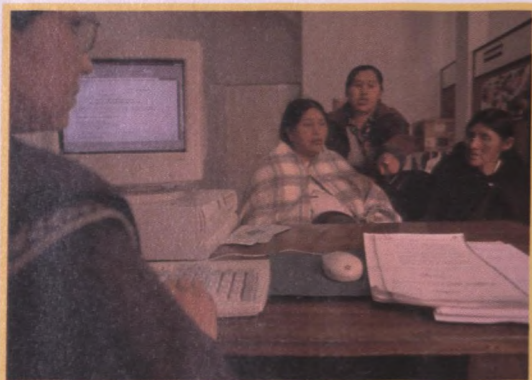


Canada took the opportunity of the Quebec Summit to announce the creation of the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas (ICA).

## Connectivity

Canadians know by experience that information and communications technology can bring us together as a nation even as it transforms the way we study, work, heal, communicate, build, entertain and govern ourselves.

Canada has quickly seized the opportunity to take a leadership position on-line with an array of private-sector and government initiatives winning worldwide attention. Now that digitized information is becoming available throughout the Americas, Canadian experience with new media and information technology provides an opportunity to connect Canada even more closely with its hemispheric neighbours.



CIDA Photo: Greg Kinch

Leaders at the Quebec City Summit issued a statement on "Connecting the Americas." This recognized that the region is beginning a historic transformation, with a vastly enhanced capacity to access knowledge and improve information flows.

In demonstration of its commitment to promoting the transformation, Canada took the opportunity of the Quebec Summit to announce the creation of the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas (ICA). The ICA aims to build on the success of Canada's domestic "Connecting Canadians" strategy and international development experience to achieve the Leaders' objectives, working with international institutions, the private and public sectors, academic institutions, and civil society.

ICA's role within the Americas is to lead, facilitate, promote and foster the accelerated development and adoption of Hemispheric connectivity, with a focus on regional approaches. The Institute is filling a critical gap by assisting the coordination, collaboration and sharing of efforts across countries; it is promoting strategic partnerships and financing, and is providing leadership and support to jurisdictions, providers and stakeholders.

Canada plays a leading role in a parallel process within the OAS. It has been working within the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission to develop a simple model that national governments can use to develop a plan for connectivity appropriate to their circumstances. Canadian-led efforts have resulted in the creation of the Agenda for Connectivity in the Americas and Plan of Action of Quito (ACAPAQ).

### Connectivity and a Hemispheric Infrastructure

Developing digital information and communications technology is part of broader efforts to create a truly integrated hemispheric infrastructure. This would improve global competitiveness, while bringing myriad benefits in enhancing human potential.

For example, Canada has played the leading role in the establishment of the Western Hemisphere Transportation Data System (WHTDS). The WHTDS establishes better linkages among transportation information networks by improving transportation information exchange and dissemination among countries of the Hemisphere. This includes information linking transportation and health data that reflect the social and financial consequences of increased traffic.

A core element of any infrastructure, transportation is a complex issue that requires extensive coordination. Along with the WHTDS, Canada has led a number of initiatives under the Western Hemisphere Transportation Initiative, a forum for cooperation and information exchange between the transport ministries of Summit of the Americas countries. Work towards the establishment of a Dangerous Goods Working Group has begun, and Canada chaired the Group of Experts on Aviation Safety and Security. Here too, connectivity is key to creating a more effective hemispheric infrastructure.