



is to build the highest-quality, lowest-cost information network in the world. Immense potential exists in all information and telecommunications subsectors for collaborative research and development and for joint ventures and international alliances between Canadian and foreign companies.

In 1995, Canada sold over \$6 billion in telecommunications equipment, mostly to customers in the United States, China and the United Kingdom. Canadian companies specialize in several areas of telecommunications, including switching systems, broadband and multimedia products and services, fibre-optic cabling, rural communications, design and application of submarine cable systems, satellite networking, computer telephony integration and mobile and cellular phones. There are very few areas of telecommunications and information technology in which Canadian companies are not at the forefront of development.

The willingness to form strategic alliances and transfer technology is an essential feature of a good partner. Many joint trade and investment opportunities have been realized after representatives of other countries visited Canada through the Telecommunications Executive Management Institute of Canada education program. Countries are moving toward the creation of more open economic systems that welcome healthy competition from abroad and joint enterprise within their own borders. Canada itself welcomes both competition and outside investment.

Canada's regulatory agency, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), has effectively opened local telephone service to competition from all suppliers, including cable companies, resellers and wireless providers. Telecommunications companies can now provide new information and multimedia services, such as home banking and shopping, distance education and telemedicine.

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Canadian companies have worked with state enterprises in countries such as Malaysia to find the best way to open their own systems to lower costs and to increase efficiency. They have provided the feasibility and viability studies and assisted in the development of working systems.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

Canada's exports of information technology products (including computers, consumer electronics, peripherals and software products) are growing, with Canadian firms recording strong performances in this industry. With growing Canadian capacity, offshore investors and companies are approaching Canada in search of North American alliances.

Software products, multimedia products and geomatic solutions are three areas in which Canada continues to have considerable success.

The software products and computer services industry has grown rapidly in Canada. Revenues of the top 100 software products companies totalled more than \$2 billion in 1996 (up 4.7 percent from 1995), of which 83 percent was derived from exports. Revenues of the top 50 service firms grew by 40 percent, reaching \$1.4 billion in 1996. Many of these companies have formed strategic alliances with foreign partners to enhance distribution and foster product development.

Canada has established leading positions in specialized markets such as graphics, Internet tools, document management, geographic information systems (GIS), systems development, and information-technology management. In Canada the SchoolNet family of programs is integrating the Internet into virtually every classroom, library and community across the country to help its citizens build the skills they require for the information-based economy and society of the 21st century. As a co-operative venture among federal, provincial and territorial governments, SchoolNet facilitates excellence in learning through electronic networking across Canada.

