

Population

Canadian population reaches 25.5 million

Statistics Canada, the Canadian government agency, has reported that Canada's population has reached 25.5 million.

Population estimates released by the agency show that Ontario is the most populated province (9.1 million people), followed by Quebec (6.6 million), British Columbia (2.9 million), Alberta (2.4 million) and Manitoba (1.1 million).

Saskatchewan's population is estimated to be 1.0 million; Nova Scotia's is 883,000; New Brunswick's, 720,300; and Newfoundland's, 580,700.

Prince Edward Island is the least populated province, with 127,900 people. The Northwest Territories and the Yukon have populations of 50,900 and 22,700 respectively.

Business

Royal Trust acquires UK banker and broker

Royal Trust, the Toronto-based trust company, has acquired a 72 per cent stake in the UK merchant bank, Arbuthnot Latham, and in the UK brokerage house, Savory Millin.

The two acquisitions were part of a larger deal through which Royal Trust acquired the European financial services business of Dow Chemical (including Dow's 77 per cent stake in the Dow Banking Corporation of Zurich), as well as banks in Singapore, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and Turkey.

Software package offered to UK opticians

Alpha Bytes Computer Corporation of Markham, Ontario, which makes software packages for specialist medical purposes, has signed an exclusive marketing agreement with Kalamazoo PLC, Birmingham – a business systems company.

The initial agreement is worth £125,000, in rights and royalties, but during the first full year of sales, orders are expected to total well over £500,000.

Initially, sales will concentrate on a computer systems for opticians. As Anton Dissanayake, president of Alpha Bytes, says, 'we saw a hole in the market – there just weren't any software systems in the UK to handle all the business (patient recall, stock control and inventory, appointments, prescription ordering, and management and accounting) functions carried out by these people.'

The company already has plans to expand into the dental and general medical fields.

The package will be known as the Kalamazoo 20/20 Practice Management System, and was developed over three years of consultations with opticians in Canada and the UK. It is being put forward as the tool which can help Britain's 6500 consulting opticians increase their competitive edge through more efficiency leading to substantial cost savings.

AES opens first business efficiency centre

AES has opened the first of its Business Efficiency Centres at AES House – its new UK headquarters – in Hammersmith, London.

An international corporation with headquarters in Canada, AES designs, manufactures and distributes office automation equipment ranging from office support stand-alones to sophisticated shared and distributed office systems. These software-rich, network-oriented products are compatible with industry standards to support management, professional and administrative functions in the office. They also offer state-of-the-art options such as personal computing and communications.

In less than a decade, AES has become an international leader in one of the world's fastest growing, high-technology industries. It now has an installed base of some 120,000 units in 55 countries.

Since it was established with a staff of 22 in 1974, the company has evolved into a multi-million dollar operation. In July 1978 the Canada Development Corporation (CDC) acquired a majority interest in AES.

In the UK, AES business is conducted from sales and support offices around the country. AES House in Hammersmith is the base of the company's marketing, sales and finance departments. AES also has a 27,000 square feet building at Sunbury-on-Thames, which houses its technical and internal support, warehousing, internal training and distribution centre.

Since its formation in 1981, AES Data (UK) Ltd has grown in size from 95 to 265 employees and from a turnover of £4 million to a projected £16.6 million in 1986. Over a third of AES business is within the local government sector. Major accounts include ICI, Fisons, Bass Charrington, Inland Revenue, TI Group (Tubular Investments) and Guinness.

Coins and investment

New coin to replace Canadian dollar bill

The Canadian government has decided to scrap the dollar bill in favour of a new 11-sided gold-coloured coin.

The first of the 300 million new \$1 coins will be issued in January, 1987, but the government will not start taking the dollar bill out of circulation until 1989.

Maple Leaf coins capture major part of world market

Sales of Canadian Maple Leaf gold coins from the Royal Canadian Mint have captured 70 per cent of the world's gold coin investment market.



The coins, which contain 0.9999 oz of gold, had worldwide sales of 1,878,000 last year, with a 56 per cent increase over 1984.

Technology

New device measures water content of soil

A soil physicist with Agriculture Canada's Land Resource

Research Institute in Ottawa has developed a device that can be used, on-site, to measure the water content of soil.

Previously, soil moisture measuring could only be undertaken in a laboratory.

The new measuring device – developed by Dr Clarke Topp – has two parallel metal rods, which are pushed into the ground. They act as a wave guide for high-frequency radio waves that are sent into the soil, reflected from the end of the rods, and returned along their original path.

The device translates the travel time of the wave in the soil into a water content percentage, and this reading appears instantly on the display terminal.

The more water in the soil, the longer the travel time.

The device is thought to have great potential in dryland farming, where it will help answer questions on the amount of soil water used by crops, the depth needed to reach optimum water content for germination, and the best crops for a farmer to plant. Dr Topp suggests that eventually the instruments will be used for automated irrigation.

By setting a number of probes to the rooting depth in a field and hooking the instrument to a computer, a farmer will be able to generate automatic readings, which will indicate when water is needed and how much is required.

The computer will then turn the irrigation system on and off as needed.

The Canadian company, Foundation Instruments Inc, manufactures the instruments, most of which have been bought for scientific research – including research into the adaption of the technique to soil salinity and to measuring the moisture content of stored grain and other agricultural products.

Canadian computer programme teaches French in UK

The UK's national Centre for Computer-Assisted Learning has been given the right to convert and market a Canadian computer programme for teaching French.

The programme, Computer-Assisted Learning Exercises for