

*Supply*

Finally, service standards will include simple, easy to use complaint mechanisms so Canadians have an effective avenue of redress if they are not satisfied with the service they are receiving.

Service standards should be developed in consultation with the program's clients and employees. The government believes consultation with Canadians is an important step in restoring faith in federal institutions. To this end we are determined to develop an effective consultation process.

By talking to the people who actually use or deliver the service, government managers get a better idea of what is most important to their clients. When asked clients generally offer worthwhile suggestions on how the service could be improved. By finding out what Canadians value, government managers can concentrate their energies and efforts where the return in terms of increased client satisfaction is the greatest. They can use the information to eliminate or reduce services that no longer meet the needs of today's clients.

Service standards are real. Mr. Speaker, when you filed your income taxes this year you will have noticed in the guide the declaration of taxpayers' rights. This is not new. What was new was a statement by the department that even at the height of income tax processing in April and May returns can normally be processed and cheques or assessments returned within four weeks. This gives Canadians a very concrete idea of what they can expect.

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Enquiries Canada, part of the Canada Communication Group, has a number of service standards in place. For example, phone calls are answered, with a bilingual greeting I might add, in three rings or 16 seconds 85 per cent of the time. Any inquiry requiring further research is answered by the research team within 24 hours and the research officers do the callbacks to the clients themselves.

Correspondence received by Enquiries Canada is answered within 48 hours.

As we can see, this is a real and concrete description of the services that are being offered, something Canadians can monitor to see if the organizations are continuing to meet these targets.

The inspections branch of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has developed draft standards that are based on consultation with clients and staff. One set deals with how the department will handle complaints. Complaints involving health and safety of fish products will be investigated immediately. Trade complaints or complaints involving quality or consumer fraud will be investigated within three working days.

This is an example of how the department is becoming more sensitive to the service needs of its clients.

My final example of the service standards comes from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The department has established a single access food labelling service for the Canadian food industry. The service consolidated food labelling activities involving the former departments of consumer and corporate affairs and agriculture under four different pieces of legislation. The new service will complete a label assessment within 10 working days.

These are all examples where federal departments and agencies have clearly spelled out for Canadians the level of service they can expect to receive. We can monitor their performance and see if they are meeting their targets. We can discuss their targets with them. For the first time we will know what response we should expect from a government department or agency.

Of course, developing service standards is only one step in more efficiently delivering effective and affordable programs. One way to really improve the services that Canadians are receiving is to eliminate the stovepipe mentality resulting from separate government departments. Based on clients' perspective, related services from a number of departments and agencies can be provided in one location. That is what the Canada Business Service Centre concept is all about, one stop shopping for the business client.

CBSCs provide a comprehensive access point for information, assistance and referrals on all federal programs and services to business.

In the last budget this government made a commitment to open at least one centre in a major urban area in each province this year. Furthermore, we are working with the provinces and the private sector to develop a single access point for federal, provincial and community-based programs and services of interest to business clients.

Clients have access to CBSC services by telephone and facsimile transmission, in person and in future electronically from home or business. Aside from some start-up funds to offset technology investment, CBSCs are being established within existing operating resources.

Since these estimates were tabled on February 24 the Canada-B.C. Business Service Centre has officially opened, this in addition to three CBSCs in Halifax, Edmonton and Winnipeg which have been up and running for some time. Four new centres will open in the early summer in Montreal, Fredericton, St. John's and Charlottetown. Most of these will operate in conjunction with provincial services and one will even have the participation of the local chamber of commerce. The remaining centres will open in the early fall.

Harmonizing federal and provincial services in one location is a giant step forward. However, it is even more important to determine that the programs and services that we are delivering are still relevant to the needs of today's Canadians. To that end, the budget announced a series of program reviews. The most