**Canada East**

**Population**

The population of the colony of Canada East prior to Confederation was 1.2 million people of whom 78% were French, 10% were Irish, 6% were English and 5% were Scottish.

**Urban Centres**: Montreal (107, 225); Quebec (59,700)

**Key Figures:** George-Etienne Cartier (1814-1873)

Alexander T. Galt (1817-1893)

Thomas D’Arcy McGee (1825-1868)

Hector L. Langevin (1826-1906)

Jean Charles Champais (1811-1885)

By the 1860s, the Province of Canada (encompassing both Canada East and Canada West) is the most populous, the largest in size, and the most powerful of the British North American colonies. The colony’s urban centre, Montreal, is the most populous city in British North America. It is, in fact, almost double the size of Quebec, the second largest city in the colonies.

The wealthy lumber merchants are central members of the city’s elite, along with a rising group of industrialists: owners of iron and steel plants, flour mills, and steamship lines. This group, dominated by Scotsmen, have built grand mansions along the slopes of Mount Royal, in the centre of the city. Though English speaking Protestants make up only 15 percent of the colony’s population, they dominate the commercial and political life of the colony.

It is the rural habitant, however, the French Canadian farmer, who makes up the bulk of the rural population. Living, by and large, along the shores of the St. Lawrence River, the French speaking, Roman Catholic habitants lives a traditional way of life, producing potatoes, rye, buckwheat, and livestock.

**Economy**

The colony’s economy was very strong, and could have survived without assistance from

Britain. Their economy was based on lumber and logging, as well as leather and potash production. Agriculture was also another important sector of the Quebec’s economy.

**Self-Sustainability**

Responsible government was given to Quebec in 1848, but there was a lack of stability within the colony. The British lost interest in their North American colonies, and wanted to create a more independent colony. The Canada’s had had political instability for over 10 years, with changing leaders, parties, and political deadlock. The rise to power of the ‘Great Coalition’ government, led by John A. Macdonald, George-Étienne Cartier and George Brown, wanted a Confederation with the British North American colonies, with this came the question of representation by population.

Many feared the destruction of French culture in any union of the British North American colonies. But George-Etienne Cartier, the French Canadian member of the Coalition, believed that only in a federal union of the colonies would French Canadian culture survive and, in turn, flourish. In the new federal union, he argued, French Canadians would still control all matters concerning language, religion, civil law, and education within the province.

The Grand Trunk is the colony’s central railway line. With its headquarters in Montreal, and an impressive network of lines (including the Victoria Bridge, which spans the St. Lawrence and is the world’s longest bridge), transportation is still hampered by two factors: not only does the colony lack a year-round, ice-free port, but also one cannot travel from Canada East to the Maritime colonies without traveling through the United States. For six months of the year, Canadian imports and exports are carried on American railways, on American soil and, often, shipped in and out of American ports. The solution, in many Canadian minds, is an Intercolonial Railway. If the Intercolonial were built, it would run through New Brunswich, Nova Scotia, and end in Halifax. Canada East’s potential would be immense.

The railway was very important to the colony, however by 1860, the colony’s debt was up to $50 million. Security was another concern, as Britain wanted to lower the costs of military and protection for the colony. The threat of Fenian raids along the Canada-United States border near Montreal, as well as the threat of American invasion during the Civil War, makes an Intercolonial Railway necessary for mobilizing troops. Rupert’s land, west of Ontario, was another point of interest to the Canada’s. They wished to acquire the land to solidify the union as well as to prevent the Americans from purchasing it, like they had with Alaska.

**Canada East Viewpoints**

**Thomas D’Arcy McGee’s vision of a new Northern Nation (1860)**

I have spoken with a sole single desire for the increase, prosperity, freedom, and honour of this incipient Northern Nation. I call it a Northern Nation – for such it must become become, if all of us do our duty to the last… I see in the not remote distance one great nationality, bound, like the shield of Achilles, by the blue rim of the Ocean. I see it quartered into many communities, each disposing of its internal affairs, but all bound together by free institutions, free intercourse, and free commerce. I see within the round of that shield the peaks of the Western Mountains and the crests of the Eastern waves, the winding Assiniboine, the five-fold lakes, the St. Lawrence, the Ottawa, the Saguenay, the St. John, and the basin of the Minas. By all these flowing waters in all the valleys they fertilize, in all the cities they visit in their courses, I see a generation of industrious, contented, moral men, free in name and in fact – men capable of maintaining, in peace and in war, a constitution worthy of such a country!

