



CANADA

A elaborete eleva: Balan Mirela cl. 9

Canada, the world's second-largest country (after Russia), is the largest country in the Western Hemisphere and comprises all the North American continent north of the United States, with the exclusion of Alaska, Greenland, and the tiny French Island of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

Canada is bounded on the north by the Arctic Ocean, on the west by the Pacific Ocean, and on the east by the Atlantic Ocean and its associated bodies of water, including Baffin Bay and Labrador Sea. Its only international land boundary is with the United States - - on the northwest, between Canada and the state of Alaska, and on the south, where the U.S.- Canada border is 6,416 km (3,987 mi) long.

Canada has a total population (1991) of 27,296,859 . About 80% of this number live within 160 km (100 mi) of the U.S. border on the south; approximately 89% of the country is virtually unsettled. Because of these vast tracts of virtually uninhabited northern forests and tundra, Canada has one of the lowest population densities in the world.

Canada is rich in natural resources. It is a world leader in value of mineral exports and produces and exports many of the minerals needed for modern industrial economies, although a few minerals, such as manganese, chromium, bauxite, and tin must be imported. Its soils, which are especially rich in the three prairie provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, are intensively utilized and make Canada one of the world's largest exporters of agricultural products. Forests cover much of the land, and Canada is the world's largest exporter of newsprint and a leading supplier of lumber, pulp, paper, and wood products.

Canada has a dual cultural heritage that stems from the British conquest (1763) of the French colony of New France. Today both French and English are official languages. The threat of separatism by the largely French – speaking province of Quebec was an issue through the 1980s and early 1990s referendum mandating the sovereignty of Quebec was defeated by Quebec’s electorate. The 1987 Meech Lake accord, an addition to the 1982 constitution that acknowledge Quebec’s distinctness, failed in 1990 when two provinces refused to finalize it.

The name Canada is thought to be derived from Kanata, the Huron – Iroquois word meaning “village” or “community”.

THE LAND AND RESOURCES

Physical Regions

Canada has six major physical, or physiographic, regions: the CANADIAN SHIELD, the Arctic Islands, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowlands, the Appalachian Region, the Interior Plains, and the Cordilleran Region.

Climate

The populated southern areas of Canada have a wide variety of temperate climates. The Pacific coastal areas have a temperate marine west coast type of climate, with cool summers in the 16 deg-18 deg C (60deg- 65deg F) range and mild winters in the 0 deg-4 deg C (32 deg – 39 deg F) range. The interior plains have a middle- latitude steppe-type climate in the drier southern section and a more humid and extreme continental type of climate elsewhere. Temperatures winters and 18 deg- 20 deg to 25 deg C (-5 deg to +5 deg F) in long winters and 18 deg- 20 deg C (65 deg- 68 deg F) in short summers.

The Great Lakes- St. Lawrence Lowlands and the Appalachian Region have a more humid version of a continental type of climate. Both areas have a long, cold winter, with January averages about -10 deg C (14 deg F) in the eastern sections and -4 deg C (25 deg F) in the Ontario Peninsula, and short, warm summer with average temperatures of near 20 deg C (68 deg F).

Precipitation is heaviest in the west. Where moisture-laden winds from the Pacific Ocean are forced to rise over the mountainous coastal regions and bring more than 5,000 mm (195 in) of rain a year to some areas, although average annual precipitation is 1,525 to 2,540 mm (60 to 100 in). Precipitation is least in the Interior Plains, where many areas receive less than 500 mm (20 in) a year. Except for the low-lying Pacific coast areas, winter precipitation throughout Canada is usually in the form of snow, and thick blankets of accumulated snow cover most of Canada east of Rockies for 3 to 6 months of the year.

The sparsely settled northern areas have an arctic, or tundra, type of climate on the island and northern coastal areas and a subarctic type of climate in the vast transitional area between the frozen north and the settled south. The arctic type of climate is characterized by long, very cold winters, with average temperatures higher than 10 deg C (50 deg F). In the subarctic areas, winters are similarly long and bitterly cold, but summers are warm enough (more than 10 deg C/50 deg F) to support vegetation growth. Precipitation is generally light in the western areas of the arctic and subarctic regions and heavier in northern Quebec and Labrador. Despite the low precipitation, snow covers the ground permanently for more than 6 months of every year.

The people

The great majority of Canadians were born in Canada, and most are of European descent. The ethnic composition of the

population today is the result of successive waves of immigration by various European national groups in the past.

Composition of the Population

French Canadians account for about 27% of the total population and are heavily concentrated in the province of Quebec. Where they are about 80% of the population, and in New Brunswick. Where they constitute about a third of the population.

The British settled primarily in the Atlantic provinces and in Ontario and later in British Columbia. They remain a major element in the population of these regions today, although the proportion of the British ethnic group in Canada as a whole has declined steadily from 57% in 1901 to about 40% in 1986.

The principal continental European groups are Germans, Italians, Ukrainians, Scandinavians, Dutch, and Poles. Indigenous Indians and Eskimos (Inuit) account for a small percentage of the total population but are a major element in the north, where they account for a majority of the population in the Northwest Territories and a significant population in the Yukon.

Language

Canada has two official languages, English and French, which have equal status in affairs of the federal and provincial government and federal courts. Of the total population, more than 60% speak only English and significant minorities speak only French or are bilingual. A few speak neither language. The majority of new immigrants prefer to learn English rather than French and to enroll their children in schools in which the language of instruction is English.

Economic Activity

During the last 75 years, the Canadian economy has been transformed from one based primarily on agricultural production and the export of agricultural products and raw materials to one



based primarily on manufacturing and service sectors, as well as a sector of continuing importance.