

Smart Communities: The Key to Canada's Economic and Social Growth
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Smart Communities The Key to Canada's Economic and Social Growth

**Conference
Get Smart - Economic Development
Libraries & Smart Communities**

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Overview

- Definition of Smart Communities
- The Smart Communities movement
- The impact on people and the economy
- Content and technology
- What makes Toronto Smart!

Where Are We Now?

We are at the point of convergence between the human spirit and the fruits of 35 years of technological innovation. The promise of technology started long ago - more leisure time, less paper. It started with the first widespread use of computers in the 1960s and the subsequent development of memory, microchips, processing and networks. Now, it's all about how we use technology. It's about what is contained on our networks and in our databanks. The promises are about to be kept.

What is a Smart Community?

"Smart Communities are towns and cities that use information and communication technologies in new and innovative ways to empower their residents, institutions, and region as a whole. Smart communities make the most of the opportunities that new technologies can afford - for example, in the areas of better health care delivery, better education and training, and growing businesses - to help them more effectively compete in the future economy. Canada needs these communities to drive the use of technology for the benefit of all."

Industry Canada

"A community that has made a conscious effort to employ information technology to transform a major portion of its region. This transformation is beneficial to the community and attracts local participation and cooperation among the community, government, industry, and education."

World Foundation for Smart Communities

"A geographical area ranging in size from a neighbourhood to a multi-county region whose residents, organizations, and governing institutions are using information technology to transform

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their region in significant, even fundamental ways."

California's "Smart Communities"

"Smart Communities are communities that are driven by content, not technology, and where there is a distinction between information and knowledge."

Mark Deacon, President, SMART Toronto

The Smart Communities Movement

- Singapore has launched its IT2000 initiative, also known as the **Intelligent Island Plan**.
- Japan is building an electronic future called **Technopolis**, or **Teletopia**.
- France, as early as 1976, initiated a plan called **Telematique**, an aggressive effort to place personal computers on every desktop and in every home in the country.
- Stockholm, Seattle, and Sacramento, for instance, have constructed large-scale **public-access networks** that residents can use to obtain information about government activities, community events, and critical social services like disaster preparedness, child abuse prevention, and literacy education.
- The university town of **Blacksburg, Virginia**, has transformed itself into an electronic village, in which the majority of the town's businesses and residents are connected to the local data network.

The Smart Communities Movement - Canada

Connecting Canadians

"Smart Communities" is one of six pillars of Canada's Connectedness Agenda.

- Canada On-line
- **Smart Communities**
- Canadian Content
- E-commerce
- Governments online
- Connecting Canada to the World

Canada's SchoolNet

Established in 1993, SchoolNet is a partnership with provincial and territorial ministries of education, library authorities, education and library associations and the private sector. Industry Canada's SchoolNet has successfully made Canada the first nation in the world to connect its schools and libraries to the Information Highway.

Canada's Panel of Smart Communities

In June 1998, Jean Chrétien - Canada's Prime Minister - announced the creation of a panel of Smart Communities. One of the panel's mandates is to create a world-class Smart community in each province, one in the North, and one in the Aboriginal community. The project is budgeted for \$60 million over 3 years.

Benefits

Why all the fuss? Why are governments reacting? Why is there so much interest?

There are tremendous social and economic benefits that result directly from being a Smart Community.

The New Economy

Social Benefits

- Quality of life issues are gaining importance
 - Aided by technology
 - Directly related to economic growth
- Social service delivery
 - e.g. Access for Success (<http://www.a4s.org>) is an organization that provides online services to non-profit groups in the Greater Toronto Area that offer employment, professional development, or community economic development.
- Culture
- Education and training

The Virtual Reference Library

Part of the Toronto Public Library, the Virtual Reference Library is a gateway to information. It delivers reference and research information, selects Internet sites with good knowledge bases, and indexes and classifies Internet resources.

The library relied on people to visit. Today, the Virtual Reference Library aims to bring information to the desktops, 24-7, targeted to students, business, SOHOs (small office, home office), and the community.

The virtual reference library brings information to the desktop, e.g.:

- Health
- Business
- Immigration and Citizenship

Librarians know the difference between information and knowledge. They are the ultimate "search engine" and a key component of a smart community. For the past decade, we have been over promoting the modern mailroom staff. Technology is just a way of delivering information, yet we have placed the practitioners of technology into exalted positions. We have let technology reign over content.

Examples of Content and Technology in Toronto

- Financial Services
- Content Creators
 - Animation
 - Internet
 - Film and television
- Manufacturing
- Biotech
- Education
 - Distance learning
 - Online learning
 - Virtual library
- Municipal services
 - Connect@Toronto

What Makes Toronto Smart

Source: the SMART Toronto/Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance (GTMA) study on the

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information technology and telecommunications industry.

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- The surrounding area's 8 universities and 14 colleges.
- A highly advanced communications infrastructure and one of the most "fibre-rich" networks in the world.
- More than 1,500 call centres that employ around 90,000 people.
- 4 major wireline and 4 major wireless service providers - lowest telecom costs in North America.
- Consumers and businesses who are extremely "techno-savy".
- The most R&D intensive province in Canada conducting more than 25% of all R&D in the IT&T industry.
- More than 500 IT&T companies and more than 15,000 IT&T employees performing R&D in the GTA, making it one of the top 5 R&D centres in North America.
- 75% of the IT&T companies listed in the Fortune 1000 have executive offices in the GTA, providing the area with a large executive talent pool.



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- Consistently identified as one of the top cities in the world in terms of quality of life, multiculturalism, public safety, efficient transit, and educated workforce, etc.
- Continues to remain cost effective versus its U.S. and Global counterparts and is rated as one of the least expensive metropolitan centres in North America.
- Location of choice for corporate headquarters providing an abundance of executives, industry leaders and decision makers.

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Conclusions

It's not about technology. It's about how we use technology and how we can marry content and technology to address the specific needs of specific audiences. The future, even ten years from now, will force you to deal with concepts and practices that you and I can't begin to imagine today. Focusing on ideas and content, not technology, is smart!

Favourite Websites

Smart Communities: The Key to Canada's Economic and Social Growth

SMART Toronto	http://www.sto.org
Access for Success	http://www.a4s.org
Toronto New Media Trainers Alliance	http://www.nmt.org
Toronto New Media Works	http://www.tnmw.on.ca
Industry Canada Report on Smart Communities	http://smartcommunities.ic.gc.ca
MultiMediator	http://www.multimediator.com
The Greater Toronto Area	http://www.greater.toronto.on.ca
World Foundation of Smart Communities	http://www.smartcommunities.org