**French Canadian distrust of Confederation (*L’Ordre* Montreal, 4 May 1860, translation)**

What French Canadian has not in his heart cursed a hundred times the Union of the two Canadas? … Others have wanted in turn to *anglicize* us and *protestantize* us: after a century of ignoble hopes and base efforts, convinced of their failure, they now want to destroy our constitution … What would Upper Canada be today without the Union? Nothing more or less than a forest put up for auction by British capitalists to repay their investments. The only solution is repeal of the Union. Upper Canada does not like living with us: we like it less.

**Joseph Perrault (Canadian Parliament, Winter 1865)**

(W)ith Confederation, as we shall be in the great minority in the General Parliament, which as all the important powers in relation to legislation, we shall have to carry on a constant contest for the defence and preservation of our political rights and of our liberty.

**D’Arcy McGee on the American threat (Canadian Parliament, 9 February 1865)**

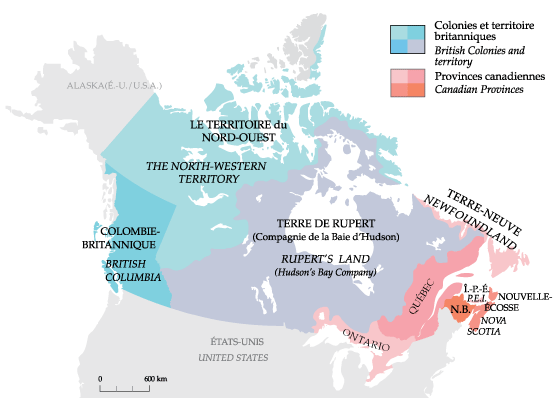
These are frightful figures [US military] for the capacity of the destruction they represent, for the heaps of carnage that they represent, for the quantity of human blood spilt that they represent, for the lust of conquest that they represent, for the evil passion that they represent, and for the arrest of the onward progress of civilization that they represent… They [the Americans] coveted Florida, and they seized it; they coveted Louisiana, and purchased it; they coveted Texas and stole it; and then they picked a quarrel with Mexico, which ended by their getting California… had we not the strong arm of England over us, we would not now have had a separate existence.

**Hector L. Langevin on the fate of French Canadians in Confederation (Canadian Parliament, Winter 1865)**

But what would be the fate of the French Canadians in the case of annexation to the United States? Let us profit by the example of the French race in the United States, and enquire what has been the fate of the French in Louisiana? What has become of them? What has become of their language, their customs, their manners, and their institutions? After the war, hardly a trace will remain to show that the French race has passed that way… we live in peace at the present day and are perfectly comfortable; Catholics and Protestants have the same rights and religious liberty, and they live peacefully together as there was but one religion in the land.

Information collected from Critical Challenges Across the Curriculum.

Go to <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/confederation/023001-3120-e.html> for more information.



**New Brunswick**

**Population**

Prior to Confederation, this was the largest colony in the Maritimes. The population of the colony was 270,000, and its capital city, Saint John, had a population of over 40,000 inhabitants, which compared in size to Toronto and Quebec City.

Those of English descent made up the majority of the population. There were also large minorities of Acadians, Irish and Scots. As well, many inhabitants traced their roots to the Loyalists who had come north during the American Revolution, including a small community of Black Loyalists.

**Urban centre:** Saint John (28,805); Fredericton (6,200)

**Key figures:** Samuel Leonard Tilley (1818-1896)

John M. Johnson (1818-1868)

William H. Steeves (1814-1873)

Edward B. Chandler (1800-1880)

John Hamilton Gray (1814-1889)

Peter Mitchell (1824-1899)

Charles Fisher (1808-1880)

RD Wilmot (1809-1891)

Though it is not the colony’s capital, Saint John is one of the Maritimes’ largest cities. Deeply influenced by the rugged life of the timber trade, Saint John is known as a “fast city,” with lively and aggressive residents. Fredericton, a sleepy town by comparison, has been chosen as the colonial capital because it is upriver and easy to defend in case of attack.

