

## **Connecting the Americas**

Information and communications technologies are rapidly and radically transforming the Western Hemisphere and the world. Their expansion into every corner of the globe is having a profound impact on all lives. Governments are only one of many actors in this transformation, but they have an important role to play in shaping the evolution of these new and revolutionary technologies and the way in which they will serve human needs and aspirations.

Canada believes that the governments of the Americas, in partnership with the private sector, citizens, multilateral development banks and other regional and international organizations, must work together to ensure more equitable sharing of the potential benefits of information and communications technologies. These technologies have the ability to bridge vast distances, expand access to knowledge and increase economic productivity.

Connectivity is a tool, not an end in itself. Promoting connectivity cannot be allowed to displace emphasis on meeting basic needs such as health, food, clothing and dignified employment for all citizens of the Americas. For the third Summit of the Americas, in Quebec City in April 2001, Canada is proposing that leaders consider ways to expand access to information and communications technologies for the benefit of the entire community of the Americas, not just those who are already connected or who are currently best placed to take advantage of commercial opportunities.

Canada's overall goal is to help create conditions to increase equitable access to the new technologies and harness their potential to strengthen the community of the Americas, help break down barriers and build bridges to greater opportunities for greater numbers of people.