

September 11, 2007

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## Businesses can now pay their taxes online

*Can review up to two years of transactions*

By Martin Cash

It is a rare occasion when both small business advocates and provincial tax collectors are cheering for the same thing.

That was the case this week when the finance minister unveiled a new online provincial tax-payment system.

The availability of such a service has been near the top of the wish list of both the members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) and the members of the province's tax department.

"This is a big step in the right direction in ways to simplify business," said Shannon Martin, Manitoba vice-president of the CFIB. "When we asked our members what sort of administrative changes would promote compliance, being able to pay taxes online was the NO.1 suggestion."

More than a year in the works, the new system called TAXcess ([www.manitoba.ca/TAXcess](http://www.manitoba.ca/TAXcess)) was also a top priority of department staff.

"Our staff has been trying to do this for a long time," said Finance Minister Greg Selinger. "It was part of the strategic vision. This is also an example of the province working at cutting out red tape."

Not only will the system make it easier for Manitoba businesses to pay taxes, but it will let them review up to 24 months of a company's tax transactions, post pre-payments ahead of time and set up automatic pay schedules. Government officials said that online security of the system satisfies the province's high standards.

Ron Hambley, executive vice-president of the Winnipeg Construction Association, said making timely remittance of tax payments was not always easy to do.

"Since many of our members are trades people, sometimes they would actually have to leave the work

site in order to ensure that a monthly provincial sales tax remittance was made on time," he said.

The new system will allow payment of retail sales tax, payroll tax, corporate capital tax and gasoline and fuel tax.

"There is always a concern that the remittance would not be received on time and the penalty for late payments is substantial," said John Schubert, a member of the Winnipeg Construction Association board and the owner of McCaine Electric. "This will help us all better manage our cash flow."

Tax department officials say they believe the Manitoba system will be more comprehensive and easier to use than online payment systems available in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. A similar system is in the works in Ontario, but it is not likely to be rolled out for another year.