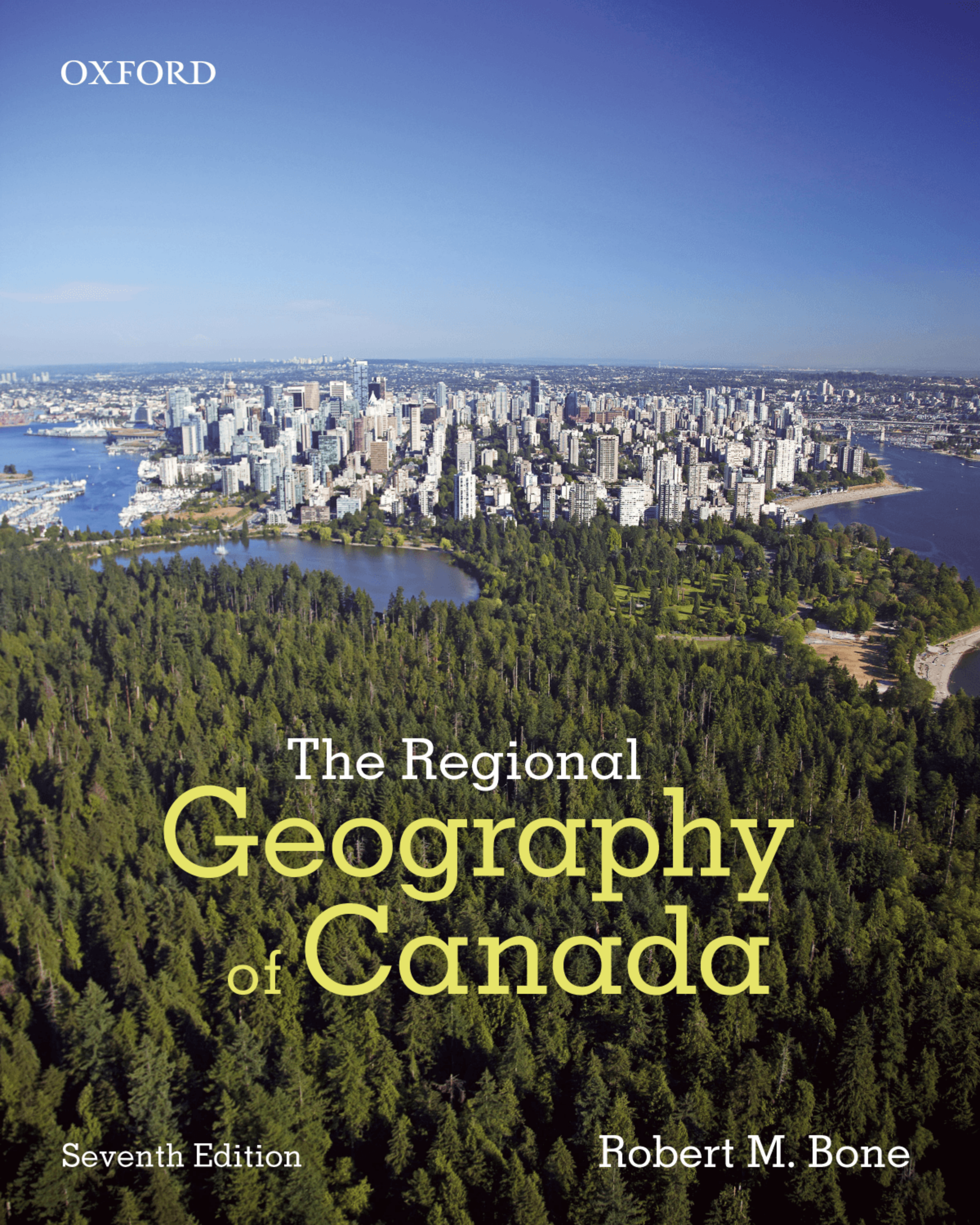


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An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely Vancouver, Canada, viewed from a high vantage point. The foreground is dominated by a dense, lush green forest of tall evergreen trees. In the middle ground, a large body of water, possibly a bay or harbor, is visible, with a small island or peninsula in the center. The city skyline is composed of numerous high-rise buildings and skyscrapers, extending to the horizon under a clear blue sky. The overall scene captures the contrast between urban development and natural forest.

The Regional  
**Geography**  
of **Canada**

Seventh Edition

Robert M. Bone

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# Brief Contents

*Figures* viii

*Tables* x

*Boxes* xii

*Preface* xiv

*Important Features of this Edition* 1

- ① Regions of Canada 3
- ② Canada's Physical Base 21
- ③ Canada's Historical Geography 59
- ④ Canada's Human Face 115
- ⑤ Canada's Economic Face 149
- ⑥ Ontario 175
- ⑦ Québec 213
- ⑧ Western Canada 247
- ⑨ British Columbia 283
- ⑩ Atlantic Canada 321
- ⑪ The Territorial North 363
- ⑫ Canada: A Country of Regions within a Global Economy 397

*Glossary* 407

*Websites* 416

*Notes* 420

*Bibliography* 429

*Index* 454

# Contents

*Figures* viii

*Tables* x

*Boxes* xii

*Preface* xiv

*Important Features of This Edition* 1



## 1 Regions of Canada 3

- Chapter Overview 3
- Introduction 3
- Geography as a Discipline 4
- Regional Geography 4
- Canada's Geographic Regions 5
- Geography of Political Power 7
- Sense of Place 8
- Faultlines within Canada 9
- The Core/Periphery Theory 16
- Summary 17
- Challenge Questions 18
- Essay Questions 18
- Further Reading 19



## 2 Canada's Physical Base 21

- Chapter Overview 21
- Introduction 21

- Physical Variations within Canada 22
- The Nature of Landforms 23
- Physiographic Regions 24
- Geographic Location 37
- Climate 38
- Climate Change and Global Warming 39
- Major Drainage Basins 50
- Canada and Pollution 53
- Summary 56
- Challenge Questions 56
- Essay Questions 56
- Further Reading 57



## 3 Canada's Historical Geography 59

- Chapter Overview 59
- Introduction 59
- The First People 60
- The Second People 66
- The Third People 69
- The Territorial Evolution of Canada 71
- Faultlines in Canada's Early Years 78
- The Centralist/Decentralist Faultline 80
- The Indigenous/Non-Indigenous Faultline 81
- The Immigration Faultline 95
- The French/English Faultline 103
- Summary 111
- Challenge Questions 112
- Essay Questions 112
- Further Reading 112



## 4 Canada's Human Face 115

- Chapter Overview 115
- Introduction 115
- Canada's Population 116
- Urban Population 125
- Canada's Aging Population 129
- The Ups and Downs of Indigenous Population 130
- Canada's Changing Culture 133
- Summary 145
- Challenge Questions 146
- Essay Questions 146
- Further Reading 147



## 5 Canada's Economic Face 149

- Chapter Overview 149
- Introduction 149
- Canada's Economies 150
- Canada's Future Economic Face 150
- The National Policy and the Birth of an Industrial Core 153
- Globalization and the Stages of Economic Growth Model 154
- The Super Cycle Theory 156
- Canada's Economy 157
- Trade Agreements 161
- Manufacturing: Alive or Dead? 162
- The Wave of the Future: The Knowledge-based Economy 165
- Regional Economies 167
- Summary 171
- Challenge Questions 171
- Essay Questions 171
- Further Reading 172



## 6 Ontario 175

- Chapter Overview 175
- Introduction 175
- Ontario within Canada 176
- Ontario's Physical Geography 178
- Environmental Challenges 180
- Ontario's Historical Geography 182
- Ontario Today 188
- Technical Spearheads 191
- Ontario's Economic Anchor: The Automobile Industry 192
- Ontario's Core 197
- Ontario's Hinterland: Northern Ontario 202
- Indigenous Communities in Northern Ontario 207
- Summary 209
- Challenge Questions 209
- Essay Questions 209
- Further Reading 210



## 7 Québec 213

- Chapter Overview 213
- Introduction 213
- Québec's Place within Canada 214
- Québec's Culture, Identity, and Language 214
- Québec's Physical Geography 219
- Environmental Challenges 220
- Québec's Historical Geography 220
- Québec Today 226
- Technical Spearheads 229
- Québec's Economic Anchor: Hydro-Québec 232
- Québec's Core 235
- Québec's Northern Hinterland 238

Summary 243  
Challenge Questions 244  
Essay Questions 244  
Further Reading 245



## 8 Western Canada 247

Chapter Overview 247  
Introduction 247  
Western Canada within Canada 248  
Western Canada's Population 249  
Western Canada's Physical Geography 250  
Environmental Challenges 253  
Western Canada's Historical Geography 257  
Western Canada Today 260  
Technical Spearheads 262  
Western Canada's Economic Anchor:  
Agriculture 265  
Western Canada's Resource Base 269  
Western Canada's Urban Core 277  
Summary 279  
Challenge Questions 280  
Essay Questions 280  
Further Reading 281



