
Development projects aided

Minister for External Relations Monique Vézina has signed two agreements authorizing the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to contribute \$2 724 236 to the Confédération des Caisses populaires et d'économie Desjardins for projects that affect some 20 countries in Latin America and in western and central Africa.

The first agreement for \$1 676 236 will be used as institutional financing to consolidate the Desjardins group's international agency, the Société de développement international Desjardins (SDID). Over the next three years, the amount will mainly finance about 75 per cent of the budgets for general administration, development information and education programs, research and development, and employee training and development programs.

The additional \$1 048 000 will go to SDID program funds to finance co-operative projects in savings and credit, agri-food, general and co-operative education, housing, handicrafts and community services, the advancement of women, and co-operative integration. This amount is in addition to CIDA's previous \$1.1-million contribution to this operating fund for the current year.

World acceptance of Telidon

The coding scheme known as the North American Presentation Level Protocol Syntax (NAPLPS), which contains Telidon as a fundamental component, was officially approved by the International Telegraph and Telephone Consultative Committee (CCITT) and the membership at the eighth plenary assembly in Malaga-Torremolinos, Spain, in December.

The CCITT is an organ of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a specialized agency of the United Nations. The incorporation of the NAPLPS standard by CCITT is an important step for the introduction of Telidon systems in other parts of the world.

In addition, videotex system operators, information providers, equipment manufacturers and consumers now have the assurance that NAPLPS (Telidon) products and services will not become obsolete as a result of unexpected changes in the standard.

Telidon, an advanced information communications technology originally developed by Canada's Department of Communications, is recognized by both the Canadian Standards Association and the American National Standards Institute, and is well established as a North American videotex standard.

The technology allows business people, consumers and others to access graphic and textual information stored in data banks by using a normal telephone or data circuit and a decoder connected to a television set. Picture description instructions at the core of Telidon permit the encoding of pictorial information in a very compact form. This code is ideally suited for accessing information in data banks not only by telephone, but also other media such as cable television systems, satellite links and optical fibres.

Its applications include: information retrieval, electronic messaging and mail services; audiovisual presentation systems; computer-aided learning systems; transactional services for banking, shopping, or making reservations; tourist and public information systems.

At its eighth plenary assembly CCITT also approved the Japanese CAPTAIN and the European CEPT Standards. In addition a companion standard on international videotex services was approved at the assembly.

More efficient iceberg jigger

Offshore Technology Corporation Limited of St John's, Newfoundland, has developed an iceberg towing device known as an iceberg jigger, that will be able to move small icebergs away from oil rigs.

The jigger is expected to greatly increase the safety aboard oil rigs when threatened by small icebergs. Current methods of moving them are only effective about 50 per cent of the time.

Ice melted to attach rope

A working model of the iceberg jigger unveiled by the firm recently, has a triangular steel frame through which three cylindrical elements are fitted, like a tripod.

Consisting of an asbestos-wrapped copper core in a titanium shell, the elements are heated to between 300 and 400 degrees Celsius by an electric or gas heater. Once heated, the elements are fitted into a steel frame and lowered onto an iceberg, where springs press the hot cylinders into the ice.

The iceberg jigger can be placed on an iceberg by a boom aboard a vessel or by helicopter. It would then melt its way into the ice, and a rope already attached would be used to tow the iceberg.

Currently, most icebergs that are towed have been lassoed. As a vessel encircles an iceberg, a heavy floating rope is paid out over its stern.

There are many difficulties involved in this method. Sometimes the rope slips over or under the iceberg, depending on its shape.

In other circumstances the iceberg may roll and when it does, the rope can get badly snarled. Then it has to be spread out on deck and tediously untangled.

Lassoing is the least effective on smaller icebergs such as the "growler" which is about the size of a desk or a piano. The "berg bit" is closer in size to a large truck or a house.

The smaller an iceberg, the more it rides the waves thereby increasing its destructive force as it is hurled about in high seas.

Secured quickly

The main attraction of the iceberg jigger is that it can be secured rapidly to an iceberg and quickly reattached if it breaks loose said Peter Gammon of Ice Engineering Limited, a consulting firm to Offshore Technology. This would dramatically reduce ship time, a major part of the cost of towing icebergs.

Other attractions are the jigger's simplicity and the fact that it can be used without installing expensive or complex equipment.

Although the working model weighs about seven kilograms and has a load bearing capacity of one tonne, Mr. Gammon said the design could be scaled upward to produce a half-tonne model with a 50-tonne load bearing capacity.

New customs rates

Effective January 1, an Act to Amend the Customs Act and the Customs Tariff came into force and established new customs values and tariff rate increases.

The amendments to the Customs Act were made as a result of Canada's international commitment, established during the 1979 Tokyo Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, to adopt the Customs Valuation Code of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Under the new law, the value for customs duty is based on the "transaction value", which is essentially the price paid for the imported goods. Canada's previous method of valuing imported goods was based on the "fair market value" of like goods sold for consumption in the country of export.

The amendments to the Customs Tariff introduced tariff rate increases, recommended by the Tariff Board to prevent a decline in the level of tariff protection under the new system of valuation. The increases, which are compatible with Canada's GATT undertakings, have been accepted by Canada's trading partners. Other amendments to the Customs Tariff include the removal of the duty on aircraft parts in line with the expanded product coverage of the GATT aircraft agreement.