

The information technology sector is a major part of the knowledge-based economy. In strictly business terms, the response to our on-line initiatives has been remarkable. The information technology sector employs 512 000 Canadians and generates \$116.4 billion in revenue, including \$30.8 billion in exports. Future prospects are also bright because Canada offers the industry a winning combination of low costs, an ample supply of knowledge workers, the best R&D tax incentives in the world and a streamlined regulatory framework.

We are becoming information millionaires. In countries such as Canada, individuals have never been as empowered as they are today by their access to a wealth of on-line information. However, at last year's UN Millennium Summit, Canada's Prime Minister joined with many world leaders in expressing sharp concern over a growing digital divide between rich and poor nations. Unfortunately, half the world's population has yet to make their first telephone call, and less than 1 percent of the developing world's population has access to the Internet.

Bridging the digital divide is a key priority. The G-8 Digital Opportunity Task Force was launched at the 2000 Okinawa Summit to ensure that everyone everywhere has access to the diverse benefits of information and communications technologies.

Under our NetCorps program, hundreds of young, technology-trained Canadian interns are helping the world's poorest countries connect schools and small businesses to the Internet.

Canada's move towards creative excellence in both our culture and economy depends on a multilingual, multidisciplinary population. Each year, immigrants to Canada contribute to the economy as both workers and investors. With a population of some 30 million, Canada absorbs more than 200 000 immigrants annually. We benefit from their diverse new backgrounds and outlooks that constantly enrich our culture and society.