## 9 British Columbia 283

Chapter Overview 283  
Introduction 283

British Columbia within Canada 284  
Population 286  
British Columbia's Physical Geography 288  
Environmental Challenges 291  
British Columbia's Historical Geography 297  
British Columbia Today 300  
Technical Spearheads 303  
British Columbia's Economic Anchor:  
Forestry 306  
Mining, Energy, and Fisheries 308  
British Columbia's Urban Core 314  
Summary 317  
Challenge Questions 318  
Essay Questions 318  
Further Reading 319



## 10 Atlantic Canada 321

Chapter Overview 321  
Introduction 321  
Atlantic Canada within Canada 322  
Atlantic Canada's Population 325  
Atlantic Canada's Physical Geography 325  
Environmental Challenges/Disasters 331  
Atlantic Canada's Historical Geography 333  
Atlantic Canada Today 337  
Technical Spearheads 339  
Atlantic Canada's Economic Anchor:  
The Fishing Industry 342  
Atlantic Canada's Resource Wealth 347  
Atlantic Canada's Core 355  
Summary 360  
Challenge Questions 360  
Essay Questions 360  
Further Reading 361



**11** The Territorial North 363

- Chapter Overview 363
- Introduction 363
- The Territorial North within Canada and the World 364
- Physical Geography of the Territorial North 367
- Environmental Challenge: Climate Change 369
- Historical Geography of the Territorial North 370
- The Territorial North Today 380
- Economic Spearheads 385
- Frontier Vision of Development in the Territorial North 387
- The Territorial North's Economic Anchor: Megaprojects 389
- Summary 394
- Challenge Questions 394
- Essay Questions 394
- Further Reading 395

**12** Canada: A Country of Regions within a Global Economy 397

- Introduction 397
- Regional Character and Structure 399
- Urban Canada and the Advanced Economy 401
- Canada's Faultlines 401
- Canada and the Global Economy 403
- The Future 404
- Challenge Questions 405
- Essay Questions 406
- Further Reading 406
  
- Glossary* 407
- Websites* 416
- Notes* 420
- Bibliography* 429
- Index* 454



# Figures

- 1.1 Gable's regions of Canada 5
- 1.2 The six geographic regions of Canada 6
- 1.3 Regional populations by percentage, 1871 and 2016 8
- 2.1 Physiographic regions and continental shelves in Canada 25
- 2.2 Maximum extent of ice, 18,000 BP 26
- 2.3 Time zones 37
- 2.4 Climatic zones of Canada 39
- 2.5 Seasonal temperatures in Celsius, January 42
- 2.6 Seasonal temperatures in Celsius, July 43
- 2.7 Annual precipitation in millimetres 45
- 2.8 Permafrost zones 49
- 2.9 Drainage basins of Canada 51
- 2.10 Greenhouse gas emissions, Canada, 1990–2014 54
- 3.1 Migration routes into North America 60
- 3.2 Culture regions of Indigenous peoples 65
- 3.3 Indigenous language families 66
- 3.4 Canada, 1867 71
- 3.5 Canada, 1873 73
- 3.6 Canada, 1882 74
- 3.7 Canada, 1905 77
- 3.8 Canada, 1927 78
- 3.9 Canada, 1999 79
- 3.10 Historic treaties 89
- 3.11 Modern treaties 90
- 3.12 Western Canada and the Northwest Rebellion of 1885 99
- 4.1 Population of Canada, 1851–2016, with an estimate for 2025 116
- 4.2 Population increase, 1956–2056: Immigration, an increasingly important component 117
- 4.3 Annual number of immigrants, 1901–2015 120
- 4.4 Canada's population zones and highway system 122
- 4.5 Percentage of Canadian population in urban regions, 1901–2015 126
- 4.6 Population 65 years and over, 1971–2061 129
- 4.7 Indigenous population by ancestry, 1901–2011 131
- 4.8 Number and share of the foreign-born population in Canada, 1901–2031 143
- 5.1 Daily crude oil spot prices, 2010–2015 157
- 5.2 Annual economic growth: Year-over-year per cent change in real GDP, 2010–2015 (seasonally adjusted) 158
- 5.3 Annual percentage change in real gross domestic product for Canada, provinces, and territories, 2015 159
- 5.4 CN: Symbol of the integrated North American economy 162
- 5.5 Share of Canadian exports to United States, 2001–2015 163
- 5.6 Manufacturing's share of total employment, 1998–2015 164
- 5.7 Canadian and Mexican percentage shares of North American vehicle production, 2000–2014 (including heavy-duty trucks) 165
- 6.1 Ontario basic statistics, 2015 176
- 6.2 Ontario's economy to 2020: Which way? 177
- 6.3 Ontario 178
- 6.4 Physiographic regions in Central Canada 179
- 6.5 The Great Lakes Basin 183
- 6.6 The Haldimand Tract 186
- 6.7 The heart of the problem: Mexico attracts more investment than Canada 193
- 6.8 Employment in Canada's automobile industry 194
- 6.9 Automobile assembly centres in Ontario 196
- 6.10 Historical and projected population in Northern Ontario, 1871–2036 203
- 6.11 Canadian mine production of gold, by region, 2015 205
- 6.12 De Beers diamond explorations in the Hudson Bay Lowlands 207
- 6.13 Northern Ontario's Ring of Fire 208
- 7.1 Québec basic statistics, 2015 214
- 7.2 Pastagate: Language inspector rejects "pasta" on Italian restaurant menu 215
- 7.3 Population of Québec, 1851–2011, and projected population, 2021–2061 216
- 7.4 The St Lawrence River and Lake Ontario 218
- 7.5 Map of British North America, 1774 222
- 7.6 Major export products from Québec, 2006, 2014, and 2015 (millions of \$) 231
- 7.7 Cree communities of Québec 234
- 7.8 Population by mother tongue, 2011: Québec and Montréal 235
- 7.9 Canadian mine production of iron ore, by province, 2015 241
- 8.1 Western Canada 248
- 8.2 Western Canada basic statistics, 2015 250

- 8.3 Chernozemic soils in Western Canada 254
- 8.4 Agricultural regions in Western Canada 255
- 8.5 Carbon capture and storage at Boundary Dam Power Station 264
- 8.6 Alberta's hydrocarbon resources: Oil sands and oil fields 270
- 8.7 Cyclic steam stimulation (CSS) 271
- 8.8 Projected Alberta oil production to 2030 272
- 8.9 Oil sands deposits, with proposed and approved pipelines and expansion 273
- 8.10 Canadian mine production of potash, 2006–2015 275
- 9.1 British Columbia 284
- 9.2 British Columbia basic statistics, 2015 287
- 9.3 The Second Narrows Bridge: Getting supertankers to port 288
- 9.4 Physiography of British Columbia 289
- 9.5 Great Bear Rainforest Land Use Zones 292
- 9.6 Map of the proposed twinning of the Trans Mountain pipeline 295
- 9.7 Westridge oil terminal expansion, Burnaby, BC 295
- 9.8 2015 simplified seismic hazard map for British Columbia 296
- 9.9 Horizontal drilling 305
- 9.10 Forest regions in British Columbia 307
- 9.11 Prince Rupert Gas Transmission and North Montney Mainline pipelines 309
- 9.12 Mines in British Columbia 311
- 9.13 Dams and generating stations on the Peace River 312
- 9.14 Metro Vancouver 314
- 10.1 Atlantic Canada 323
- 10.2 Atlantic Canada basic statistics, 2015 325
- 10.3 The Labrador Current and the Gulf Stream 329
- 10.4 Atlantic Canada in 1750 334
- 10.5 The Maritime Provinces: First to enter Confederation 336
- 10.6 Newfoundland and Labrador 338
- 10.7 Lower Churchill hydroelectric projects 341
- 10.8 Major fishing banks in Atlantic Canada 343
- 10.9 Lobster landings in Atlantic Canada, 1895–2014 344
- 10.10 Georges Bank: The Canada–US boundary 345
- 10.11 Cod landings for Newfoundland/Labrador and Atlantic Canada, 1990–2014 (metric tonnes live weight) 346
- 10.12 Nova Scotia offshore gas sites and pipeline system 349
- 10.13 Natural resources in Atlantic Canada 352
- 11.1 The Territorial North 364
- 11.2 The Territorial North basic statistics, 2015 365
- 11.3 Nunavut's suicide spike 375
- 11.4 The Arctic Basin and national borders 377
- 11.5 Major urban centres in the Territorial North 381
- 11.6 Inuit Nunangat 383
- 11.7 Resource development in the Territorial North 391
- 12.1 Gord Downie's *The Secret Path* and the death of Chanie Wenjack 398
- 12.2 Fighting over oil revenues 400
- 12.3 Energy East pipeline route 402

