Information	→	Presence
Mid 90's	Interaction	→	Intake process
Present	Transaction	→	Complete transaction
Future	Transformation	→	Integration and organizational changes



E-Governance Maturity Model (Gartner, 2000)

Phase 1: Information

During the *first phase* e-governance covers presence on the web, providing the general public with relevant information. The format of the first government websites is similar to that of a brochure or leaflet. The value to the public is that government information is publicly accessible; processes are described and thus become more transparent, which improves democracy and service. Internally the government can also disseminate information with static electronic means, such as the Intranet. This phase is all about information.

Phase2: Interaction

During the *second phase* the interaction between government and the public increases. A number of applications is offered so that citizens can ask questions via e-mail, use search engines to locate information, and are able to download necessary forms and documents. These are time-saving functions since some applications can be done online which previously required a visit to the government counter during opening hours. Internally government organizations use Local Area Networks (LAN), intranets and e-mail to communicate and exchange data. The final result is higher efficiency and effectiveness achieved because of online availability of various applications. However, citizens still have to go to the government office to finalize the transaction, by paying a fee, handing over evidence, or signing papers.

Phase 3: Transaction

Phase three increases the complexity of the technology. Complete transactions can be done without visiting the government office. Examples of online services are filing income tax, filing property tax, extending/renewal of licenses, visa and passports and online voting. Phase three is mainly complex because of legal, security and personalization issues (e.g., electronic signatures). On the business side the government is starting with e-procurement applications. Internal processes have to be redesigned to provide good service. Government needs to create new laws and legislation that will enable paperless transactions with legal certification. The bottom line is that now the complete process is online, including payments, digital signatures etc. This saves time, paper and money.

Phase 4: Transformation

The final, fourth phase is the transformation phase in which all information systems are integrated and the public can get all required services at one virtual counter. One single point of contact for all services is the ultimate goal. The complexity lies also on the internal side. This includes the necessity for major cultural change, re-engineering of processes, and redefinition of responsibilities within the government institution. Government employees in different departments have to work together in a smooth and seamless way. In this phase cost savings, efficiency and customer satisfaction are reaching highest possible levels.

This phase strives to achieve the following vision of e-governance:

- A single point of contact for constituent entities would provide an integrated platform for government services and an organization transparent to its citizens and businesses.
- Focus on 'virtual agencies' where government information is readily available to all allowing a seamless interface to respective agencies involved in the transactions.
- State-of-the-art internal information networks linking government employees in different agencies, and reliable extranets allowing seamless flow of information from the outside environment thereby facilitating collaborative decision making among government agencies, non-governmental-organizations (NGOs) and the public.

An underlying effort to setup and upgrade the following critical infrastructure facilities throughout these phases should be sustained by:

- Upgrading the government information infrastructure.
- Establishment of a certification authority and Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) encryption systems.
- Establishment of an electronic payment gateway, and reliable postal addresses for
- Residences and businesses (Al-Tawil, K.M. & Said, S. 2002).

Once a vision and priority sectors for e-governance are established, it is important to assess how prepared a society is for such a project. Assessing e-governance readiness requires examination of government itself institutional frameworks, human resources, available budgetary resources, inter-departmental communication flows, etc. National

infrastructure, economic health, education, information policies, private sector development and other issues are also factors of society's readiness. Even in developing countries where problems of low connectivity and human resource development (including low ICT literacy) are severe, using available creativity and careful planning can develop specific applications, services and information that can be delivered in a targeted, useful way to identifiable audiences (PCIP, 2002).

Reaching this transformation phase is a complex and long process. It requires well planned efforts, substantial investments, comprehensive training, as well as change of government service culture. Another problem associated with this phase is the methodology which can be used to determine that the phase has been reached. Some authors have devoted their work and research to defining the tools for detecting if the goals have been reached. Sun et al. (2006), used a literature review of the measurement indexes to come up with a topology based on three quality constructs which can be used for such purpose. They include:

- Measurement of system quality: It covers ease of use, ease of access, functionality, easy to learn, stability, processing efficiency, meeting user requirements, system reliability and system availability (Hamilton & Chervancy 1981).
- Measurement of information quality. It covers completeness of information output, data exchangeability, content completeness, information accuracy, understandability, usability, timeliness, conciseness and up-to-date (Swanson 1974).

- Measurement of service quality: It covers empathy, service attitude, communications skill, cordiality, understanding user's needs, trustworthy, timeliness, professionalism, and respecting users' needs and honoring a promise (Johnson et al. 1995).

