

# Canada

## A PORTRAIT



• THE ENVIRONMENT • THE PEOPLE

• THE SOCIETY • THE ECONOMY



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**The Official Handbook  
of Present Conditions  
and Recent Progress**

**53rd EDITION**

Prepared in the  
Communications Division  
Statistics Canada

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# Preface

This, the 1991 edition of *Canada: A Portrait*, marks the 60th anniversary of a Canadian tradition of publishing excellence.

Published since 1931, *Canada: A Portrait* was, until recently, known as the *Canada Handbook*. In the Preface to the first edition, the editors explained the genesis of the book this way:

“As the result of the growth of the Dominion and the increasing complexity of its institutions, there is an increasing need of an official handbook of Canada, dealing with the whole range of its economic and social institutions, and giving a succinct and popular account of its problems and its progress, while devoting special attention to the facts of the existing economic situation.”

Modeled on a booklet prepared on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of the Confederation of Canada in 1927, the Handbook was intended “to survey the Canadian situation as a whole within a reasonable space, in a popular and attractive format, and at a cost which makes possible a wide distribution”.

Then, as now, our intent remains unchanged. This, the 53rd edition, includes an updated exploration of the land and climate as well as an expanded examination of the range of environmental problems confronting us. Also included for the first time is an annotated bibliography of associated publications from Statistics Canada for readers with an interest in pursuing particular topics in more detail. In keeping with tradition, *Canada: A Portrait* also includes over 200 colour photographs from some of the nation's leading photographers.

The content of *Canada: A Portrait* is drawn from over 60 contributors, making it impossible to acknowledge each individually. Nevertheless, our gratitude to each remains, as does our gratitude to the Canadian public for responding to the surveys and providing the data that are the foundation of this nation's statistical system.

Ivan P. Fellegi  
Chief Statistician of Canada  
Ottawa

April 1991

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# THE ENVIRONMENT

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- *The highest point in Canada is located in the St. Elias Mountain range of the Yukon; Mount Logan towers 5951 metres above sea level.*
- *Acid rain, caused by sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions, is responsible for an estimated \$1 billion worth of damage in Canada every year. In February 1985, the federal government and seven provinces agreed to cut emissions by 50 per cent by 1994 at the latest.*
- *Forest fires destroy at least 2 million hectares of forest in Canada per year, double the total area harvested. In 1989, losses were even more extensive claiming over 6 million hectares.*
- *Burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, land-use changes and industrial processes are causing increased levels of climate controlling gases in our atmosphere: over the past several centuries carbon dioxide has increased 25 per cent and is now rising at 4 per cent per decade, and chlorofluorocarbons are increasing 5 to 6 per cent per year.*

## THE LAND

Canada is the second largest country in the world; its vast territory ranges from wide fertile prairies and farmlands, through great areas of mountains, rocks and lakes, to northern wilderness and Arctic tundra. The greatest north-south distance is from Cape Columbia on Ellesmere Island to Middle Island in Lake Erie, 4634 km. The greatest east-west distance is from Cape Spear, Nfld. to the Yukon-Alaska border, 5514 km.

*Canada's diverse territory is divided into 10 provinces and two territories.*

**Newfoundland** is Canada's most easterly province. The larger part, Labrador, borders the North Atlantic Coast to Hudson Strait and extends inland about 750 km toward its southern end. The surface is mostly a barren mosaic of rocks,



swamps and lakes. The extreme northern area is dominated by the Torngat Mountains, rising to 1622m. Labrador has a rigorous climate and is snow-covered for more than half the year. Many of its river valleys are well forested. Rivers have numerous falls suitable for hydro development, such as Churchill Falls. Coastal waters abound in fish. The Precambrian rocks have mineral potential; iron ore is Labrador's greatest source of wealth.

The Island of Newfoundland is also rugged. The Long Range Mountains parallel the western coast and rise to heights of over 800m. Much of the surface is barren and rocky and has innumerable ponds and swamps. Summers are cool and winters relatively mild.

The capital city is St. John's. Other urban areas are Corner Brook and Grand Falls, both pulp and paper centres.

**Prince Edward Island**, the smallest province, is cradled in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, east of New Brunswick and north of Nova Scotia and separated from them by the Northumberland Strait. The coast is greatly indented and has many bays and inlets running inland in every direction. Influenced by the sea, the climate is quite moderate except for occasional extreme lows in winter.

Agriculture is the principal occupation. Almost 70 per cent of the land is cultivated, producing mixed grain crops but specializing in potato growing. Dairying and livestock

*Salvage Cove, Nfld. The Island of Newfoundland is rugged with a surface of barren rocks and lakes.*





*Prince Edward Island, the smallest province, is cradled in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.*

raising are also important. The lobster catch accounts for about 60 per cent by value of primary fishery production. Food processing makes up the bulk of manufacturing.

The capital of Prince Edward Island is Charlottetown.