# Tables

- 1.1 General Characteristics of the Six Canadian Regions, 2015 7
- 1.2 Social Characteristics of the Six Canadian Regions, 2011 13
- 2.1 Geological Time Chart 25
- 2.2 Latitude and Longitude of Selected Centres 38
- 2.3 Climatic Types 44
- 2.4 Air Masses Affecting Canada 44
- 2.5 Canada's Drainage Basins 50
- 3.1 Timeline: Old World Hunters to Contact with Europeans 62
- 3.2 Population of the Red River Settlement, 1869 69
- 3.3 Canada's Population by Provinces and Territories, 1901 and 1921 70
- 3.4 Timeline: Territorial Evolution of Canada 74
- 3.5 Timeline: Evolution of Canada's Internal Boundaries 79
- 3.6 Members of the House of Commons by Geographic Region, 1911 and 2015 80
- 3.7 Modern Land Claim Agreements, 1975–2014 92
- 3.8 Population in Western Canada by Province, 1871–1911 100
- 3.9 Population of Western Canada by Ethnic Group, 1916 102
- 3.10 Population by Colony or Province, 1841–1871 (%) 106
- 4.1 Population Size, Increase, and % Change by Geographic Region, 2001–2016 117
- 4.2 Phases in the Demographic Transition Theory 118
- 4.3 Canada's Rate of Natural Increase, 1851–2015 119
- 4.4 Population Density by Region, Canada, 2016 121
- 4.5 Population Zones, 2016 122
- 4.6 Population of Census Metropolitan Areas, 2006 and 2015 127
- 4.7 Major Phases for the Indigenous Population in Canada 132
- 4.8 Indigenous Population by Identity, Canada and Regions, 2001 and 2011 133
- 4.9 Ethnic Origins of Canadians, 1996 and 2011 136
- 5.1 Historic Shifts in Canada's Industrial Structure 152
- 5.2 Major Economic Revolutions over the Last 10,000 Years 153
- 5.3 Canada's Annual Unemployment Rate, 2006–2016 158
- 5.4 The Orientation of Canadian Trade: From North American to Global? 163
- 5.5 Industrial Structure of Canada and Regions, Percentage of Workers by Industrial Sector, 2015 168
- 5.6 Provincial Unemployment Rates, 2007, 2009, 2014, and 2015 (percentage of total labour force) 169
- 5.7 Federal Equalization Payments to Provinces, Fiscal Year 2016–2017 170
- 6.1 Equalization Payments to Ontario, 2009–10 to 2016–17 (\$ millions) 177
- 6.2 Ontario Industrial Sectors by Number of Workers, 2005 and 2016 190
- 6.3 Ontario Motor Vehicle Production, 1999–2014 195
- 6.4 Ontario Automobile Assembly Plants, 2015 196
- 6.5 Population of Census Metropolitan Areas in Southern Ontario, 2001 and 2015 197
- 6.6 Population of Northern Ontario CMAs, 2001–2015 204
- 6.7 Population of Cities and Towns in Northern Ontario, 2001–2011 204
- 7.1 Timeline: Historical Milestones in New France 221
- 7.2 Timeline: Historical Milestones in the British Colony of Lower Canada 223
- 7.3 Timeline: Historical Milestones for Québec in Confederation 225
- 7.4 Québec Industrial Sectors by Number of Workers, 2005 and 2016 228
- 7.5 Population of Census Metropolitan Areas in Québec, 2001 and 2015 237
- 7.6 Population Change: Montréal and Toronto, 1951–2015 (000s) 238
- 8.1 Western Canada: Population and GDP, 2015 261
- 8.2 Western Canada Industrial Sectors by Number of Workers, 2005 and 2016 (000s) 261
- 8.3 Leading Crops by Acreage in Western Canada, 2016 268
- 8.4 Recently Proposed Oil Pipelines to Tidewater 273
- 8.5 Uranium Mines and Mills in Northern Saskatchewan 276
- 8.6 Forested Areas by Province, Western Canada 276
- 8.7 Census Metropolitan Areas in Western Canada, 2001–2015 278

- 8.8** Population of Small Cities, 2001–2011 279
- 8.9** Indigenous Population by Province, Western Canada 279
- 9.1** Exports through British Columbia, 2001, 2006, 2009, and 2015 301
- 9.2** British Columbia Industrial Sectors by Number of Workers, 2005 and 2016 302
- 9.3** Census Metropolitan Areas in British Columbia, 2001–2015 315
- 9.4** Urban Centres in British Columbia, 2001–2011 316
- 10.1** Basic Statistics for Atlantic Canada by Province, 2015 325
- 10.2** Atlantic Canada Industrial Sectors by Number of Workers, 2005 and 2016 339
- 10.3** Value of Commercial Atlantic Coast/Gulf of St Lawrence Fish Landings, by Province, 2014 (\$ millions) 344
- 10.4** Value of Resources, 2014 (\$ millions) 347
- 10.5** Population Change in Atlantic Canada, 1996–2016 356
- 10.6** Census Metropolitan Areas in Atlantic Canada, 2001–2015 357
- 10.7** Urban Centres in Atlantic Canada, 2001 and 2011 358
- 11.1** Petroleum Resources in the Territorial North 378
- 11.2** Capital Cities in the Territorial North 381
- 11.3** Population and Indigenous Population, Territorial North, 2001–2015 382
- 11.4** Components of Population Growth for the Territories, 2015 382
- 11.5** Estimated Employment by Industrial Sector, Territorial North, 2015 383
- 11.6** Comprehensive Land Claim Agreements in the Territorial North 386
- 11.7** Mineral and Petroleum Production in the Territorial North, 2014 (\$ millions) 393

# Boxes

## Vignette Boxes

- 1.1 Curiosity: The Starting Point for Geography 4
- 1.2 Canadian Unity: A Powerful Force 12
- 1.3 Indigenous Peoples, Modern Land Claims, and Resource-Sharing 15
- 1.4 Does Time Temper All? 16
- 2.1 Two Different Geographies 22
- 2.2 The Earth's Crust and Major Types of Rocks 23
- 2.3 Alpine Glaciation, Glaciers, and Water for the Prairies 30
- 2.4 Cypress Hills 33
- 2.5 Isostatic Rebound 34
- 2.6 Prince Edward Island 35
- 2.7 Champlain Sea 36
- 2.8 Prairie Climate Atlas 38
- 2.9 Global Warming and Climate Change: What Is the Difference? 40
- 2.10 Natural Factors Affecting Global Warming 41
- 2.11 Air Masses 43
- 2.12 Types of Precipitation 44
- 2.13 Fluctuations in World Temperatures 46
- 3.1 Unity through the CPR 69
- 3.2 America's Manifest Destiny 72
- 3.3 The Transfer of the Arctic Archipelago to Canada 75
- 3.4 The Loss of the Oregon Territory 76
- 3.5 The Federal Government and Indigenous Peoples 82
- 3.6 The Failure to Create "Good Little Indians" 86
- 3.7 From a Colonial Straitjacket to Indigenous Power 94
- 3.8 The Origin of the Métis Nation 97
- 3.9 The Results of the 30 October 1995 Referendum 111
- 4.1 The Concept of Replacement Fertility 118
- 4.2 The Assembly of First Nations 132
- 4.3 Time Heals All? 138
- 4.4 Charles Taylor on Multiculturalism 139
- 4.5 Cultural Adjustment and Ethnic Neighbourhoods 140
- 4.6 Indigenous Realities: Family Instability and Murdered and Missing Women 144
- 5.1 The Fourth Industrial Revolution 153
- 5.2 China: The Engine of a Commodities Super Cycle 155
- 5.3 The Third Super Cycle 156
- 5.4 GDP: A Measure of the Economy 158
- 5.5 New Link in the North–South Transportation System 160
- 6.1 Ontario's Snowbelts 180
- 6.2 The Welland Canal 184
- 6.3 Timeline of the Caledonia Dispute 187
- 6.4 Hamilton: Steel City or Rust Town? 198
- 7.1 The Quiet Revolution and Natural Rate of Population Increase 215
- 7.2 Demography Has Political Consequences 217
- 7.3 The St Lawrence River 218
- 7.4 Does Geography Draw Québec into the Circumpolar World? 220
- 7.5 The Rebellions of 1837–8 225
- 7.6 Administrative Regions in Québec's North 239
- 7.7 Indigenous Peoples Benefit from Resource Profit-Sharing Agreements 241
- 8.1 Water Deficit and Evapotranspiration 249
- 8.2 The Great Sand Hills 266
- 8.3 Potash: Saskatchewan's Underground Wealth 275
- 8.4 Winnipeg 278
- 9.1 BC's Precipitation: Too Much or Too Little? 291
- 9.2 Polluter Pays—Or Can a Company Dodge the Bullet? 296
- 9.3 Indigenous Title: Who Owns BC? 298
- 9.4 Granville Island 316
- 10.1 Weather in St John's 328
- 10.2 The Annapolis Valley 330
- 10.3 Georges Bank 345
- 10.4 The Hibernia Platform 350
- 10.5 The Passing of the Big Commute 357
- 10.6 Halifax 358
- 11.1 Sedimentary Basins 368
- 11.2 The Northwest Passage and the Franklin Search 371
- 11.3 European Diseases 372
- 11.4 The Arctic Council and the Circumpolar World 379
- 11.5 Resource-Sharing with the Northwest Territories, 2015 384
- 11.6 Sea Transportation on the Arctic Ocean 388
- 11.7 Toxic Time Bombs: The Hidden Cost of Mining 392
- 12.1 Canadian Identities 399

