

It's about purchasing cards

In April, Grand & Toy, using Visa Canada's enhanced data services, made more detailed information possible for its government clients. Without a doubt, purchasing cards, while making a purchaser's life easier, require close monitoring by managers. More information about what and how much is being purchased, particularly office supplies – the largest and most frequent expense – is valuable to ensure that the card is being used as intended and that costs are in line with budgets. Plus this detailed information could help in the negotiation of rates from suppliers. ❦

Government fuels green energy

The Ontario government has invested \$3.4 million in a partnership that is developing technology to transform wood residue from municipal landfills, sawmills and local industry into a bio-oil, which can be used to create electricity and several other products. The partners, Ensyn Technologies, the Renfrew Industrial Commission and Opeongo Forestry Service, plan to use the money for the demonstration phase of the five-year project. As well, Ontario has invested in another break-through technology – an anaerobic digestion reactor and generator that speeds up the decomposition of livestock waste creating a bio-gas, which can then be used as fuel. Partners in the initiative include, among others, Ontario Power Generation, the John Pittens Family Farm, the Law Family Farm and the Culham Family Farm.

The Government of Canada invested nearly \$10 million to assist Canadian firm, Electrovaya with its research program in battery technology. Battery power, offering zero emissions, is an alternative to carbon based fuels to power vehicles. ❦

Healthier info at DND

Lockheed Martin Canada and its partners, DINMAR Consulting, Purkinje Inc., SCC Soft Computer Consultants Inc, Calculus Informatique and ADSTRA Systems Inc., were recently awarded a major contract (up to \$56 million over 10 years) to provide the Department of National Defence with a health care information system for military personnel. The new system will integrate several individual systems currently used to maintain personnel records. The first phase of the contract (worth \$17 million) runs over 14 months with options in place for three more phases in the next 10 years. ❦

Toronto Computer Leasing Inquiry

The Ongoing Toronto Computer Leasing Inquiry (TCLI) was established in February 2002 to examine every aspect of the leasing contract between the City of Toronto and MFP Leasing regarding computers, related software and licensing. City Council had approved leasing arrangements totaling \$43 million but is on the hook for over \$80 million.

The following October, Toronto City Council expanded the TCLI inquiry creating a separate judicial inquiry, the Toronto External Contracts Inquiry (TECI), to investigate the development and implemen-

tation of the tax system (known as TMACS) for the then City of North York, the subsequent decision to use TMACS by the amalgamated City of Toronto and the hiring of Ball HSU & Associates as consultants to the City.

The inquiry (www.torontoenquiry.ca) covers several aspects of the procurement process: determination of need, contract tendering, evaluation, award and overall management of the contract including proper oversight of expense and payment procedures.

One expects that the inquiry will lead to a review of the system of checks and balances already in place at the City of Toronto, and possibly to the code of ethics that city staff operate under in their dealings with elected officials and suppliers. ❦

Losing suppliers obtain winning proposals

The recent decision by the Federal Court of Canada in *Promaxis Systems Inc. v. Minister of Public Works and Government Services (Canada)* [2002], F.C.J. No. 1204 to allow competitors to learn what is contained in the winning proposal creates a precedent for governments across the country when dealing with requests under freedom of information statutes. ❦

Citizens First

Citizens First is a series of biennial studies that research how Canadians perceive the services provided by all three levels of government provide. The original study in 1998 found that – assessing timeliness, staff knowledge/competency, treatment by staff and the results obtained – we rated the quality of government service higher than private sector services. Difficulties usually occurred in technical areas – busy phones, voice mail or the directory listings, or when several government offices needed to be contacted around one single life event, i.e. a birth.

Citizens First 2000 confirmed those findings and found that Canadians perceived government websites to be comparable to private sector websites in ease of navigation, visual appeal, information and speed.

The recently released, *Citizens First 3*, reveals that the quality of government service influences citizens' confidence in government; citizens frequently access more than one channel (telephone, kiosk, counter or Internet); citizens have increased expectations of government service levels in comparison to the private sector; and there are still challenges in telephone delivery, timeliness of service and access. More information can be found at <http://iccs-isac.org>. ❦

Government gets help with truck specs

In late March, Ontario-based International Truck and Engine Corporation launched a website (www.InternationalDelivers.com/government) specifically to assist its government customers. The site, developed in response to customer comments, is populated with information for the "spec" process including a checklist of questions to have ready before visiting a dealer, guides to the individual specs of each part of the truck and information on how to write a spec bid. ❦