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Building the world's most connected city



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- Emergency Services**
- Government Services**
- Public Works Services**
- Transportation Services**
- Utilities Services**

FreeNet

SmartCapital.ca



The Ottawa Centre for Research & Innovation's SmartCapital.ca initiative brings technology into the service of the community, helping to foster on-line communities, collaboration and civic participation and providing a wealth of applications and services free of charge to all city residents.

INSID

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Building the world's most connected city

SmartCapital puts Ottawa's impressive infrastructure in the hands of the community

By Eppo Maertens
Citizen advertising features

For the last five years, the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI) has been spearheading an initiative to put Ottawa's wired infrastructure into the hands of the community, making the nation's capital one of the most connected cities in the world.

Today, the centre delivers on that promise.

When mayor Bob Chiarelli and representatives from OCRI and the federal and provincial governments meet this morning to officially launch SmartCapital, they'll demonstrate how information technology can be used by city residents to do everything from getting their voices heard at city council to tapping into resources for entrepreneurs and linking up to a wide array of services offered by local government, businesses and institutions.

"SmartCapital puts the latest technology into the hands of each and every citizen," says Mr. Chiarelli. "Ottawa has a well deserved reputation as being a major centre for technological innovation. SmartCapital demonstrates how innovation can help foster a stronger community."

SmartCapital involves a suite of on-line services that are accessible free of charge to all Ottawa residents. These services facilitate interaction between and among governments, businesses and citizens and improve the efficiency of on-line transactions and services. At the same time, they provide city residents with a one-stop source of information, as well as a forum for on-line discussion and collaboration.

"OCRI's mandate is to determine how technology can be used to improve the quality of life and productivity within our community," explains SmartCapital Executive Director Paul Wilker. "We see the Internet as an important tool that allows us to do that."

Mr. Wilker points to SmartCapital's government-services portal as an example. The portal allows citizens to access council meetings and their elected representatives through Web casting and video conferencing, and have input into the city's budget and new Official Plan. As well, residents are able to access bilingual information and services and link up to federal and provincial government sites.

"If information is the currency of the new economy," says Mr. Wilker, "SmartCapital is like a virtual ATM."

He explains that SmartLibrary, part of the SmartCapital suite of services, allows users to search for books, magazines, videos, music and other materials from five area libraries via a single search engine. People who are thinking about starting a new business or growing an existing one can access the resources of Ottawa's Entrepreneurship Centre.

"Whether you're launching a high tech start-up company or planning to open a pizza parlour, you'll find a wealth of information and applications to help you get started," says Mr. Wilker.

Mr. Wilker goes on to explain that the SmartCapital project is making sure these services are accessible to everyone in the city. As part of the initiative, SmartSites make Internet-ready computers available at 150 locations around the city: at schools, municipal offices, libraries and communities centres.

Meanwhile, free software tools let civic, business and other groups build and administer on-line communities. As well as being able to post information, members of these "virtual" communities can share files and images, schedule events and meetings, and communicate via instant messaging.

National Capital FreeNet, a partner in the SmartCapital initiative, provides donation based Internet access to area residents. The service has more than 10,000 subscribers and, through its partnership with SmartCapital, is now providing free access to Microsoft Office and Corel WordPerfect suites.

"National Capital FreeNet provides an impressive array of on-line applications that go far beyond what's available in other cities," says Mr. Wilker.

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2 E-democracy: changing the way politicians consult with their constituents



5 Entrepreneurship online: destination smart business



7 Altogether OTTAWA: creating community online

The world's most connected city

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Ottawa's major educational institutions are also on board with the SmartCapital initiative, explains Mr. Wilbur. For example, Algonquin College provides information on a range of on-line courses. EduNET links students at the University of Ottawa, Carleton University and Algonquin College to information on housing, exchanging textbooks, obtaining tutors and sharing notes.

"EduNET is an example of one of the sites developed through the SmartCapital project that is creating a more efficient means of gathering information and doing business on-line," says Mr. Wilbur.

Mr. Wilbur explains that the idea behind SmartCapital goes back to 1997 when OCRI set out to turn Ottawa into a "smart" city where information technology would be applied in new ways to empower residents and institutions, provide a competitive edge to businesses and improve the quality of life for all citizens. The centre invited area residents to share their ideas. As a result of those consultations, OCRI developed a list of 20 core applications that, today, serve as the foundation for the SmartCapital initiative.

In May 2000, the project got a boost when the federal government selected Ottawa as one of 12 communities across Canada to participate in the Smart Communities Demonstration Program. Industry Canada committed \$4.5 million over three years towards the development of SmartCapital. Additional support comes from 60 local companies that provided technical, marketing, printing and other support, including financial backing that brought the project's overall budget to \$12 million.

Today, 75 per cent of Ottawa residents are connected to the Internet. Meanwhile, 60 per cent of the urban area has access to broadband DSL and cable-modem services. SmartCapital has put that infrastructure in the service of the city's residents, bringing all 15 core applications on-line through a single, comprehensive service.

Mr. Wilbur says cities that are well-connected and well-served have a distinct competitive advantage. But they're also places where people want to live.

"Connectivity is a new standard," says Mr. Wilbur. "Like having reliable, clean water, affordable and sustainable energy sources of employment, and quality educational and cultural institutions, it's what residents of modern metropolitan centres have come to expect from their municipalities. Thanks to SmartCapital, we've there."