## Contested Terrain Boxes

- |            |  |             |  |
|------------|--|-------------|--|
| <b>1.1</b> | CETA and Canada's Dairy Industry: A Central Canada Issue? 11         | <b>6.3</b>  | The Bailout of Chrysler and GM: Sound Public Policy? 193 |
| <b>2.1</b> | The Northern Gateway Pipeline: Centripetal or Centrifugal Effect? 24 | <b>7.1</b>  | Mâîtres Chez Nous 216                                    |
| <b>3.1</b> | The Supreme Court and the Métis 88                                   | <b>8.1</b>  | Drawers of Bitumen? 271                                  |
| <b>4.1</b> | Social Engineering Often Backfires 124                               | <b>8.2</b>  | Pipeline Ruptures: Rare Events? 274                      |
| <b>4.2</b> | Immigration and Multiculturalism 141                                 | <b>9.1</b>  | Piping Oil across British Columbia 294                   |
| <b>4.3</b> | Where Are the Indigenous Fathers? 145                                | <b>9.2</b>  | Is Fracking Harmless? 305                                |
| <b>5.1</b> | Coal, the Industrial Revolution, and Global Warming 151              | <b>10.1</b> | Is the Economy All That Matters in a Hinterland? 337     |
| <b>6.1</b> | Cleaner Air and Higher Electrical Costs 181                          | <b>10.2</b> | Churchill Falls: Bonanza for Québec 342                  |
| <b>6.2</b> | Urban and Industrial Needs versus Precious Farmland 182              | <b>11.1</b> | Less Ice, More Whales 369                                |
|            |  | <b>11.2</b> | Global Warming and Arctic Tourism 386                    |
|            |  | <b>12.1</b> | Are the Oil Sands in Canada's Economic Future? 402       |

# Preface

The purpose of this book is to introduce university students to Canada's regional geography. In studying the regional geography of Canada, the student gains an appreciation of the country's amazing diversity; learns how its regions interact with one another; and grasps how regions change over time. By developing the central theme that Canada is a country of regions, this text presents a number of images of Canada, revealing its physical, cultural, and economic diversity as well as its regional complexity. Canada and its regions are involved in the global economy as never before. As a trading nation, Canada is affected by changes in world trade and prices. These changes impact each region differently. Also, Canada's population composition is now highly diverse as a result of immigrants arriving from around the world. These newcomers play a key role in Canada's population growth.

*The Regional Geography of Canada* divides Canada into six geographic regions: Ontario, Québec, Western Canada, British Columbia, Atlantic Canada, and the Territorial North. Each region has a particular regional geography, story, and population, and a unique location. These factors have determined each region's character, set the direction for its development, and created a sense of place. In examining these themes, this book underscores the dynamic nature of Canada's regional geography, which is marked by a shift in power relations among Canada's regions. World trade opened Canada to global influences, which, in turn, transformed each region and the relationships between the regions. This text employs a core/periphery framework. Such an approach allows the reader to comprehend more easily the economic relations between regions as well as modifications in these relations that occur over time. A simplified version of the core/periphery framework takes the form of "have" and "have-not" provinces.

At the same time, social cracks within Canadian society provide a different insight into the nature of Canada and its regions. Each faultline has deep

historic roots in Canadian society. While they may rest dormant for some time, these raw tensions can erupt into national crises. Four such stress points exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians; French and English Canadians; centralist (Ottawa and/or Central Canada) and decentralist (the other, less powerful regions) forces; and recent immigrants (newcomers) and those born in Canada (old-timers). This book explores the nature of these faultlines, the need to reach compromises, and the fact that reaching compromises provides the country with its greatest strength—diversity. While more progress in resolving differences is required, these faultlines are shown to be not divisive forces but forces of change that ensure Canada's existence as an open society within the context of a country of regions.

## Organization of the Text

This book consists of 12 chapters. Chapters 1 through 5 deal with general topics related to Canada's national and regional geographies—Canada's physical, historical, and human geography—thereby setting the stage for a discussion of the six main geographic regions of Canada. Chapters 6 through 11 focus on these six geographic regions. The core/periphery model provides a guide for the ordering of these regions. The regional discussion begins with Ontario and Québec, which represent the traditional demographic, economic, and political core of Canada. The two chapters on the core regions are followed by our exploration of fast-growing, slow-growing, and resource hinterland regions: Western Canada, British Columbia, Atlantic Canada, and the Territorial North. Chapter 12 provides a conclusion.

Chapter 1 discusses the nature of regions and regional geography, including the core/periphery model and its applications. Chapter 2 introduces the major physiographic regions of Canada and other elements of physical geography that affect Canada

# Preface

The purpose of this book is to introduce university students to Canada's regional geography. In studying the regional geography of Canada, the student gains an appreciation of the country's amazing diversity; learns how its regions interact with one another; and grasps how regions change over time. By developing the central theme that Canada is a country of regions, this text presents a number of images of Canada, revealing its physical, cultural, and economic diversity as well as its regional complexity. Canada and its regions are involved in the global economy as never before. As a trading nation, Canada is affected by changes in world trade and prices. These changes impact each region differently. Also, Canada's population composition is now highly diverse as a result of immigrants arriving from around the world. These newcomers play a key role in Canada's population growth.

*The Regional Geography of Canada* divides Canada into six geographic regions: Ontario, Québec, Western Canada, British Columbia, Atlantic Canada, and the Territorial North. Each region has a particular regional geography, story, and population, and a unique location. These factors have determined each region's character, set the direction for its development, and created a sense of place. In examining these themes, this book underscores the dynamic nature of Canada's regional geography, which is marked by a shift in power relations among Canada's regions. World trade opened Canada to global influences, which, in turn, transformed each region and the relationships between the regions. This text employs a core/periphery framework. Such an approach allows the reader to comprehend more easily the economic relations between regions as well as modifications in these relations that occur over time. A simplified version of the core/periphery framework takes the form of "have" and "have-not" provinces.

At the same time, social cracks within Canadian society provide a different insight into the nature of Canada and its regions. Each faultline has deep

historic roots in Canadian society. While they may rest dormant for some time, these raw tensions can erupt into national crises. Four such stress points exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians; French and English Canadians; centralist (Ottawa and/or Central Canada) and decentralist (the other, less powerful regions) forces; and recent immigrants (newcomers) and those born in Canada (old-timers). This book explores the nature of these faultlines, the need to reach compromises, and the fact that reaching compromises provides the country with its greatest strength—diversity. While more progress in resolving differences is required, these faultlines are shown to be not divisive forces but forces of change that ensure Canada's existence as an open society within the context of a country of regions.

## Organization of the Text

This book consists of 12 chapters. Chapters 1 through 5 deal with general topics related to Canada's national and regional geographies—Canada's physical, historical, and human geography—thereby setting the stage for a discussion of the six main geographic regions of Canada. Chapters 6 through 11 focus on these six geographic regions. The core/periphery model provides a guide for the ordering of these regions. The regional discussion begins with Ontario and Québec, which represent the traditional demographic, economic, and political core of Canada. The two chapters on the core regions are followed by our exploration of fast-growing, slow-growing, and resource hinterland regions: Western Canada, British Columbia, Atlantic Canada, and the Territorial North. Chapter 12 provides a conclusion.

Chapter 1 discusses the nature of regions and regional geography, including the core/periphery model and its applications. Chapter 2 introduces the major physiographic regions of Canada and other elements of physical geography that affect Canada



and its regions. Chapter 3 is devoted to Canada's historical geography, such as its territorial evolution and the emergence of regional tensions and regionalism. This discussion is followed, in Chapter 4, by an examination of the basic demographic and social factors that influence Canada and its regions as well as its population. Chapter 5 explores the national and global economic forces that have shaped Canada's regions. To sharpen our awareness of how economic forces affect local and regional developments, four major themes running throughout this text are introduced in these first five chapters. The primary theme is that Canada is a country of regions. Two secondary themes—the integration of the North American economy and the changing world economy—reflect the recent shift in economic circumstances and its effects on regional geography. These two economic forces, described as continentalism and globalization, exert both positive and negative impacts on Canada and its regions, and are explored through the core/periphery model—a model introduced in the first edition back in 2000 that has had its basic premises shaken by the uneven effects of global trade on Canada's regions.