Further in their study Sun et al. (2006) concluded that information quality is the most important factor, followed by the service quality and the system quality. Therefore, higher information quality increases user's reliance on the system and their satisfaction. This should have direct repercussions on designers and evaluators of all e-governance initiatives and systems.

A number of authors, while talking about the future of e-governance, talk about virtual organizations and communities. On the basis of a study of e-governance initiatives in the Netherlands, and a description of the information spaces which were created, Bekkers (2003) went a step further and created a typology of virtual organizations. This typology is based on two dimensions: the degree of formalization and the openness of the in- and exclusion process of virtual organization as an information space. A 2-by-2 typology has usually four types, but he found five types:

Virtual organization types related to e-government services and coordination type

Virtual organization	Federal	Concentric	Platform	Portal	Web
Dominant e-government service	Data transfer services, sometimes extended with transaction services	Data transfer services, sometimes extended with transaction services	Contact and participation services	Information and contact services, sometimes transaction	Contact and participation services
Dominant coordination mechanism	Exchange and disclosure of information in relation to a well defined goal	Processing and disclosure of information in relation to a well defined goal	Sharing of information and knowledge and communication in relation to an emergent goal	Exchange and disclosure of information; sometimes transaction in relation to a broader theme or target group	Sharing of information and knowledge and communication in relation to an emergent goal
Degree of formalization	Formalization and standardization of process and content	Formalization and standardization of process and content	Formalization of access, not of the exchange and communication process	Formalization of the linking and searching process, as well as the delivery formats of content	No formalization
In- and exclusion of parties	Regulation of in- and exclusion; restricted number	Regulation of in- and exclusion; restricted number	Regulation of in- and exclusion	No regulation	No regulation

Overview e-governance solutions			
	External: G2C	External: G2B	Internal: G2G
Phase Information 1 :	Local / Departmental / National information (mission statements and organisational structure Addresses, opening hours, employees, telephone numbers Laws, rules and regulations Petitions Government glossary News	Business information Addresses, opening hours, employees, telephone numbers Laws, rules and regulations	Knowledge base (static intranet) Knowledge management (LAN)
Phase Interaction 2 :	Downloading forms on websites Submitting forms Online help with filling in forms (permits, birth / death certificates) Intake processes for permits etc. E-mail Newsletters Discussion groups (e-democracy) Polls and questionnaires Personalised web pages Notification	Downloading forms on websites Submitting forms Online help with filling in forms (permits) Intake processes for permits etc. E-mail Notification	E-mail Interactive knowledge databases Complaint handling tools
Phase Transaction 3 :	License applications / renewals Renewing car tags, vehicle registration Personal accounts (mytax, myfines, mylicenses etc.) Payment of (property) taxes Payment of tickets and fines Paying utility bills Registering and voting online	License applications and renewals via website Payment of taxes Procurement	Inter-governmental transactions
Phase Transformation 4 :	Personalised website with integrated personal account for all services	Personalised website with integrated business account for all services	Database integration

Overview e-governance solutions for each phase

Moshtaq (2003) offered an interesting road map for developing e-governance on a national level. The road map consists of seven steps which depend on its target (e-Government, e-Citizen, or e-Business) have various perspectives and focus.

Steps	Elements of Road Map of e-Governance	Perspectives and focus		
		e-Government	e-Citizen	e-Business
1	Analysis of requirements of e-governance	Structure and process	Service requirements	Practices
	1.1 Current Capacity	Demand and Supply	Satisfaction	Interactions
	1.2 Tools and Techniques	Technology and adoption	Accessibility	Interface
	1.3 Learning	Pilot and demonstration	Trail use and impact	Rules and Procedure
2	Articulation visions and defining policy	Strategies and Actions	Perceived benefits	Growth & expansion
	2.1 e-Vision	Long term vision	Immediate solution	Opportunity in operation
	2.2 Strategies Plans, Policies	Inputs, process and outputs	Equity and justice	Fair practice
	2.3 Resources and Constrains	Capability and priority	Optimum use	Sharing and outsourcing
3	Developing core architecture	Networked system	Any where access	Participation
	3.1 Business process Model	Core –periphery system	Involvements	Improvements
	3.2 Integrated Framework	Reduce duplication	Easy to access	Attachments
	3.2 Interfacing	Linked and coordinated	Access from anywhere	Equal access points
4	Building infrastructure (Technology)	Strong control over process	Enhancement	Partnerships
	4.1 Data and Security	Legacy and operations	Privacy and security	Management solutions
	4.2 Applications	Portable and replicable	User-friendly and easy	Providing solutions
	4.3 Network	LAN, WAN and Internet	Kiosks and access point	Operate the system
5	Integrated services and Value chain	Integration	Public Readiness	Partner management
6	Mobilizing resources for implementation	Small and limited project	Wider benefits	Business Transformation
7	Evaluating the program (Risk and Performance management)	Portfolio management	High availability	Dependability

Elements of road map of e-governance

10. CANADA AND E-GOVERNANCE

Canadian view on electronic government is well expressed by Mel Cappe (2001), Head of the Public Service, in the Eight Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada. According to him, the e-Government is not just “electronic government”. It is “enabled government” – government that delivers different and better programs and services to Canadians. E-Government is about people: new skill sets, mindsets and leadership approaches. It will transform how public servants work, relate to each other, do business, and engage citizens and other partners.

