

Canada

INTRODUCTION

The name Canada comes from a word meaning "village" or "community" in one of the indigenous Iroquoian languages.

Canada, is a federated country in North America, made up of ten provinces and two (soon to be three) territories. Canada is a vast nation with a wide variety of geological formations, climates, and ecological systems. It has rain forest, prairie grassland, deciduous forest, tundra, and wetlands. Canada has more lakes and inland waters than any other country. It is renowned for its scenery, which attracts millions of tourists each year. On a per-capita basis, its resource are the second richest in the world after Australia.

It is the second largest country in the world but has about the same population as the state of California. This is because the north of Canada, with its Arctic and sub-Arctic climates, is almost inhabited. Most Canadians live in the southern part of the country. More than three-quarters of them live in metropolitan areas, the largest of which are Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, Ottawa-Hull, and Edmonton. French and English are the official languages, (Their effort to preserve their language and culture has been a continuing theme of Canadian history and has led in recent years to a movement to become independent of the rest of Canada). However, diversity increased with a wave of immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that brought in people from many other European nations. This trend continues on the eve of the 21st century: Canada is one of the few countries in the world that still have significant immigration programs. Since the 1970s most immigrants have come from Asia, increasing still further the diversity of the population.

Its prosperity and diversity have encouraged a variety of artistic pursuits. Most major cities have symphony orchestras, opera companies, classical and modern dance groups, and live theater. Canadian popular musicians have built highly successful careers both in Canada and in the world at large. Canadian writers have also gained worldwide recognition, as have painters, sculptors, film makers, and architects. To nurture Canadian arts, the government has imposed quotas on foreign content in Canadian media.

Canada has impressive reserves of timber, minerals, and fresh water, and many of its industries are based on these resources. Many of its rivers have been harnessed for hydroelectric power, and it is self-sufficient in fossil fuel. Industrialization began in the 19th century and a significant manufacturing sector emerged, especially after World War II. Canada's resource and manufacturing industries export about one-third of their output. Transportation equipment is the leading manufacturing industry. While Canada's prosperity is built on the resource and manufacturing industries, most Canadians work in service occupations, including transportation, trade, finance, personal services, and government.

Is a parliamentary democracy, and the federal, provincial, and territorial legislatures are all elected. However, Canada's sovereign is a monarch, the queen of the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland. The queen is represented in Canada by the governor-general and ten lieutenant governors. Canada's constitution guarantees equality under the law to all of its citizens. Powers of the federal and provincial governments are spelled out separately under the constitution, but over the past 50 years they have increasingly cooperated in programs that provide a wide range of social services often called the "welfare state" to the public.

Modern Canada was formed in an event that Canadians call Confederation, in 1867, when three colonies of Britain merged to create a partially independent state of four provinces. Since then, six more provinces and

two territories have been added, with a third territory scheduled to come into existence in 1999. Canada achieved full independence in 1931 but continues to belong to the Commonwealth of Nations, a voluntary association of countries with ties to the United Kingdom.

Land and Resources

It is a very large country (only Russia is larger) composed of several distinct regions that are often separated from each other by natural barriers. Canada has an abundance of natural resources, such as forests, minerals, fish, and hydroelectric power. These resources have encouraged Canadians to focus their economic development on the export of raw materials. Conservation of these resources has become a national priority.

Canada is a country of difficult terrain; much of its area is under water or is rocky, marshy, mountainous, or otherwise uninhabitable. Settlement has therefore been concentrated in the areas that are more level and have the better soils. The northern climate, with its long winters, has encouraged the population to settle in the south, where agricultural and living conditions are most favorable. (More than three-quarters of Canada's population live in metropolitan areas, like Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, Ottawa–Hull and Edmonton).

Climate

Because of its size, Canada has a great variety of climatic conditions. Part of the mainland and most of the Arctic Archipelago are within the earth's north frigid zone; the remainder of the country lies in the northern half of the north temperate zone. Climatic conditions range from the extreme cold of the Arctic regions to the moderate temperatures of more southerly latitudes. Average summer temperatures range from 8° C (46° F) in the far north to more than 22° C (72° F) in some parts of the far south. Average January temperatures range from –35° C (–31° F) in the far north to 3° C (37° F) in southwestern British Columbia. Similarly, precipitation ranges from near-desert conditions of less than 300 mm (12 in) per year in the far north to very wet conditions of more than 2400 mm (more than 90 in) in parts of the west coast. Thus we cannot speak of a single Canadian climate, but rather of several regional climates.