The regional chapters explore the physical and human characteristics that distinguish each region from the others and that give each region its special sense of place. To emphasize the uniqueness of each region, the concept of an advanced economy, discussed in Chapter 5, is examined in two ways: first by identifying leading or spearhead industries and second by a more in-depth discussion of the region's predominant or historic economic anchor. These economic anchors are the automobile industry in Ontario; Hydro-Québec in Québec; agriculture in Western Canada; forestry in British Columbia; the fisheries in Atlantic Canada; and megaprojects in the Territorial North. From this presentation, the unique character of each region emerges. In the concluding chapter we discuss the future of Canada and its regions within the rapidly changing global economy.

## **Seventh Edition**

For Canada's regions, the consequences of recent global economic developments—notably the remarkable industrialization of Asian countries, especially

China—are twofold. First, fluctuations in the global economy result in “boom-and-bust cycles,” and these cycles affect Canada and its regions. Western Canada (led by Alberta and Saskatchewan) plus three other resource-dependent regions—Atlantic Canada, British Columbia, and the Territorial North—are currently suffering from low prices for their resources. During the last boom, the opposite happened. Then the economies of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia attracted record numbers of newcomers: migrants from other parts of Canada and immigrants from abroad. High oil prices benefited Newfoundland and Labrador, though its population continued to decline. Since then, these regions have fallen into an economic slump.

Second, while Ontario and Québec remain the economic and population pillars of Canada, a shift of regional power is in the wind. Over the last decade, Ontario and Québec have suffered a decline in the number of workers in their manufacturing sectors. This decline began with the relocation of many firms offshore, where labour costs are significantly lower. Canadian manufactured goods also were troubled by the so-called “Dutch disease”—a combination of high energy prices and revenues and a rising Canadian dollar—which made their production and export more difficult, thus magnifying the problems facing the industrial heartland of Canada. All of these troubling trends came to an end in 2014. Since then, for example, Ontario's automobile industry has increased the value of its exports to the United States.

Reviews play an important role in crafting a new edition. How to recast Canada's regions within the global economic crisis was one challenge. Others were to restructure the book by splitting Chapter 4 into two chapters, one dealing with population and the other with economic matters; and to reorder the sequences of regional chapters by the population size of each region. All revisions had the goal of focusing on who we are, where we have been, and where we are headed—individually, collectively, and as a country of regions—all from a regional perspective.

Consequently, this new edition has experienced a major overhaul in content to account for changes both globally and within Canada. As well as

features from the previous edition that helped students make connections and understand historical and contemporary processes, “Contested Terrain” boxes highlight controversial issues that make the regional geography of Canada dynamic and at times difficult for the major political actors to navigate. Many new photos, maps, vignettes, tables, graphs, further readings, websites, and glossary terms aim to facilitate and enrich student learning, and new essay questions have been added to each chapter.

### Acknowledgements

With each edition, I have benefited from the constructive comments of anonymous reviewers selected by Oxford University Press. I especially owe a debt of thanks to one of those reviewers who spiced his critical comments with words of encouragement that kept me going. As Canada has changed, so has each edition of this book. When I look back at the first edition, I see a much different Canada from today. This transformation process is often captured in the constructive comments of reviewers.

I have called on the resources of *The National Atlas of Canada* and Statistics Canada to provide maps and statistics. As well, both organizations have created important websites for geography students. These websites provide access to a wide range of geographic data and maps that, because they are constantly updated, allow the student to access the most recently available information on Canada and its regions.

The staff at Oxford University Press, but particularly Phyllis Wilson, made the preparation of the seventh edition a pleasant and rewarding task. Peter Chambers, the developmental editor who worked with me in the initial phases of revising the text and selecting new photographs, deserves special thanks. Richard Tallman, who diligently and skilfully has edited my manuscripts into polished finished products for each of the last six editions, deserves special mention. As copy editor, Richard has become an old friend who often pushes me to clarify my ideas.

Finally, a special note of appreciation to my wife, Karen, is in order, as well as to our four wonderful grandchildren, Casey, Davis, Austyn, and Bodhi.

# Important Features of this Edition

The seventh edition of *The Regional Geography of Canada* has been fully revised to incorporate the newest Statistics Canada data and reflect Canada's ever-changing role in the global economy. This is reflected in the new Chapter 4, Canada's Human Face, on the nation's demography, and in a new Chapter 5, Canada's Economic Face, on the economy. Building on the strengths of previous editions, the text takes into account key factors in human geography such as the slow but continuing recovery from the global economic crisis and the significant industrialization of Asian countries, which are contributing factors in shifting and re-shaping the balance of power across the nation.

As in previous editions, the seventh edition incorporates a wide range of resources for students that complement and enhance the text. Features appearing throughout the text include:

- **New essay questions** at the end of each chapter that ask students to undertake research and think critically about important issues that have been introduced.
- **New and updated “Contested Terrain” boxes** that draw attention to specific issues in the regional geography of Canada.
- **New and revised vignettes** that focus on issues specific to each chapter.
- **New and updated “Think About It” questions** that prompt students to analyze the material both in and out of the classroom.
- **New and revised cross-chapter references** that highlight the interconnectedness of content across chapters to ensure a comprehensive study of the material.
- **Numerous new figures and tables** that help to delineate the changing social and cultural face of Canada and its regions.
- **New and updated maps** that highlight the characteristics of various regions across Canada.
- **New colour photographs** that engage the reader and provide strong visual references tied to the material.

The result is a new edition that retains the strengths that have made *The Regional Geography of Canada* a best-selling text while introducing new concepts and exploring topics of interest to today's student.



# 1

# Regions of Canada

## Chapter Overview

The study of Canada's **regional geography** provides an analysis and synthesis of Canada, and provides an intuitive grasp of the country's regional nature as well as the relationships between its regions. The following topics are examined in greater detail in Chapter 1:

- Geography as a discipline.
- Regional geography.
- Canada's geographic regions.
- The dynamic nature of Canada and its regions.
- Sense of place.
- Faultlines within Canada.
- Core/periphery theory.
- Understanding Canada's regions.

## Introduction

Geography helps us understand our world. Since Canada is such a huge and diverse country, its geography is best understood from a regional perspective. In fact, the image of Canada as “a country of regions” runs deep in Canadian thought and literature, and even in the national psyche. This image is, in fact, political reality as geography and history have forged Canada into a complex and varied set of regions within a federal political framework. In its early years, railway building bound the country together and railways still play a unifying role (see Further Reading). Each **region** has its own political agenda and economic objectives that sometimes collide, causing tensions within the federation. The core/periphery model provides an overarching account of these regions and their economic relationship to each other.

Canada consists of six regions. Each differs by location, physical geography, resources, population, and historical development. From these differences, a strong sense of regional identity exists in each region. These identities, shaped over time as people came face to face with challenges presented by their economic, physical, and social environments, produced a unique sense of place in each region as well as a deep attachment to Canada. At the same time, each part of Canada contains powerful centrifugal forces that, from time to time, erupt into fractious disagreements between the federal government and particular regions, and these tensions pose challenges—some serious and other less so—to Canadian unity. So far, Canadians have overcome such friction through compromises and thus remain a strong and united country.

← A lake near Huntsville, Ontario, an area only a few hours by car from Canada's largest city, Toronto. The contrast between the two areas—not just physically but culturally as well—is striking. By closely examining the reasons for such differences in places across Canada, we can better understand country's geographic diversity.

## Geography as a Discipline

### THINK ABOUT IT

Does a sense of place still apply if a person moves from the region of his/her birth and resettles in another part of Canada?

Geography provides a description and explanation of lands, places, and peoples beyond our personal experience (Vignette 1.1). De Blij and Murphy (2006: 3) go so far as to state that “Geography is destiny,” meaning that for most people, place is the most powerful determinant of their life chances, experiences, and opportunities. In that sense, geography sets the parameters for a person’s life opportunities, and this concept transfers easily to regions and nations. The concept of “place” is much more than an area; rather, “place” refers to the community/region where one was born and raised, and emphasizes that this geographical fact combines the physical place with the local culture. In geography, this concept of place is known as a **sense of place**. Of course, within Canada, there are a variety of senses of place. An Inuk in Cambridge Bay has a different sense of place to a Québécois in Rimouski or a Vancouverite in British Columbia. Thus, sense of place reflects the attitudes and values of the inhabitants of particular communities. Yet, sense of place has a hierarchical feature whereby regional and national “layers” are added to this local palate, giving rise to both a sense of **regional consciousness** and a sense of national consciousness. As such, they combine to form a **regional identity** and a national identity, and these identities are the cornerstones of regional geography.

## Regional Geography

The geographic study of a particular part of the world is called **regional geography**. In such studies, people, interacting with their economic, physical, and social environments, are perceived as placing their imprint on the landscape just as the landscape helps to determine their lives and activities. In layperson’s terms, the goal of regional geography is to find out what makes a region “tick.” By achieving such an understanding, we gain a fuller appreciation of the complexity and diversity of our world.

