

ICA 37th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

OPENING ADDRESS BY CHAIR

JOHN L. RIDDLE

Canada

Dear Colleagues:

It is my great pleasure to open this 37th Annual Conference of the International Council for Information Technology in Government Administration (ICA) and to welcome the 25 countries or jurisdictions and 70-75 representatives who will participate in our deliberations over the next three days.

Let me preface my opening remarks by reinforcing the message from Martha Dorris of a minute ago, how grateful we are to the Republic of Estonia and particularly the efforts of Arvo Ott and his associates in hosting this Conference. As demonstrated by last evening's welcoming and sumptuous opening reception, every effort has been made to ensure that delegates and partners are made to feel welcome and that our meetings/discussions will be productive.

Please join me in thanking our hosts the government and the people of Estonia.

Each year the ICA Board/Programme Committee struggles to identify an overarching theme that is sufficiently anticipatory and broad as to capture interest, but not so vague or ephemeral that there is no real content, no real "on the ground" projects and progress. Once again, under the capable direction of Martha Dorris, USA and Chair, Programme Committee and with the help of many colleagues in this room, this balance between vision and reality has been achieved.

The theme "Real-time Government: Collaboration at the next level" encompasses both the destination and the means. We cannot get to E-Government or joined-up government without collaboration.

Our agenda is not technology - our agenda is building a better world. Our agenda is about reaching across borders, national jurisdictions - yes using technology - but for the betterment of our fellow citizens and ultimately all mankind. We are in the vanguard of public servants "sans frontieres".

This Conference theme furthers our understanding of how small and large steps either knitted together or simply identified and held up to public scrutiny for peer review - make us believe it is possible to change the world. As an international association, this must be our conviction.

As we think about Real-time Government - 24 hour x 7 days, self-help, anywhere, consistent and accurate information using multiple channels (portals, kiosks, fax, over the counter, etc), we must also think about broader collaborative strategies. Thus, our agenda is divided into major themes, which focus our attention on both the opportunities but also the challenges of achieving this goal... Specifically, we will address enterprise architecture, integrated and interoperable

services, the double edged dilemma of security and privacy, the information management agenda, the role of standards such as XML, client service standards, inter-jurisdictional governance issues and so forth.

In effect, we have a marvellous opportunity in the next three days of learning from each other, questioning basic assumptions, testing conclusions and constructively probing the experiences of many countries.

It is my view that the citizens of our respective countries will make the following demands of their public servants.

- High service expectations – impatience for what they see in either the private sector or in other jurisdictions
- Efficiencies – yes citizens want better/faster etc... – but they have not forgotten ROI ...where is the pay-off?
- Transparency – public accountability (performance measurement) to our political leaders and ultimately citizens
- Comprehensive – integrated services, across programs, across jurisdictions, across national boundaries – that is why we have focussed on collaboration.

In some respects, these imperatives – high service expectations, efficiency, transparency and comprehensiveness – are not new. But “comprehensiveness” has taken on greater urgency, and importance. We must think, plan and deliver across boundaries, (for example, the Estonian IT in Public Administration Report has an entire section on International Cooperative and Development); municipal, provincial/state, national and country. Through collaboration, in such fora as ICA, integrated service is, and will, become a reality.

Let me conclude by again thanking our host – the government and people of Estonia and the ICA Board and Programme Committee for providing a wonderful location/venue and a stimulating conference agenda.

To each of you in the room whether this is your first conference or your 37th, welcome! (Estonian – TERVETULOJA TALLINNA. We need your active participation so that you can honestly say by Thursday night – you have had the “ICA Experience”. Thank you.