In the Atlantic provinces, the ocean lessens the extremes of winter cold and summer heat but also causes considerable fog and precipitation. The Pacific coast, which is influenced by warm ocean currents and moisture-laden winds, has mild summers and winters, high humidity, and abundant precipitation. In the Cordillera, the higher western slopes, particularly the Selkirks and the Rockies, receive sizable amounts of rain and snow. The eastern slopes and the central plateau receive little precipitation. In the eastern Cordillera, the Chinook, a warm, dry westerly wind, makes winters substantially less severe in the Rocky Mountain foothills and adjoining plains. The Prairie Provinces (Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan) are marked by the most extreme ranges of summer heat and winter cold in Canada. Eastern Canada (Ontario and Québec), which also has great variations in heat and cold, is the snowiest region in Canada.

Climate has been a factor in the development of Canada because people have settled where temperatures are warmest and agricultural growing seasons longest. Climate also influences vegetation, producing. Southern Ontario and southwestern British Columbia have the mildest climates and greatest population densities in Canada. In contrast, the central and northern regions are sparsely populated. The permafrost region in the north poses great challenges for settlement and development. Yukon Territory, the Northwest Territories, the Nunavut Territory, northern Québec and Labrador, and the far northern areas of Ontario and Manitoba are all affected by this condition. Houses, roads, runways, and pipelines require special, expensive adaptations.

Water and sewage lines are especially troublesome to maintain. Permafrost also makes mining and other forms of development more difficult and environmentally damaging. Disruption of the environment through development can induce the formation of thaw lakes into which buildings can sink.

People

The population of Canada was 28,846,761 at the time of the latest census in 1996, compared to 27.3 million in 1991. The growth rate from 1991 to 1996 was 1.14 percent per year; this is the fourth highest rate among the 27 countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which corresponds roughly to the most developed industrial countries of the world. Half of this growth is due to immigration. Canada's liberal immigration program accepts newcomers from nearly every other country in the world.

Most Canadians live in cities, and most of the cities are close to the southern border. The largest urban centers are in Québec and Ontario provinces, or central Canada. Most of the population is ethnically British or French, although other European countries are well represented, and indigenous peoples are the majority in the north. French and English are the official languages. Roman Catholics, who include most French-speaking people, are the most numerous religious group, followed by the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church. Immigrants are a growing minority, particularly those from Asia, and have been changing the face of Canada's largest urban areas.

Canadians have a high literacy rate and a number of fine universities. The standard of living is one of the world's highest, although one in seven households is poverty stricken. Violent crime is low compared to other North American societies, but has been rising.

Libraries and Museums

Canada has more than 2100 museums, archives, and historic sites, the most important of which are in the national capital region. These include the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Québec, which celebrates Canada's multicultural heritage; and, in Ottawa, the Canadian Museum of Nature (formerly the National Museum of Natural Sciences), the National Museum of Science and Technology, and the National Gallery of Canada. The latter exhibits European art, a growing collection of Asian art, and a large body of work by Canadians.

The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto has collections of art, life and earth sciences, and materials typical of Canadian culture. Among more specialized museums are Upper Canada Village, a restoration of 18th- and 19th-century buildings in Morrisburg, Ontario; the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Museum in Regina, Saskatchewan; and the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria, which contains important displays of indigenous artifacts.

The National Library of Canada, in Ottawa, issues the national bibliography and maintains union catalogs of the collections of more than 300 other libraries. Its holdings, including a comprehensive collection of Canadian newspapers, exceed 14.5 million items. The Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information, also in Ottawa, is the center for the dissemination of scientific and technical data. Provinces and cities have their own libraries. Particularly outstanding university libraries are those of the universities of Toronto, British Columbia, and Montréal.

Tourism

The exact impact of tourism on the Canadian economy is difficult to ascertain, but it is estimated that it

generates between 3.5 and 4.0 percent of jobs. Canada's variety of seasons and scenic attractions draws large numbers of tourists. There are many festivals, including spring blossom festivals, the Ottawa Festival of Spring, and the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede. The Niagara Grape and Wine Festival and color tours in central Ontario and the Laurentian Mountains of Québec are autumn attractions. Visitors are also drawn to Canadian wilderness areas. In the winter the abundant snowfall has been exploited, and a number of skiing centers, especially in the Cordillera region, are considered world class. About 485,000 sq km (about 187,000 sq mi) of terrestrial and marine areas have been preserved in their natural state as national parks, and each of the provinces and territories also has set aside land as provincial or territorial parks.

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