Regional geography has evolved over time.<sup>1</sup> Originally, geographers focused their attention on the physical aspects of a **region** that affected and shaped the people and their institutions. Today, geographers place more emphasis on the human side because the physical environment is largely mediated through culture, economy, and technology (Agnew, 2002; Paasi, 2003). The argument, based on a challenge and response paradigm, goes like this:

A multitude of profound and often repeated extreme experiences mark people in a particular region, requiring them to respond. In turn, their responses help create a common sense of regional belonging and consciousness.

### Vignette 1.1

#### Curiosity: The Starting Point for Geography

Curiosity about distant places is not a new phenomenon. The ancient Greeks were curious about the world around them. From reports of travellers, they recognized that the earth varied from place to place and that different peoples inhabited each place. Stimulated by the travels, writings, and map-making of scholars such as Herodotus (484–c. 425 BCE), Aristotle (384–332 BCE), Thales (c. 625–c. 547 BCE), Ptolemy (90–168 CE), and Eratosthenes (c. 276–c. 192 BCE), the ancient Greeks coined the word “geography” and mapped their known world. By considering both human and physical aspects of a region, geographers have developed an integrative approach to the study of our world. This approach, which is the essence of geography, separates geography from other disciplines. The richness and excitement of geography are revealed in Canada’s six regions—each region is the product of its physical setting, past events, and contemporary issues that combine to produce a set of unique regional identities.



**FIGURE 1.1** Gable's regions of Canada

Political cartoonist Brian Gable aptly captured the occasionally fractured relationships between provinces and territories with his map of Canada. In 1985, regional tensions reached the boiling point over the threat of Québec separating from Canada. The results of the 1995 referendum were very close, but afterwards the heated political scene cooled somewhat and political separation lost its appeal—at least for now. Fast-forward to 2017, and the stresses between regions have taken on a more economic tone: the crippled energy industry of Alberta has seen the Canadian dollar fall; the federal deficit has climbed; and the equalization payments are under fire.

Source: Brian Gable/The Globe and Mail/Canadian Press Images

## Canada's Geographic Regions

The geographer's challenge is to divide a large spatial unit like Canada into a series of "like places." To do so, a regional geographer is forced to make a number of subjective decisions, including the selection of "core" physical and human characteristics that logically divide a large spatial unit into a series of regions and that distinguish each region from adjacent ones. Towards the margins of a region, its core characteristics become less distinct and merge with those characteristics of a neighbouring region. In that sense, boundaries separating regions are best considered transition zones rather than finite limits.

In this book, we examine Canada as composed of six geographic regions (Figure 1.2):

- Atlantic Canada
- Québec
- Ontario
- Western Canada
- British Columbia
- Territorial North

The six regions were selected for several reasons. First, a huge Canada needs to be divided into a set of manageable segments. Too many regions would distract the reader from the goal of easily grasping the basic nature of Canada's regional geography. Six regions allow us to readily comprehend Canada's regional geography

### THINK ABOUT IT

Each region has had its struggles with Ottawa. What event(s) affected relations between your region and Ottawa?



**FIGURE 1.2** The six geographic regions of Canada

The coastal boundaries of Canada are recognized by other nations except for the “sector” boundary in the Arctic Ocean, which is shown as a dashed boundary. In the near future, the Territorial North may extend well into the Arctic Ocean and its seabed. In 2018, Canada plans to submit to the United Nations its claim to part of the “international” portion of the continental shelf of the Arctic Ocean. If successful, Canada may gain a portion of the Arctic Ocean’s seabed as large as the Maritimes.

### THINK ABOUT IT

Each of the six regions could be subdivided. For instance, a strong case could be made to divide Ontario into two parts—Southern and Northern Ontario. But even so, do you agree with the author’s rationale to limit the number of regions to six?

For discussion of Canada’s claim to the Arctic seabed, see **Chapter 11**, especially the section titled “Strategic Frontier, Arctic Sovereignty, and the Northwest Passage,” page 376.

and to place these regions within a conceptual framework based on the **core/periphery model**, discussed later in this chapter. This is not to say that there are not internal regions or sub-regions. In Chapter 5, Ontario provides such an example. Ontario is subdivided into Southern Ontario (the industrial **core** of Canada) and Northern Ontario (a resource **hinterland**). Southern Ontario is Canada’s most densely populated area and contains the bulk of the nation’s manufacturing industries. Northern Ontario, on the other hand, is sparsely

populated and is losing population because of the decline of its mining and forestry activities.

Second, an effort has been made to balance these regions by their geographic size, economic importance, and population size, thus allowing for comparisons (see Table 1.1). For this reason, Alberta is combined with Saskatchewan and Manitoba to form Western Canada, while Newfoundland and Labrador along with Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia comprise Atlantic Canada. The Territorial North, consisting of three territories, makes up a single region. Three provinces, Ontario, Québec, and British Columbia, have the geographic size, economic importance, and population size to form separate geographic regions.



**TABLE 1.1** General Characteristics of the Six Canadian Regions, 2015

Geographic Region	Area* (000 km <sup>2</sup> )	Area (%)	Population	Population (%)	GDP (%)
Ontario	1,076.4	10.8	13,850,090	38.5	38.5
Québec	1,542.1	15.4	8,284,656	23.0	19.1
Western Canada	1,960.7	19.6	6,654,345	18.5	24.8
British Columbia	944.7	9.5	4,703,939	13.1	12.7
Atlantic Canada	539.1	5.4	2,374,154	6.6	5.4
Territorial North	3,909.8	39.3	118,567	0.3	0.5
Canada	9,972.8	100.0	35,985,751	100.0	100.0

\*Includes freshwater bodies such as the Canadian portion of the Great Lakes.

Source: Statistics Canada (2016a, 2016b).

Canadians understand this set of regions partly because of the following features:

- They are associated with distinctive physical features, natural resources, and economic activities.
- They reflect the political structure of Canada.
- They facilitate the use of statistical data.
- They are linked to regional identity.
- They are associated with reoccurring regional disputes.
- They replicate regional economic strengths and cultural presence.

The critical question is: What distinguishes each of Canada's six regions? Certainly geographic location and historical development play a key role. Equally important are contemporary elements such as variations in area, population, and economic strength (Table 1.1), while the proportions of French-speaking and **Indigenous peoples** in each region form another essential part of the puzzle (Table 1.2). These basic geographic elements provide a start to understanding the nature of the six regions. Further understanding is provided by analysis of an important economic activity—an “economic anchor”—found in each region. By examining these historically and currently important economic activities for each region we gain detailed insights into the nature and strength of each regional economy and are better able to identify the challenges they face. These economic anchors are:

- Ontario: automobile manufacturing
- Québec: hydroelectric power
- British Columbia: forest industry
- Western Canada: agriculture
- Atlantic Canada: fisheries
- The Territorial North: megaprojects

The task of interpreting Canada and its six regions poses a challenge. A spatial conceptual framework based on the core/periphery model helps us to understand the nature of this regional diversity within the national and global economies. At the same time, the social dimensions of Canada are captured in the concept of **faultlines** that identify and address deep-rooted tensions in Canadian society that sometimes stir negative feelings towards Ottawa and even other provinces. Such tensions present an obstacle to Canadian unity and often result in necessary adjustments to the regional nature of Canada. These faultlines require a reaction—a kind of challenge and response paradigm—that results in a continuous reshaping of Canada and its regions.

