

Putting Canada on the Online Map: Geography Leaders Launch First Interactive, Web-based Canadian Atlas

The Canadian Atlas Online is now available free of charge over the Internet

Toronto, ON – Tuesday, April 5, 2005 – The first interactive, web-based, fully bilingual atlas of Canada was launched today by The Royal Canadian Geographical Society and *Canadian Geographic* magazine.

The Canadian Atlas Online, which is now available free of charge over the Internet, surpasses traditional print atlases using the latest interactive technologies to bring to life amazing maps and colourful presentations of Canada's geography, culture and people.

The project was made possible through the support of the Government of Canada, TD Bank Financial Group and Microsoft Canada.

“The Royal Canadian Geographical Society is dedicated to imparting a broader knowledge and deeper appreciation of Canada, including our people and places, our natural and cultural heritage, and our environmental, social and economic challenges,” said Gisèle Jacob, president of The Royal Canadian Geographical Society. “We are marking our 75th anniversary by creating a new, interactive way of experiencing and understanding Canada.”

The maps contained on The Canadian Atlas Online, built on Microsoft server technology and development tools, exemplify cartographic excellence and allow users to zoom and pan, add and remove overlays, and interact with highly informative themed web pages to explore geographical details using easy, intuitive navigation.

“Microsoft works closely with communities, organizations and businesses to help advance the country's social well-being,” said Lasha Dekker, Vice President, Developer Platform and Evangelism Group, Microsoft Canada Co. “Working with *Canadian Geographic* to create The Canadian Atlas Online, is part of Microsoft's commitment to empower individuals and communities with the innovative software they need to realize their full potential.”

The online atlas is focused on Canadian youth and the education sector. The atlas includes a wealth of interactive features that make learning about Canada's geography fun and enjoyable. Multi-level lesson plans are also included to enable educators to readily incorporate the many valuable benefits of the atlas into their school curriculums.

“TD's support of the Canadian Atlas Online complements our strong commitment to education and it's one of the gifts we want to give all Canadians as we mark our 150th anniversary,” said Tim Hockey, Executive Vice President, TD Bank Financial Group and Co-Chair, TD Canada Trust. “We're particularly pleased that this resource will offer curriculum-based lesson plans so that many young people can explore our unique geography and rich history within the classroom.”

The Government of Canada's important financial support was provided through the Canadian Culture Online Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage. Sarmite Bulte, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, was on hand at the opening to host the coast-to-coast interactive challenge with students. "Canadians of every age now have access to a world-leading geographical resource in both official languages," she said, "The Government of Canada is proud to have been part of the partnership that made this possible."

The Canadian Atlas Online includes themed modules that invite an in-depth exploration of topics ranging from weather to flora and fauna, as well as Canada's diverse people and its unique history. These modules feature rich media including video and animated graphics.

"The Internet and online research have become essential parts of today's learning experience," said Beth Dye, Chair of the Canadian Council for Geographic Education. "The Canadian Atlas Online will encourage students to learn more about the country they live in and foster a greater understanding of the geographical differences that exist in Canada from coast to coast."

To access The Canadian Atlas Online, go to www.canadiangeographic.ca/atlas.

About The Royal Canadian Geographical Society

The Royal Canadian Geographical Society is Canada's most trusted source for geographic information and insight. With more than 220,000 members, the non-profit Society is dedicated to broadening public knowledge of geography through research and education. It publishes the award winning *Canadian Geographic* and *géographica* magazines. Other programs include a popular lecture series featuring today's boldest explorers, grants for research and expeditions, scholarships and the Great Canadian Geography Challenge.

About TD Bank Financial Group Community Giving

Marking 150 years of supporting Canadians communities in 2005, TD Bank Financial Group's Community Giving program supports education, health and the environment, with a focus on children and youth. TD sponsors four flagship community programs – TD Canadian Children's Book Week, TD Canada Trust Scholarships for Community Leadership, the Children's Miracle Network and TD Friends of the Environment Foundation – as well as a host of national, regional and local children's programs across Canada.

About Microsoft Canada

Established in 1985, Microsoft Canada Co. is the Canadian subsidiary of Microsoft Corporation (Nasdaq "MSFT") the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential. Microsoft Canada provides nationwide sales, marketing, consulting and local support services in both French and English. Headquartered in Mississauga, Microsoft Canada has 10 regional offices across

the country dedicated to empowering people through great software - any time, any place and on any device. Visit Microsoft Canada's web site at www.microsoft.ca.

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