**Nova Scotia** is a peninsular province almost surrounded by waters of the Bay of Fundy, the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Northumberland Strait. It is connected with New Brunswick by the Isthmus of Chignecto. The northeastern portion, Cape Breton Island, is separated from the mainland by the Strait of Canso, now traversed by a permanent causeway. Winters are stormy on the Atlantic Coast and fog is prevalent all year.

Nova Scotia's fishery is one of Canada's largest; principal species by landed value are lobster, cod, scallop and haddock. Agriculture is centred on dairy products, livestock and fruit. Coal is the principal mineral produced; others are gypsum and salt.

The two large urban areas are Halifax-Dartmouth and Sydney-Glace Bay. Halifax, the capital, is situated on one of the best natural harbours in the world.

**New Brunswick** is nearly rectangular with a surface which is mostly undulating, and with an extensive seacoast provided by the Chaleur Bay on the North, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Northumberland Strait on the East, and the Bay of Fundy on the South. It adjoins Quebec and the United States.



New Brunswick's climate reflects the moderating influence of the sea. Temperatures in the interior are more extreme than on the coasts.

Forest products and food processing are the principal types of manufacturing. The most important species in the provincial fishery in terms of landed value are lobster and crab. Agriculture is varied, with dairy products and potatoes being the most important products.

Fredericton is the capital. Saint John, at the mouth of the Saint John River, is the principal port and industrial centre.

**Quebec**, the largest province in area, extends north and west of the St. Lawrence River and Gulf of St. Lawrence to Hudson Strait and Hudson Bay; it is bounded on the southwest by the Ottawa River and on the northeast by Labrador. South of the St. Lawrence are the Eastern Townships and the Gaspé Peninsula.

Physiographically, Quebec has three regions: the plateau-like highlands of the Canadian Shield occupy the greater part of the area north of the St. Lawrence River; the Appalachian Mountains extend through the area south of the St. Lawrence; and the third region, the fertile agricultural area of the St. Lawrence lowlands, is low and flat.

In the St. Lawrence Valley, the frost-free season extends from early May to late September. Northward and westward, winter temperatures become more extreme and the summers cooler.

*Prospect, NS. The fishery of this province is one of Canada's largest.*





*Moonlight reflects the stillness of winter on the Mississippi River, near Fergusons Falls, Ont.*

Quebec accounts for about one-quarter of Canadian manufacturing, is a major producer of gold, iron ore and copper, a leading world producer of asbestos and a major producer of hydroelectric power. Agriculture is concentrated on dairy products and livestock.

Montreal, the largest city, is one of the great industrial, commercial and financial centres of the continent. The capital city of Quebec was founded by Champlain in 1608.

**Ontario** has a freshwater shoreline on the Great Lakes and a northern saltwater shoreline on Hudson Bay and James Bay.



Ontario has two major physiographic regions, the Canadian Shield and the gentler lowlands of the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence region. The Canadian Shield terrain, a rugged, rocky plateau strewn with lakes and muskeg, is a difficult surface over which ground transportation routes have been constructed with great effort. Summers, though warm, are short.

The southern lowlands region, about one-sixth the size of northern Ontario, has such glacial features as rock plains, morainic hills, till plains, clay plains, drumlins and sand plains. This area has a much milder climate than the northern districts. Since it lies in a major storm track, wide variations occur in weather, especially in winter, but conditions of severe cold or excessive warmth are not prolonged.

The lowlands area is densely populated and highly industrialized. Favourable climate, fertile soil and ease of travel over relatively unobstructed terrain and on the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes influenced population growth, and agriculture became well established. The area is now one of the world's great industrial agglomerations with the provincial capital, Toronto, as its focal point.

Ontario accounts for about half of Canadian manufacturing and ranks first among the provinces in agricultural receipts. Although Ontario ranks second in mineral production by value, it is first in metals production, including nickel, copper, uranium, gold and zinc.

**Manitoba** is the most easterly of the three Prairie provinces. The northern area has heavily glaciated topography and deranged drainage. Its major rivers, Nelson and Churchill, flow into Hudson Bay. The southwestern portion is the lowest of three step-like formations across the great central plains. It is floored by deep fertile clay soils left by glacial lakes that once covered the area. Manitoba has a continental-type climate with long cold winters, short but warm summers and scanty precipitation.

*Canola fields create colorful designs along the Little Saskatchewan River valley, north of Minnedosa, Man.*





*Lloydminster area of Saskatchewan. This province is the great grain-producing region of Canada.*

Manitoba's economy has been built on agricultural resources, mainly wheat and other grain crops but a variety of livestock products are also important. Manufacturing is varied, led by food processing and metal fabricating. Manitoba has the greatest water-power potential of the three Prairie provinces.

Winnipeg, the capital, is the industrial centre of Manitoba.

**Saskatchewan** is two-thirds prairie lowland, the great grain-producing region of Canada. Cutting across the lowland are the branches of the Saskatchewan River which flow to Lake Winnipeg.

Saskatchewan's climate is continental with long cold winters and warm summers. The frost-free period in the fertile lowland areas ranges from 80 to 100 days. Precipitation is low with an average of less than 50 cm a year.