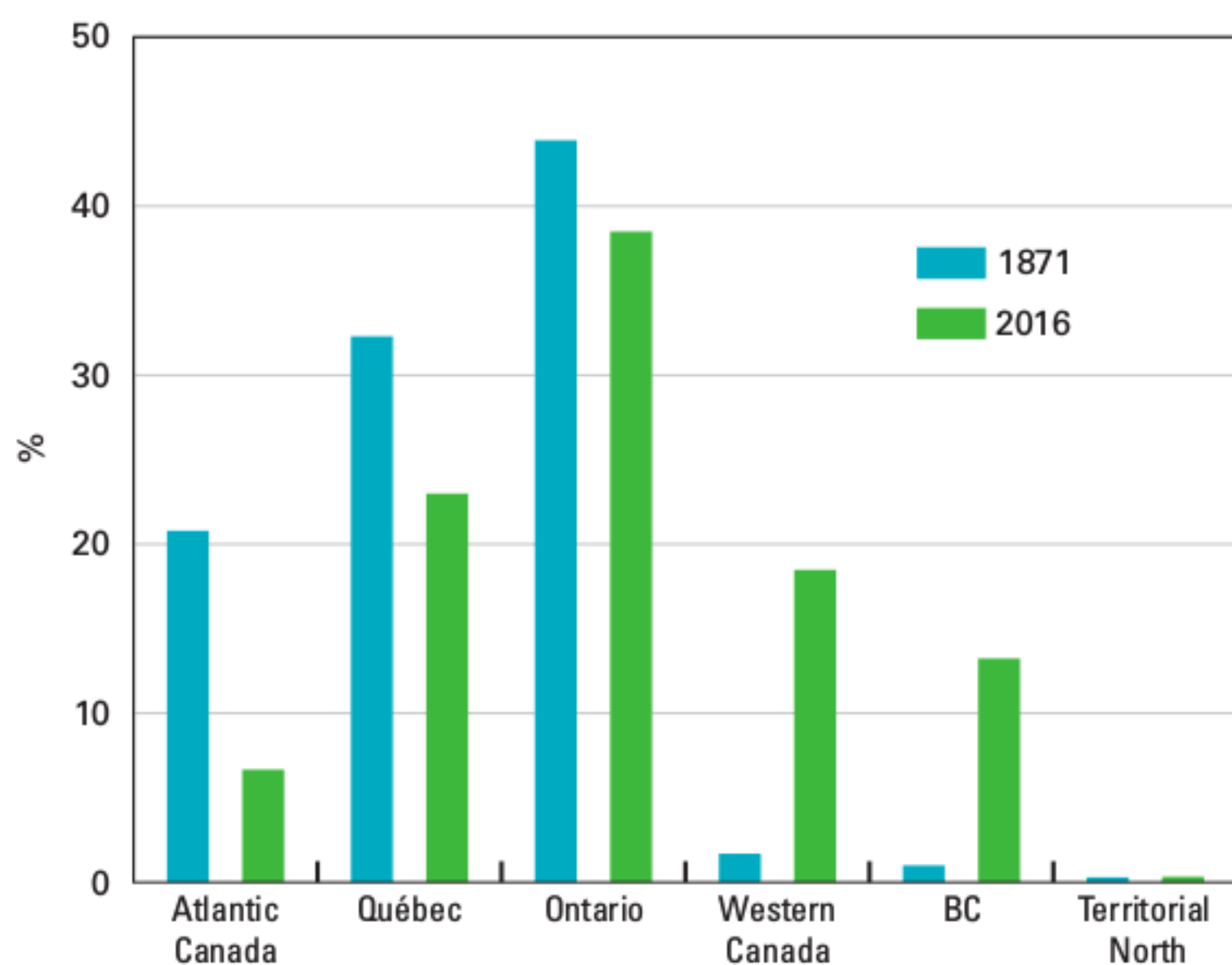
## Geography of Political Power

Canada and its regions are dynamic entities. Population provides one indicator of this dynamism. Since Confederation, Canada's population has increased about tenfold. In 1867 Canada's population was 3.5 million and by 2015 it had reached 36 million (Statistics Canada, 2016a). Yet, this population increase

**THINK ABOUT IT**

What did Marshall McLuhan, a famous Canadian philosopher and teacher, mean when he wrote: “Canada is the only country in the world that knows how to live without an identity”?

was not distributed evenly across the country, and this fact leads to different levels of political power in each region (Figure 1.3). By 1871, Canada had expanded its territory and population, reaching 3.7 million people (Statistics Canada, 2012b). While the combined population of Ontario and Québec had increased to 21.9 million by 2015, their percentage of Canada’s population had declined from 75 per cent in 1871 to 61 per cent (Statistics Canada, 2016a). Over the same span of time, the western half of the country saw its population jump from less than 100,000 to 11.3 million, forming 32 per cent of Canada’s population. Atlantic Canada, on the other hand, had dropped from 21 per cent to 6.6 per cent over the same time span. This dramatic demographic shift mirrors the major realignment of Canada’s economy caused by global forces. Such changes pull at the ropes holding the political balance of power, and in 2015 Alberta and British Columbia, along with Ontario and Québec, received more seats for the October 2015 federal election (see Chapter 4 for a more complete account of the geography of political power and electoral redistribution).



**FIGURE 1.3** Regional populations by percentage, 1871 and 2016

In 1867, all Canadians lived in the original four colonies. Within four years, Canada gained sparsely populated lands, but its population geography changed little. However, by 2016, nearly one-third of Canada population was west of Ontario, marking the shift of the country’s centre of population gravity westward, a trend that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada (1871 and 2016a).

## Sense of Place

In spite of our globalized world with its homogenized urban landscapes, the unique character of places still matters. The term “sense of place” embodies this perspective and provides a social cohesiveness. Sense of place has deep roots in cultural and human geography. Leading scholars in this area include Agnew, Cresswell, Paasi, Relph, and Tuan. While “sense of place” has been defined and used in different ways, in this text the term reflects a deeply felt attachment to a region by local residents who have, over time, bonded to their region and its resulting institutions and urban landscapes. As such, sense of place provides some protection from the predictable cityscapes produced by economic and cultural **globalization**. These urban features, such as McDonald’s restaurants, are associated with a sense of **placelessness** (Relph, 1976). Distinctive cityscapes, on the other hand, provide an exclusive identity to a place that often evokes a powerful psychological bond between people and the locale. In sharp contrast, generic landscapes have global roots offering a standard product. For example, Tim Hortons coffee is the same from Vancouver to St John’s. Physical location provides another form of sense of place. Yellowknife, located on the rocky shores of Great Slave Lake, exhibits a uniquely northern character (see Photo 1.1). Yellowknife is also noted for its large Indigenous population that, in 2011, accounted for 25 per cent of its residents.

A strong sense of place can evoke a negative reaction to the federal government. Such centrifugal energy flies awkwardly within the Canadian federal system. Québec provides such an example, where culture, history, and geography have had four centuries to nurture a strong sense of place and to give birth to a nationalist movement that has, from time to time, sought to separate Québec from the rest of Canada. On the other hand, natural disasters often place provinces in a difficult financial position, and provinces rely on Ottawa for support. One federal program, Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements, eases the financial burden of the provinces and provides Ottawa an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to national unity.



Winston Fraser / Alamy Stock Photo

**Photo 1.1** Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, is no longer a rough-and-tumble mining town. This capital city also serves as a regional service centre, providing goods and services to surrounding villages and towns as well as to the mines and tourist camps. The public sector dominates the economy, with most workers employed by the territorial and federal governments. Expensive housing exists along its waterfront where, in the warm summer months, pleasure craft, sailboats, and float planes are moored along its sheltered coves on the north shore of Great Slave Lake.

➤ For more information on the nationalist movement in Québec, see **Chapter 3**, “The French/English Faultline,” page 103.

A region, then, is a synthesis of physical and human characteristics that, combined with its distinctiveness from surrounding regions, produces

a unique character, including a sense of place and power. People living and working in a region are conscious of belonging to that place and frequently demonstrate an attachment and commitment to their “home” region. Indeed, the theme of this book is that Canada is a country of regions, each of which has a strong sense of regional pride, but also a commitment to Canadian federalism.

## Faultlines within Canada

Canada, like the earth’s crust, has its weak points, making regional harmony an elusive commodity. In 1993, *Globe and Mail* columnist Jeffrey Simpson applied the term “**faultlines**”—the geological phenomenon of cracks in the earth’s crust caused by tectonic forces—to the economic, social, and political cracks that divide regions and people in Canada and threaten to destabilize Canada’s integrity as a **nation**. In this text, “faultlines” refers to four fractious tensions in Canada’s collective psyche.



Elenathewise/Thinkstock.com

**Photo 1.2** Cityscape of St John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, as seen from Signal Hill. St John’s is one of the oldest cities in North America. Its special relationship with the sea set it aside from other Canadian cities. Originally, the economy was based on the rich cod stocks, but now it focuses on offshore oil and on the mineral and hydroelectric resources of Labrador. The city is home to Memorial University, and by 2018 the Canadian Coast Guard Atlantic Region will be based in St John’s.


For long periods of time, these faultlines can remain dormant, but they can shift at any time, dividing the country into wrangling factions.

While many divisions in Canadian society emanate from the plight of the disabled, the homeless, the rural/urban divide, and the seemingly relentless growing gap between the very rich and the rest of Canada's people, our discussion is confined to four principal faultlines that have had profound regional consequences and that have, from time to time, challenged our national unity. These four faultlines represent struggles between centralist and decentralist visions of Canada; English and French; old and new Canadians; and Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. Commencing in Chapter 3, specific examples of faultlines are explored within their regional setting.

