

Boasting almost 100 hospitals and research institutions, Toronto is the fourth-largest medical community in North America, with one of the largest life sciences clusters. The University of Toronto's electrical engineering program is ranked fourth on the continent, and its computer engineering program is ranked fifth. Each year, the nearby University of Waterloo graduates one of North America's largest classes of information technology experts. Drawing on this talent pool, the Toronto/Kitchener-Waterloo cluster has developed into a major information and communications technology centre, with more than 2000 companies employing over 100 000 people.

Throughout Canada it's the same story: all the elements are in place for success. That is why Vancouver's cluster of more than 7000 high-tech firms is growing at a phenomenal rate. And Ottawa is not only Canada's capital, it is also the global capital of optical telecommunications and home to more than 1000 advanced technology firms.

Right across the country, communities and companies are working together to advance their aspirations. In Atlantic Canada, the city of Fredericton may have only 50 000 people but it is home to a major university and more than 180 information technology companies. In the West, booming demand for Canada's abundant natural resources is powering a high-tech revolution in Calgary and cities throughout the region.

Canada is far more than its political boundaries or economic relationships. In these times of rapid change and globalization, Canada has a unique combination of attractions: the sheer beauty of our land; an unmatched cosmopolitan lifestyle; a knowledge-based economy with priceless resources and unfettered access to the largest market in the world; a commitment to values such as tolerance, education, health care for all, and sustaining our environment.

That's what we have to offer the world.

That's why the choice should be Canada.

Of course, a few words can never capture the essence of a nation, especially one with such diverse regions, peoples and particularities as Canada. And so over time, this new series of features will focus on key elements in the unfolding story of Canada's evolution as a post-modern, 21st-century nation.

In the meantime, here are a few key links for those just beginning to look on-line for information about Canada:

The Government of Canada (<http://www.canada.gc.ca>) is committed to becoming a world leader in e-government through its Government On-Line initiative. Its site has plentiful information resources tailored to meet the needs of international audiences.

Attractions Canada (<http://www.attractionscanada.ca>) offers a comprehensive guide to Canada's tourism attractions and how to make the most of them.

The Invest in Canada (www.investincanada.gc.ca) site features the information resources that will help the international business community assess just how to take advantage of Canadian opportunities.