Agriculture is the leading industry with wheat and other grains as the major components. The large value of mineral production is divided among non-metals, principally potash (Saskatchewan is a major world producer of potash), fuels and metals, notably uranium.

The urban centres — Regina, the capital, and Saskatoon — serve mainly as distributing centres for their surrounding areas.

**Alberta** lies mainly in the interior plains region. The southern part of the province is dry, treeless prairie changing toward the north into a zone of poplar interspersed with open prairie and giving way to mixed forests.

From the Saskatchewan border in the southern area the plain rises gradually as it merges into the Rocky Mountain Foothills. This foothills area is part of the Western Cordilleran region. The Alberta Rockies have numerous high peaks close to or on the British Columbia boundary.

The South is subject in winter to cold dry air masses of continental polar air, occasionally moderated by Chinook winds. Summers are warm with abundant sunshine but rainfall is meagre and highly variable, particularly in the southwest, with periodic droughts.

About half the value of minerals produced in Canada comes from Alberta, almost entirely related to fuels — petroleum, natural gas and its byproducts (including natural gas liquids and sulphur), and coal. Agriculture is an important sector with grains and livestock prominent. There is a substantial diversified manufacturing sector.

The metropolitan areas of Edmonton, the capital, and Calgary are in the oil and gas producing areas.

**British Columbia** consists almost completely of the Cordilleran region made up of parallel mountain ranges oriented in a north-south direction.

The Rocky Mountains on the East present a continuous range of wall-like ridges. Some of the highest peaks in the Canadian Rockies rise to 3 500 m or more. The central section is marked off by the Rocky Mountain Trench which contains the headwaters of the Kootenay, Columbia, Fraser, Peace and Liard rivers. In the western section, the Coast Mountains extend southward from the St. Elias Mountains.

The inner passage adjacent to the coast — the Strait of Georgia, Queen Charlotte Strait and Hecate Strait — is one of the finest natural waterways in the world. Vancouver Island rises steeply from a rocky coastline.

Prevailing westerly winds and the warm Pacific waters result in mild wet winters in the coastal area, warm summers and the longest average frost-free season in Canada. The North has long cold winters, short cool summers and moderate precipitation.

Natural resources are the basis of the economy. Forestry is particularly important, both as a primary activity and as the largest component of the province's manufacturing sector. The province's mineral production is very large, with both fuels (coal, natural gas and petroleum) and metals (notably, copper and molybdenum) predominating. Dairy products and cattle are the main forms of agriculture. Salmon makes up over half the landed value of the extensive fishery with herring also important.

Vancouver is the largest city, a rapidly growing industrial complex and seaport. Victoria, the capital, is on the southern tip of Vancouver Island.

**The Yukon**, north and slightly west of British Columbia, is a triangular area of plateaus and mountain ranges bounded by the Northwest Territories and Alaska. Its only seacoast extends along the Arctic Ocean west of the Mackenzie River Delta. Numerous river valleys cut through mountains and plateaus. In the southwest many peaks of the St. Elias Mountains reach heights of over 4 000 m. The highest point in Canada, Mount Logan (5 951 m), is located in this mountain range.

The whole region is north of latitude 60° and part is beyond the Arctic Circle. In summer, long hours of daylight promote rapid growth where there is suitable soil. In winter, the days are short with little effective sunshine.





*Banff National Park, Canada's oldest National Park, was established in 1885.*

Mining is a leading activity with gold and silver the principal products, at present.

The Alaska Highway provides a transport link with British Columbia and Alberta. The capital and main urban centre is Whitehorse.

**The Northwest Territories** include all Canadian territory north of the 60th parallel of latitude except the Yukon, the northwestern tip of Quebec and Labrador, and all islands south of the 60th parallel in Hudson Bay and James Bay. This vast area, more than one-third of Canada, is one of extremes in topographical characteristics, flora and fauna, and climate with permafrost throughout. Across the low-lying mainland area flows the Mackenzie River, draining Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake and emptying into the Arctic Ocean. The whole northeastern portion of the mainland is treeless tundra studded



with countless lakes, swamps and muskeg. In southern areas, summers last for about three months with temperatures above 10°C. North of the treeline, freezing temperatures may occur during any month and winters are long and bitterly cold. Winter nights and summer days are long, reaching a maximum of 24 hours. Precipitation is extremely light and falls mostly in late summer.

The mining industry is large with zinc, gold and lead the leading minerals. There is also some oil and gas production. Fur and fisheries resources, the mainstay of the native population, are exploited commercially to some extent.

The capital, Yellowknife, is situated on the north shore of Great Slave Lake. Road access to the rest of Canada is restricted to the Mackenzie Delta and Great Slave Lake areas. In the eastern Arctic, the focal point is Iqaluit (Frobisher Bay).

*Life is dwarfed by glacial majesty at Ellesmere Island National Park Reserve, NWT, the most northerly park in the world.*

