

People Summit

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Québec will carry forward the progress made at previous Summits. In Santiago, for example, leaders recognized education as “the key to progress” and identified areas for action. In addition, with the support of the Pan American Health Organization, governments have begun working together more effectively to address hemispheric health priorities. Other themes of past Summits have been fighting poverty and discrimination.

At the Third Summit, leaders will consider how to expand access to education and improve educational quality—action they all recognize is needed. They know as well the importance of upgrading skills development. The problem has been to come up with the funding.

On health issues, countries across the Americas have made impressive strides. But as in education, health systems face financial pressures. The Summit is expected to give priority to cost-effective innovations for preventing disease and promoting healthier living.

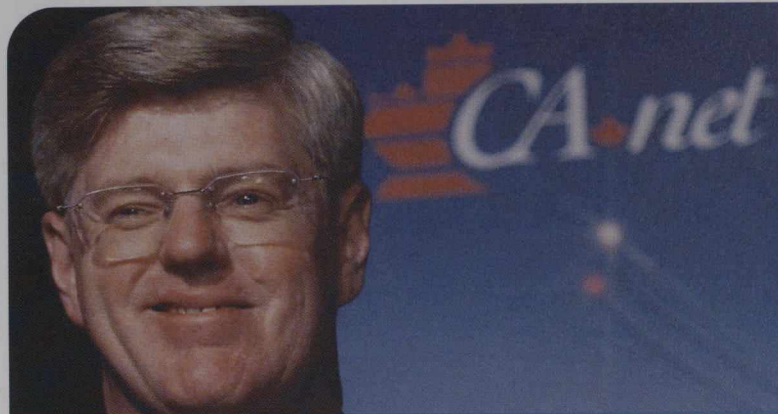
Another core social objective of the Summit is the inclusion of all groups in society. Leaders will examine how to support gender equality and encourage greater participation by Indigenous peoples and youth in social, economic and political life.

Still another priority is cultural diversity. The cultures in our Hemisphere draw their vitality from extremely varied roots. That diversity must continue to flourish. There is widespread concern about the cultural impacts of new information and communications technologies. Leaders may consider ways of linking and strengthening cultures to maintain their diversity and strength.

Connectivity

Canada strongly favours discussion of information and communications technologies at the Summit. The idea is to look at ways of using these technologies to achieve common political, economic and social goals, and to make the technologies accessible to all.

In every country of the Hemisphere, citizens, government and business are putting the new technologies to work. Individuals and civil society groups with common interests are collaborating via the Internet. Many kinds of health and education services are being delivered through communications technologies. Governments are providing information and services to the public, and even looking for



In August 1998, then Industry Minister John Manley announces an initiative to build CA*net 3—the world’s first national optical Internet network.

ways to use the technologies for dialogue with citizens. Businesses are reaching out to new markets and modernizing operations.

Those innovations are only the start but at least they show areas where collaboration can pay off. One priority at the Summit will be access to new technologies. Some commentators have decried a widening gap between people and societies that use these technologies and those that do not. To meet those concerns, leaders will discuss how to make technologies more widely available, particularly to members of groups that may be marginalized. They will examine how to help people acquire the skills enabling them to understand and use new technologies effectively. ●



In June 1996, Montréal hosted 2500 cybersurfers from 140 countries at INet—an international conference sponsored by the Internet Society. Discussions covered topics ranging from technical advances to philosophical questions.



High school teacher Stephen MacKinnon, right, explains the Internet to some of his students in Athens, Ontario, in August 1999. As the Information Age shifts into overdrive, the Internet is revolutionizing the way people learn.