



For Immediate Release

Canada Has the Best Electric and Gas Web Sites in the World, and Hydro-Québec Has the Best Site Overall, According to E Source Study

BOULDER, Colo., June 2004— Canadian utility customers are fortunate to be served by the best electric and gas web sites in the world according to an independent comprehensive review of over 70 international web sites conducted by E Source. Furthermore, the residents of Québec province have access to the overall best site provided by Hydro-Québec, www.hydroquebec.ca/en.

Elsewhere in Canada, the web sites of Hydro One, Gaz Métro, Hydro Ottawa, and Newfoundland Power all found a place in the top-30 web sites in the world. This top-30 list also includes sites from France, Australia, Hong Kong, Belgium, the UK, the Republic of Ireland, and the U.S.

Following an earlier review of U.S. web sites, E Source visited the English-language web sites of the largest electric and gas utilities throughout the rest of the world. Each web site was assessed from the point of view of the customer. The review examined the functions supported and the ease-of-use for the services offered by each web site.

The research explored more than just the “overall web site”—it examined individual web pages, especially features and functions offering online services to customers. E Source has searched for and assessed over 3,300 electric and gas web pages. Each review took an average of 20 minutes to complete, making this the most comprehensive benchmark data for electric and gas web sites in the world.

“This survey pays special attention to the ease of finding and using the features offered on electric and gas web sites,” said Andrew Heath, director of the *E Source E-Business Service*. He added that “customers in the developed world have at last started to use the online services offered by their utility—especially for simple transactions such as checking their account balance or making a payment. The electric and gas companies with good-quality web sites are well positioned to respond to this increase in demand for online services from their customers. Done well, they receive the cost savings benefits associated with moving interactions to the Internet, as well as improving their customer satisfaction ratings by providing online services their customers want to use.”

“We were surprised to see that many of the web sites within a single country or region were often clustered together within our ratings,” observed Florence Connally, an E Source senior research associate. “It looks like some companies spend all their time comparing their web sites to others in their region but fail to seek out best practice from elsewhere in the world.”

Around the world there is a marked difference between the best in class and the also-rans—in terms of both the functions supported and the usability of the functions. On average, electric and gas web sites earned ratings of “Poor” to “Moderate” when examined from a customer’s point of view, and on average they supported only two-thirds of the functions customers would be interested in using. These results are consistent with previous E Source research showing that electric and gas web sites perform poorly when customers are asked to compare them to the web sites of financial providers or retailers.

The survey was completed in 2003 and 2004. Quality-control procedures were used to ensure that the potentially subjective measure “ease of use” was applied consistently across reviewers and throughout the survey period. Countries included in the review were Australia, Belgium, Canada, Caribbean countries, France, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom. Data for U.S. companies are based on the most recent E Source review—all U.S. sites were reviewed in 2002 or more recently.

About E Source

Headquartered in Boulder, CO, E Source is a leading research and information services organization, providing member organizations with unbiased, independent analysis of retail energy markets, services, and technologies. Additional information is available at www.esource.com.

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