**Economy**

Since the early nineteenth century, New Brunswick life has been dominated by the timber trade. The economy and even the colonial character are shaped by it. The vast forests in the western part of the colony are the bedrock of this industry and, in many ways, form a natural barrier between New Brunswick and the rest of the continent. In fact, only three to four percent of the colony’s trade is with the Canadas, while twenty percent of all British timber imports come from New Brunswick. This rich supply of lumber has led to a thriving shipbuilding industry in Saint John. And while people in the colony are also involved in farming and fishing, any significant growth of an agricultural economy is impeded by the attractive profits in the lumber industry.

The colony’s economy was quite strong. The forestry and timber industries were very popular, as was shipbuilding. During this time, New Brunswick had close links with the United-States of America, and had built strong trade relations with them.

**Security / Protection**

The colony feared an invasion from the United States. The increased number of attacks by the Fenian, who were a group of pro-Irish fighters living in the United States who burned many Maritimers’ properties, caused this fear. The colony’s long border with the United States is poorly defended and not easily accessible to troops from outside New Brunswick. British troops sent to defend the colonies during the winter months of the American Civil War had to travel by sled through New Brunswick. Britain’s reluctance to defend the colonies in the future has made closer ties between the British North American provinces crucial to security.

The solution to any questions surrounding colonial defence is an Intercolonial Railway. Though it would be too costly for New Brunswick to pay for on its own, the rail line would be central to the colony’s defence and, if built, would open up New Brunswick economically to both the Western and the Eastern North American markets. Saint John would now be connected to Montreal in the West and Halifax in the East.

**Self-Sustainability**

Since 1854, New Brunswick had a responsible government, where a majority of the men could vote via secret ballot. The citizens’ voices were recognized as important, as they had a large influence on the government and the decisions it made. As a result, the political climate with in the colony was very positive and the citizens feared that a union with other larger colonies meant their voice may no longer be heard.

**New Brunswick Viewpoints**

**John Hamilton Gray (House of Assembly, April 18, 1864)**

If the Provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were to be annexed to Prince Edward Island, great benefits might result to our people; but if this Colony were to be annexed to these Provinces, the opposite might be the effect.  …We are here to maintain our rights, and we shall never enter a Union which will deprive us of this birthright.

**Concerning the Grand Union excerpt from an article published in the Saint John Morning**

**Telegraph, on September 16, 1864**

We wish we could hold out to the Canadian politicians now among us some encouragement of an early Confederation of all the Provinces.... But the truth must be told, and it is simply this—that so far as New Brunswick is concerned the people have given the subject very slender [little] consideration. Unlike Canadians and Nova Scotians and Islanders, we New Brunswickers are not greatly given to party politics; consequently a measure of this kind is not apt [likely] to be forced upon the electors before its time, or smuggled through the Legislature because a few politicians desire it. The Press, too, is less under the control of politicians here than in any other portion of Her Majesty’s dominions, and therefore reflects the views of the people, instead of the wishes of a few leading men in our little Legislature ....

**Peter Mitchell (New Brunswick Legislative Council, April 16, 1866)**

Isolation is dangerous to our liberty and destructive to our progress. Our people are industrious [hard-working]—our resources abundant [many]—but union is necessary to our success. Association by national union with three or four millions of people, attached to the institutions of our parent state, would give us a strength and importance which we do not possess. We would have extended markets for our ships and other manufacturers, and by increased trade, an increased home market for the farmer ....Railroads ere [before] long would connect our principal cities and towns with the world outside of us, and in course of time we might look forward to their extension across the continent ....

We are now as colonists comparatively a free people, but history indicates that a small province cannot long remain independent beside a powerful and rapacious [greedy] neighbour. In union there is strength, security, and continued freedom. Out of it there is before us annexation and extinction of national existence, with the doubtful advantage of having to pay a share of the enormous war debt of our neighbours.

Information collected from Critical Challenges Across the Curriculum.

Go to http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/confederation/023001-3050-e.html for more information.

