

## Economy

### Canada moves up to sixth in competitiveness ranking

According to the European Management Forum, Canada's economic competitiveness improved to sixth among 22 countries, one notch higher than last year.

'This resource-rich country — with a huge, affluent and accessible market at its doorstep — harbours great potential,' the Geneva-based private economic research group said in its annual world competitiveness report.

Two years ago, Canada placed eleventh in the rankings, but was upgraded to seventh last year after the group said the country had improved its ability to exploit its potential.

Canada and Japan were the only countries in the top 10 to improve their competitive rankings from the 1985 report.

## Business

### Marks and Spencer buys rest of subsidiary

Marks and Spencer has made a \$111 million offer for all the shares of the company's Canadian subsidiary that it does not own. The British company has always wanted 100% ownership of its Canadian operation.

After recent talks with Investment Canada, the restrictions on ownership were lifted. There are almost 4.6 million shares outstanding, and options for a further 84 000 shares.

### Instant market terminal aids prospective buyers

Prospective buyers visiting Canadian exhibits at international trade fairs can now obtain up-to-the-minute detailed information on all aspects of the relevant Canadian industry, including essential details about a specific company, at the touch of a selector button. The new computer terminal, when installed at national exhibits, gives exporters a significant advantage in the quest for new markets.

The terminal, developed by Avcor Info Display Systems of Toronto, integrates micro-computer technology with

Telidon, the world's most advanced videotex information retrieval system. Each unit consists of a full colour video display, a standard computer keyboard, a high quality printer and an electronic link to a Telidon terminal.

The interested buyer accesses the stored data through the keyboard and information flashes on the screen in up to five languages. By pressing another button, the buyer receives instant high quality print-outs of the text on the screen. If additional details about a product or source are required, the computer retrieves the information through the Telidon link and prints out the data in letter format minutes later.

## International

### Canada willing to place moratorium on African debt

Canada is willing to place a moratorium on payments of \$750 million of official Development Assistance debt owed by Sub-Saharan African countries, former External Relations Minister Monique Vezina announced recently in a speech at the United Nations.

Some \$250 million in payments on that debt of \$750 million due between now and the year 2000, would be delayed under the proposal, Vezina outlined to a special UN session on Africa.

The moratorium, which would be negotiated in renewable five-year segments, would give African countries 'the room to manoeuvre that they need to put their economies back on a solid foundation.' To be eligible, the countries concerned would need to implement an economic programme of structural adjustment. The minister encouraged other donor countries to join in the debt moratorium.

Vezina's address to the Special General Assembly Session on the critical economy situation in Africa outlined an extensive plan of action to provide debt relief and aid to the region near the Sahara. She announced that Canadian voluntary organizations will participate in 2000 small-scale projects in the region before the end of 1987.

Canada hopes to see a new mechanism established for multi-lateral aid, which would see international funds go directly to small villages, producers and farms, Vezina said. Ottawa has donated \$20 million for this purpose.

### Canada pledges aid for Ireland

Canada has agreed to contribute up to \$10 million over ten years to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland for economic and social development programmes, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney has announced.

Mulroney said the contribution to the International Fund for Ireland, set up after last November's Anglo-Irish agreement, is being made at the request of Irish Prime Minister Garret Fitzgerald and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

The contribution will include loan guarantees and cash raised on a matching basis with the private sector.

## Medicine

### Painless insulin injector available for diabetics

The Preci-Jet 50, a Canadian-made power injector that permits someone to take insulin without a needle, is now available for the country's estimated 100 000 diabetics, some of whom require four or five insulin injections daily.

Following years of research and testing at a Montreal hospital, the power injector is being manufactured by Advanced Medical Technologies Inc of Charlotte-town, Prince Edward Island. It is available for about \$750.

The Preci-jet 50 delivers insulin under air pressure through a hole in the skin many times smaller than that made by a hypodermic needle. The insulin spreads over a wider area, resulting in a more rapid and even absorption.

Two important benefits to diabetics are that the injectors are painless and do not cause a build-up of scar tissue.

### National Research Council develops vaccine for meningitis

A new vaccine that could eradicate bacterial meningitis among young children has been

developed by researchers at the National Research Council in Ottawa. With continued success in tests on the vaccine over the next year, it is expected that the vaccine will be a viable product within ten years.

Bacterial meningitis, an infection and inflammation of the membranes that envelop the brain and spinal chord, is considered to be one of the last major childhood diseases. A vaccine for adults and older children is already available, but there is none for babies and young children who are more susceptible to the disease as they haven't developed any natural immunities. Of the 764 cases of bacterial meningitis in Canada in 1982, 510 were in children younger than four years and 258 in babies younger than a year. Further, the prognosis of the disease is very devastating and among those infected, some 5–10 per cent die while another 10–20 per cent sustain some type of brain damage.

While the number of children suffering from the disease in Canada remains relatively low, the situation is much worse in countries with lower standards of hygiene.

## Technology

### Waterbombers fight fires with new extinguishing foam

A Canadian company, Wormald Fire Systems, has developed a new fire extinguishing agent that enhances the forest-fire-fighting capability of Canada's amphibious waterbomber, the CL-215, which is the only aircraft in the world specifically designed to fight forest fires.

