

Canadian companies supplying much of the backbone equipment for the newly privatized telecom and cellular companies on the continent. Other sectors where Canadian companies are present include water supply, power generation, and oil and gas. Africa's vast wealth of resources offers many lucrative business opportunities. Canada is the number one investor in the mining sector in sub-Saharan Africa, and 50 percent of all offshore mining exploration in Africa is carried out by Canadian companies.

Success stories

Canadian companies currently involved in Africa range from a small bed and breakfast in Ghana (The Four Villages Inn), run by a Canadian-Ghanaian couple, to a documentary film co-production unit in South Africa, to telecommunications companies like WaveRider Communications Inc., based in

Toronto, which is helping Nigerian companies use the Internet to improve their business. In Lagos, a bank is using WaveRider's wireless access equipment to establish a communications link between each of its branches throughout the city.

Then there are the huge corporations. Bombardier has projects in Uganda and Senegal, and, among other contracts, SNC-Lavalin operates an aluminum smelter construction project in Mozambique. Mining giant Placer Dome has a partnership in a gold mine in South Africa. Nortel Networks has formed a partnership with SchoolNet SA, a non-profit South African organization supported by Canada's International Development Research Centre, which promotes the use of information and communications technologies in schools. This past January, Nelson Mandela opened the third centre set up through this partnership.

The Canadian Bank Note Company, based in Ottawa, produces the paper currency for Ethiopia, supplies national identity cards and driver's licences to



Tecsult International's wastewater system rehabilitation project, Antananarivo, Madagascar

Togo, and provides passports to Mali and equipment for the production of passports to Burkina Faso. The Royal Canadian Mint has been awarded three contracts to mint coins for the Banque Centrale de Tunisie.

Among the Canadian companies with high profiles in Africa is the Montreal engineering consulting firm Tecsult International, which is involved in projects in a number of countries, including Algeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Madagascar, Mali and Tanzania. Seventy percent of its international activity takes place in Africa. One of the company's projects involves the rehabilitation of the wastewater system in Madagascar. Another is an \$80 million contract with the Ministry of Transport of Gabon. The contract is for plans and specifications to rebuild and modernize the country's 10 regional airports, as well as to upgrade the runways and safety facilities—such as air traffic control, radar and baggage control—at the country's two main airports.

"Doing business in Gabon is no piece of cake," concedes company president Marc Parent, "but the Gabonese are well aware of Canada's reputation in technology and that we have French as a common language."



Tecsult International's provincial airports rehabilitation project, Lambasena Airport, Gabon