Each faultline has played a fundamental role in Canada's historic evolution, and they remain critical elements of Canada's character in the twenty-first century. In extreme cases, these weak spots or cracks have threatened the cohesiveness of Canada and, by doing so, have shaken the very pillars of federalism. Under these circumstances, compromise was essential to Canada's survival. From these traumatic experiences, Canada, over time, has become what John Ralston Saul (1997: 8–9) describes as a “soft” country, meaning a society where conflicts, more often than not, are resolved through discussion and negotiations. The United States, on the other hand, would be considered a “hard” country where conflicts affecting minorities, for example, are more likely resolved by forceful means, such as threatening to deport millions of illegal Mexican immigrants now living in the United States and to build a wall along the Mexican border to prevent more Mexicans from entering the country, or, for that matter, by threatening to jail one's political opponent.<sup>2</sup>

Disagreement over the nature of Canada—is it a partnership between the two so-called French and English “founding” societies or is it composed of 10 equal provinces?—has troubled the country since Confederation in 1867. In recent years this disagreement came to a head twice with the sovereignty-association and independence referendums in Québec in 1980 and 1995, the latter of which was won by the federalist side by the narrowest margin—a mere percentage point. At the height of the referendum campaigns, uneasy relationships tore at the very fabric of Canada. But the ensuing dialogue and goodwill

between Québec and the rest of the country have led to an unspoken and uneasy compromise that cements the country together. Still, tensions do arise, such as the appointment by the federal government in 2011 of two non-French-speaking Supreme Court judges, causing Québécois to ask: how can the Supreme Court properly evaluate cases that involve documents written in French if judges are not bilingual?

 For discussion of the cultural divide between French- and English-speaking Canada, see **Chapter 3**, page 107, under the heading, “One Country, Two Visions.”

### Centralist/Decentralist Faultline


Of all the faultlines, the centralist/decentralist one leans the most heavily on Canada's geography and its political system. Canada's size and its varied physical geography provide the stage for regional differences that can—and have—led to bitter federal-provincial feuds. Adding another dimension to such feuds is provincial control over natural resources—until 2014, oil-rich provinces had an advantage over other provinces. This advantage disappeared with the dramatic drop in **oil prices** and may turn into a disadvantage with the federal government's effort to move Canada to a “low-carbon economy” that is less reliant on fossil fuels.

Disputes often flare up between particular provinces and Ottawa, or are reflected in the occasional volley of potshots between provincial political leaders. A closer examination of the underlying forces driving the centralist/decentralist faultline follows.

First, quarrels with Ottawa often revolve around federal transfer and equalization payments. Provincially administered post-secondary, health, and social programs far outstrip their financial capacity. Here we have contested ground with two different objectives. On the one hand, provinces constantly seek an increase in transfer payments, while on the other hand, Ottawa seeks ways to reduce its annual expenditures in order to balance its budget and to keep from sliding deeper into debt.

Second, another bone of contention exists between Central Canada, where the majority of national population and voters reside, and the rest of Canada over the extensive public support/subsidies for Central Canadian manufacturing. From the perspective of Ottawa and the provinces of Québec and Ontario, this public support is based on the long-held premise

that economic success in Central Canada will benefit the nation as a whole. Not surprisingly, the premise is less well received in the rest of the country. Whether true or not, from this hinterland perspective Central Canada often benefits from federal policies that support industries representing the “national interest” while other provinces are left out in the cold. Federal support for Ontario’s automotive industry and Québec’s aerospace/rail industries are two examples.

 Government support for the automotive industry in the form of financial loans to Chrysler and General Motors are described in **Chapter 6**, Contested Terrain 6.3, “The Bailout of Chrysler and GM: Sound Public Policy?”

Third, maybe Bob Dylan’s 1964 song “The Times Are A-Changin’” applies to the centralist/decentralist faultline? As the centre of population gravity edges westward, the population advantage of Central Canada is slowly eroding. Energy, the engine of growth in the past decade in Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan, added to this advantage, but energy has hit a bad patch in recent years with falling oil prices. Ottawa no longer sees the “national interest” taking the form of an “energy superpower” on the international stage, as former Prime Minister Stephen Harper imagined. With the Justin Trudeau Liberal government elected in late 2015, Canada has switched positions from posing as an energy superpower to one insisting on a carbon tax on fossil fuels.

Equalization payments shifted in the period of high oil prices. Given Ontario’s long-standing position as the “powerhouse” of Canada, who would have thought that Ontario would have this “have-not” collar hung around its neck? With the sudden collapse of oil prices leading to the sharp devaluation

of the Canadian dollar, the questions are: will Ontario regain its former status as a “have” province; and how will Alberta pay for equalization payments in 2016? Oddly enough, the calculation of annual equalization payments is based on a three-year calculation, thus keeping Ontario in the “have-not” group and Alberta, suffering badly from its weakened energy industry, forced to make equalization payments to Ottawa because the three-year calculation keeps it in the “have” group.

Fourth, faultlines do exist between provinces. The long-standing dispute between Québec and Newfoundland and Labrador over the 1969 Churchill Falls agreement illustrates this point. Within this contested terrain lurks the contentious boundary settlement made in 1927 when Newfoundland, still a British colony, was granted that part of the Labrador Peninsula from the “height of land” to the Atlantic coast, that is, all of the peninsular land within the Atlantic watershed. Québec has never accepted this boundary—the longest interprovincial boundary in Canada—and it acts like a burr in the psyche of the Québec nation. Could it be a hidden factor in preventing Hydro-Québec from reopening the 1969 agreement to seek a “fair” pricing arrangement, as well as a factor in Québec’s denying space for the transmission of future hydroelectricity from Labrador along its transmission lines to Canadian and US markets? From the perspective of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the unfairness of the 1969 agreement sees billions flowing to Québec and only a pittance to them. Why is the agreement so one-sided?

The 1969 agreement gave a set amount of electric power—some 31 billion kilowatt hours per year—generated by Churchill Falls to Hydro-Québec

.....  
**THINK ABOUT IT**


Given the sudden drop in oil prices, is the calculation of 2016–17 equalization payments based on a three-year average fair?  
.....

## Contested Terrain 1.1

### **CETA and Canada’s Dairy Industry: A Central Canada Issue?**

Under a supply management system, Canadian dairy farmers enjoy a regulated production and sales system. Since most dairy farms are located in Central Canada (Canadian Dairy Information Centre, 2015), most opposition to free trade negotiations that call for the abandonment of the Canadian supply management system comes from Québec and Ontario. With the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) now in place between Canada and the European Union, Ottawa’s promise of a compensation package for Canada’s dairy farmers has yet to come (see Dairy Farmers of Canada, 2016).

for 65 years at a very low fixed price, which, instead of increasing over time, actually decreases. Shortly after the signing of this agreement, world oil prices more than doubled, and the jump in prices cascaded into much higher hydro prices. Hydro-Québec gained a huge windfall and this windfall will continue to 2041. To Newfoundland and Labrador, the agreement is a perfect example of exploitation by a bigger, more powerful province. Yet, as the Supreme Court determined in 1984, “a contract is a contract,” and the dispute was legally settled—though Hydro-Québec held all the cards in negotiations and virtually dictated the terms.

 For extensive discussion of the Churchill Falls and Muskrat Falls hydroelectric developments in Labrador, see **Chapter 10**, “Muskrat Falls,” page 331, and “Megaproject of the Century or a White Elephant?” page 340.

Fast-forward to 2016. The province is in the midst of another huge hydroelectric project, this one on the Lower Churchill River at Muskrat Falls. But the problem of transporting the power to markets in the United States would mean crossing Québec. The bitter experience of Churchill Falls has meant that Newfoundland and Labrador intends to build an

expensive and risky underwater transmission system from Labrador to Newfoundland and then across the Cabot Strait to Nova Scotia and eventually to the huge market in New England. By mid-2016, cost overruns of several billion dollars and construction problems had called into question the feasibility of the megaproject.

## English-speaking/French-speaking Canadians

Canada is a bilingual country. Yet, English is spoken in most parts of the country. History accounts for the two languages, though it was not until 1969 that the Official Languages Act recognized English and French as having equal status in the government of Canada. A few years later, in 1974, the Québec government passed its Official Language Act, making French the sole official language in the province. The rationale for this action was the desire to ensure and foster the French language and therefore the Québécois culture. In fact, only one province, New Brunswick, officially recognizes both official languages. The explanation for the distribution of languages across Canada is found in the geographic fact that relatively few French-speaking Canadians live outside of New

## Vignette 1.2

### Canadian Unity: A Powerful Force

The formation of Canada was a struggle from the beginning. But the federal government, through such national institutions as the Supreme Court of Canada, legislation, and a series of national programs, has provided the political glue to keep the country united. The first example was Ottawa’s financial and political support for the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway that provided a much-needed physical link across the vast wilderness of the Canadian Shield, the Interior Plains, and the Cordillera to bind the western lands to Central Canada as well as ensuring that British Columbia joined Confederation (See Figure 2.1). More recent instances of nation-building have focused on ensuring a measure of equality among provinces through federal initiatives such as equalization payments to have-not provinces, multiculturalism legislation that supports a pluralistic society, and universal health care for all Canadians paid for through the tax system.

What federal programs do Canadians appreciate the most? A poll conducted for the Association for Canadian Studies in June 2014 indicates that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, enshrined in the Constitution in 1982, and universal health care represent the two most popular expressions of Canada as a nation (Jedwab, 2014).