

# Y2K: Region Readies For Bug-out

## Amita, feds not taking any chances

THE FEDERAL government may be well on its way to squashing its Y2K bugs, but Amita Corp. is still taking on the role of exterminator for the feds.

Amita Corp. specializes in large-scale project offices, said Y2K specialist Ward Smith, and Y2K-preparedness has become a high priority for the feds.

The Canadian Treasury Board's Year 2000 Information website (<http://www.info2000.gc.ca>), indicates federal government departments were 84% Y2K-ready as of January.

"Now, they're getting into the testing," says Amita's government business sector director Randy Wong, "and the building of contingency plans in case they've overlooked something, or some supplier they're depending on doesn't do his share of the work."

Amita provides two main business services related to Y2K.

The first is applications development. Extensive testing is always done on new applications, but now it includes Y2K-compliance.

"In some cases, we have to provide some level of certification," Wong says. "We say, 'These are the date field checks we've done, and they're verified and these are the results we got.' But, like any other responsible company, we won't come out and say, 'It's guaranteed Y2K-compliant.'"

"Once it gets over to the client's end, there are changes, or somebody in the department has done something a little different. We can't be held responsible for that. But we do the best we can."

The other service is office support.

It's a big applications maintenance job. Amita sets up the deliverables, the test plan, the budget-

tracking and whatever else the project requires.

"We are overseeing the actual projects that are going on in the department that are Y2K-related," says Smith. "They may be application repair, they may be replacing infrastructure, they may be testing of various components. We make sure that the money is being spent properly on year-2000 issues."

"We are helping to develop information technology contingency plans."

Amita is working on Department of Foreign Affairs Y2K issues. Foreign Affairs' goal, and Amita's, is keeping Canadian missions abroad up and running through the year 2000.

Wong says the issues are crucial for ensuring systems are running as well as planning for resuming business after a crisis.

"You have to balance the operation with the risk," he says. "You have to look at how much redundancy you've built into the plan. If that system fails, or that process fails, or that mission is closed, what's the back-up plan? If that back-up plan doesn't work, what's the next level of redundancy?"

"If you've done a good job, and worked it through down to the worst-case scenario where nothing works, you'll have an effective communications plan."

Real-time clocks (RTCs), embedded in hardware and software, keep time whether or not a system is on. Many were coded with a two-number date capability — 1999 registers only as "99" and the RTC assumes it's 1999.

When RTCs roll over to 2000, non-compliant RTCs will register "00," and assume the year is 1900. This assumption is the root of the Y2K problem.

New Zealand and Australia will be the first two technologically-advanced countries to experience the



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**AMITA CORP.'S** Y2K specialist Ward Smith (left) and Randy Wong, director of the company's Government Business Centre, are hard at work getting the federal government Y2K-ready.

real-time roll-over to 2000.

Canada will be looking to its missions in the Far East and across Asia and Europe for information about Y2K problems as New Year's Day rolls west toward Canada's east coast.

If that worst-case scenario were to happen, "we're going to have indications of the Y2K-type of problems about 18 hours before they actually get here to Ottawa," says Smith.

"Foreign Affairs has actually put in a pretty comprehensive satellite phone system," Wong says. "Just in case."

Wong feels a major issue for the federal government's Y2K-planning is policy.

He cites the example of a foreign mission in Africa, where short-term contingency plans are universal.

Since the power grid goes down on a regular basis, that mission might have a small electrical generator.

But the possibility exists that the mission might be without power for a long period of time.

"The supply of big truck generators is going to get tight," says Wong.

"Plus, you have to get it down

there. Can the government procurement machine get the procurement in place, buy the generator, and get it there this summer, as opposed to starting in November, when you can't find them?"

The answer is yes.

The federal government's Mission-Critical Systems Contract enables necessary services and products to be secured and delivered within as little as 72 hours.

Amita Corp. and the federal government are certain they have things very much in hand to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.