At the same time, there is a more and more demanding citizenry in Canada (Nevitte, 2000). All levels of government in Canada are facing growing demands for more effective and responsive programs and services. Citizens expect a good service from governments at all levels, municipal, provincial/territorial, and federal. Canadian perspective brings into focus another important element, namely a fact that the quality of public service has a significant impact on citizens’ confidence in government (Government On-Line Advisory Panel Report, 2002). Citizens want existing institutions – Parliament, legislatures and their committees, as well as the public service – to provide opportunities for people to participate in public discourse on policy issues (MacKinnon, 2003).

Canada regards e-governance as a very complex process. The main process requirements are illustrated in the Figure bellow (Turner, 2002).



Canadian e-governance requirements

On the practical – implementation side, Canada has achieved great results in implementing the e-governance. For the last five years Canada was ranked first of 22 countries in Accenture’s global e-government survey (Accenture, 2005). The study shows that, while most governments around the globe are still struggling to meet citizens’ expectations for better service despite huge investments in e-services, Canada is among the few countries that have effectively managed to achieve significant service improvements through e-government. "Canada continues to set the bar in government service delivery for the rest of the world", said Alden Cuddihey, responsible for Accenture’s e-government practice in Canada. Despite this performance, Canada still has room for improvement: "only 41 per cent of Canadians felt that government services and departments were effective at working together", Accenture’s report noted.

With 1.1 billion interactions annually, Canadian Government On-Line portal⁷ is a key channel for the delivery of public services in the country. Electronic transactions represent almost a third of all transactions between the federal government and citizens (GOL, 2006).

Canadians are among the world's most enthusiastic Internet users, which can help explain the high rates of take-up of the country's online public services. According to a 2004-2005 EKOS⁸ survey on trends in Internet usage and access, 78% of Canadians had used the Internet in the past three months, 72% had Internet access at home, and Canadian households with high-speed Internet access outnumbered those with dial-up access. In addition, the survey revealed that:

- 71% of Internet users have used a federal government website in the past 12 months, and 31% said their most recent contact with federal government was via the Internet.
- 81% of Canadian e-government users were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the services.
- 77% of Canadians having recent contact with the federal government said that accessing the Internet service was easy, compared to 67% across all delivery channels.

⁷ <http://www.gol-ged.gc.ca>

⁸ <http://www.ekos.com>

- 76% of current Internet users believed the Internet has made it easier to find information about government programs and services.
- 90% of Canadian Internet users and 38% of non-users expected to use the Internet to deal with government in the future, while 42% of the population believed they would conduct most of their transactions with the federal government online in the next five years.

11. CONCLUSIONS

To be involved in defining the future of democracy, governance and public work at the dawn of the information-age is an incredible opportunity and responsibility. With the intelligent and effective applications of ICT, combined with democratic intent, we can make governments more responsive, provide communication with citizens to effectively meet public challenges, and ultimately, build a more sustainable future for the benefit of the whole of society and the world in which we live. It seems that e-governance can play a crucial role towards this end.

Although the demand for e-governance came from the need to achieve greater operational efficiency, and from a need to provide a better response to citizen demands for improved public services, e-governance is being related more and more to democracy than to administrative reforms. Finally, it should be noted that Internet is not a panacea for solving all government and governance problems, but it offers a new communication

channels for bridging the gap between the government and its citizens offering a possibility for an interactive dialogue.

The overwhelming impression of e-governance is that the current state of use of information technologies and Internet in particular has by no means caused a democratic revolution yet. However, there are signs that progress has been made on a small scale, particularly in the area of information sharing and enhanced transparency within political processes. There are also examples of successful public debates and academic research regarding the Internet and the information technology in general and their undoubtedly large potential for improving democracy and the lives of ordinary citizens.

E-governance, combined with democratic intent, can make governments more responsive. Moreover, it can offer a connection with its citizens in order to effectively meet various development challenges, and ultimately, it tends to build a more sustainable future for the benefit of the whole of society and the world in which we live

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