

Communications has long played a vital role in Canadian history. Ours is a vast country — 9 970 000 square kilometres — spanning seven time zones and with a population of only 25 million people living in communities often separated by great distances and geographical barriers. It is also a country with two official languages, many different cultures and distinct regional identities. Excellent communications networks have enabled Canadians not only to conquer distance, but also to express and benefit from the nation's rich diversity.

Canada has pioneered many telecommunications developments from the world's first long-distance telephone call, to the world's first commercial domestic communications satellite, to a sophisticated new information technology called Telidon. In every part of the country, even remote Arctic settlements, Canadians now enjoy sophisticated communications services. Telephone, business communications and broadcasting services are delivered by cable, microwave and satellite systems. Canada is also a pioneer in innovative technologies that serve the nation's social, cultural and economic needs — broadcasting that fosters cultural diversity, projects that bring health and education services to remote communities, research into social implications of new technology, to give some examples.

Today, communications technology is more important than ever. We have entered the so-called "information age", an era in which information itself is becoming a dominant commodity and the capacity to generate, process, store and transmit information becoming critical to economic strength.

Communications is one of the fastest growing sectors of our economy, and it is undergoing revolutionary transformations. Increasingly, the boundaries between telecommunications, computers and other technologies are dissolving thus creating whole new industries, sophisticated new services and products and dramatic changes to our working and leisure environments. In Canadian offices, for example, there is an increasing tendency towards multifunctional equipment and integrated systems that enable greater productivity. In the home, television sets are beginning to be used not only for conventional programming but also for information retrieval, computer games, remote emergency alarms and other services.

Canada's early involvement in telecommunications and our continuing communications needs have placed us in the forefront of the new information era. We have contributed to advances in many areas including digital switching and transmission, satellite communications, fibre optics, videotex and standards for computer communications. Our products, services and expertise are in high demand throughout the world.



*Kids and computers.*

*Computer use is increasing.*

