

CANADA

Canada is a country in North America and it occupies most of northern America. Canada extends from the Atlantic Ocean on the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west and northward into the Arctic Ocean. Canada is the world's second largest country by total area, and shares land borders with the United States of America to the south and northwest.

The land occupied by Canada was inhabited for millennia by various aboriginal peoples. Beginning in the late 15th century, British and French expeditions explored and later settled the Atlantic coast. France ceded nearly all of its colonies in North America in 1763 after the Seven Years' War. In 1867, with the union of three British North American colonies through Confederation, Canada was formed as a federal dominion of four provinces. This began an accretion of additional provinces and territories and a process of increasing autonomy from the United Kingdom, highlighted by the Statute of Westminster in 1931, and culminating in the Canada Act in 1982 which severed the vestiges of legal dependence on the British parliament.

The name *Canada* comes from a St. Lawrence Iroquoian word *kanata*, meaning "village" or "settlement". In 1535, inhabitants of the present-day Quebec City region used the word to direct explorer Jacques Cartier toward the village of Stadacona. Cartier used the word 'Canada' to refer to not only that village, but the entire area subject to Donnacona, Chief at Stadacona. By 1545, European books and maps began referring to this region as Canada.

Canada is one of the world's wealthiest nations, with a high per-capita income, and is a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the G8. It is one of the world's top 10 trading nations. Canada is a mixed market, ranking lower than the U.S. but higher than most western European nations on the Heritage Foundation's index of economic freedom. Since the early 1990s, the Canadian economy has been growing rapidly with low unemployment and large government surpluses on the federal level. Today Canada closely resembles the U.S. in its market-oriented economic system, pattern of production, and high living standards. As of October 2007, Canada's national unemployment rate of 5.9% is its lowest in 33 years. Provincial unemployment rates vary from a low of 3.6% in Alberta to a high of 14.6% in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Canada is one of the few developed nations that are net exporters of energy. Atlantic Canada has vast offshore deposits of natural and large oil and gas resources are centred in Alberta.. The vast Athabasca Oil Sands give Canada the world's second largest oil reserves behind Saudi Arabia. In Quebec, British Columbia, Newfoundland & Labrador,

New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba, hydroelectricity is a cheap and clean source of renewable energy.

Canada is a geographically vast and ethnically diverse country. Canadian culture has also been greatly influenced by immigration from all over the world. Many Canadians value multiculturalism and see Canadian culture as being inherently multicultural. Multicultural heritage is the basis of Section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.