

“We have the highest confidence in Check Point security.”

*Normand Jette
Telecommunications Specialist
City of Montreal*



CUSTOMER NAME

City of Montreal

INDUSTRY

Government

CHECK POINT PRODUCTS

- UTM-1 Edge™
- SmartCenter™
- VPN-1® Power™
- FireWall-1®

CUSTOMER NEEDS MET

- Ensured total security for sensitive voter registration information
- Provided quick setup of temporary voter registration centers
- Supplied efficient security management

Montreal Elects Check Point VPN For Secure Voter Registration

ABOUT THE CITY OF MONTREAL

From its start as a small fur trading settlement on an island in the Saint Lawrence River in the mid 1600s, the City of Montreal has grown to a population of more than 1.8 million, making it the largest city in the Canadian province of Quebec. Today, the City of Montreal runs its government operations on a network of 25,000 users protected by seven Check Point FireWall-1® firewalls. Nine hundred users work remotely, accessing the city network securely through a VPN-1® Power™ gateway and SecuRemote® client software.

THE CITY OF MONTREAL CHALLENGE

On January 1, 2002, the City of Montreal grew larger, when the surrounding 28 suburbs on the island of Montreal merged with the City and became boroughs, on the order of the provincial government. While designed to reduce city deficits, balance budgets, and provide more equity in the delivery of services, this and other forced municipal mergers throughout the province were so unpopular that Quebec voters elected the opposition party to power the following year, largely on its promise to allow referendums on reversing the mergers. Boroughs that registered sufficient voters on the referendum would be allowed to vote on demerging.

“The newly elected government was under a lot of political pressure to deliver on its promise, which meant the City had to conduct registration and prepare for the special election in a very short period of time,” says Normand Jette, telecommunications specialist for the City of Montreal. “The master voter list had to be built, updated, and verified very quickly and securely.”



THE CHECK POINT SOLUTION

To expedite the referendum process, the City of Montreal used virtual private networks (VPNs) on the Internet for the first time in an elections scenario. The City opened 28 temporary centers in shopping malls and rented offices where citizens could go to register for the referendum. From these offices, with ADSL connections to the Internet, the centralized voter list was updated live in real time. This direct process reduced paper volume and saved time over the previous manual process of amassing paper forms for data entry later.

Security for the sensitive voter information was a paramount concern. Diskless PCs were used so that no confidential data would be retained in the temporary storefronts and offices where it could be destroyed or stolen. And Check Point UTM-1 Edge™ appliances created the secure site-to-site VPNs for linking the offices to the City registrar.

GoSecure, the City of Montreal's security consultant, recommended UTM-1 Edge as the most secure and cost-effective solution for such a rapid, large-scale, and short-term deployment. The appliances set up in minutes and provide the highest level of security to protect the transmission of sensitive voter information over the always-on ADSL connection.

THE BENEFITS OF CHECK POINT SECURITY

The UTM-1 Edge appliances proved themselves under the high pressure of the demerger referendum. "We received great support from Check Point and GoSecure," says Jette. Now the appliances are an established fixture in the City of Montreal's election process.

Total security

Since the demerger referendum had to happen in a short time, the lists had to be built, verified, and updated quickly. The fastest way was to connect to the main office of the registrar and transmit the updates securely. Every voter registration office had a UTM-1 Edge appliance that sent transactions in an encrypted manner back to the central station. "The security provided by the Edge devices is very good because it incorporates Check Point Firewall-1 technology with encryption," says Jette. "We have the highest confidence in Check Point security."

Fast deployment

Under the time pressure for this referendum, the City needed a device that was easy to deploy at many locations. Jette's team lab-tested a UTM-1 Edge appliance on loan from GoSecure in one day and took delivery of the appliances in the next two days. Configuring the appliances in the lab and deploying them to the 28 offices took only three days. "We generate a certificate for each site, install them on the Edge appliances, and connect to the VPN-1 gateway we already use for remote access," says Jette, explaining the simplicity of the process. The total time from decision to citywide deployment? One week.

Central management

Streamlining management is a top priority for the City. UTM-1 Edge appliances are centrally managed through the same SmartCenter™ console used to manage the City's seven firewalls and its remote access VPNs. The security staff already knew the efficient Check Point graphical user interface so they could manage all the UTM-1 Edge appliances with very little extra effort. "We can update or modify the rules for every site at one time," says Jette.

THE FUTURE OF THE CITY OF MONTREAL

With UTM-1 Edge, the City of Montreal has a cost-effective, real-time voter registration solution for general elections every four years and special elections in between. For the November 2005 election, Edge devices were deployed to 30 sites.

The City eagerly embraces new technology that can make government operations more efficient and secure. It is testing UserAuthority® to centrally authenticate users, therefore eliminating redundant databases of authentication information and enabling users to sign on once for all their authorized applications. The City is also testing another innovative Check Point security gateway: the Connectra™ Web security gateway, which combines SSL VPN access, endpoint security, and application security in a single, unified solution.

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