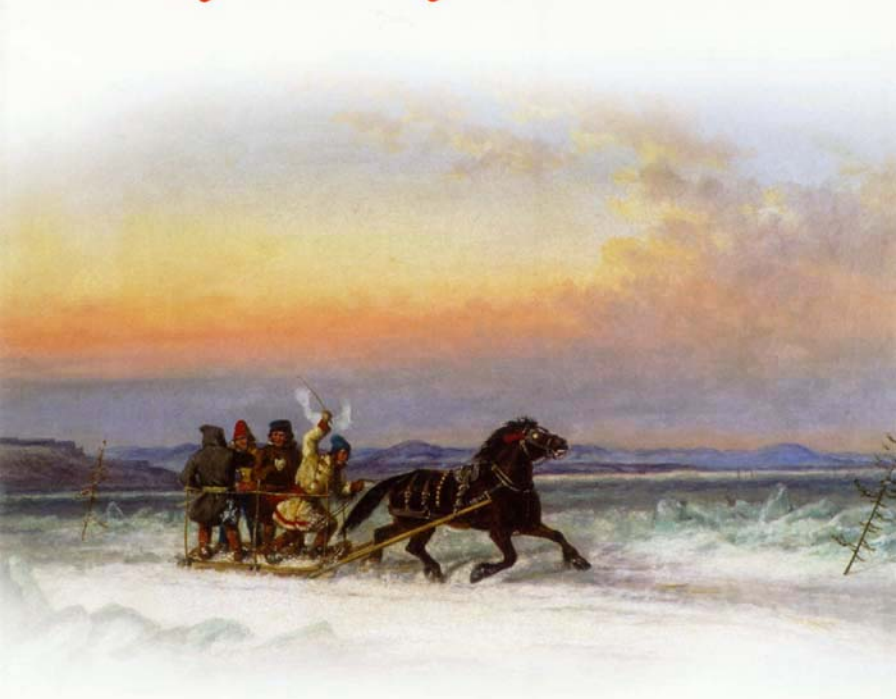


Profiles of Canada



edited by Kenneth G. Pryke & Walter C. Soderlund

THIRD EDITION





PROFILES OF CANADA

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PROFILES OF CANADA

third edition

edited by
kenneth g. pryke and
walter c. soderlund

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Profiles of Canada, Third Edition
edited by Kenneth G. Pryke and Walter C. Soderlund

First published in 2003 by
Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
180 Bloor Street West, Suite 801
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 2V6

www.cspi.org

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CSPI gratefully acknowledges financial support for our publishing activities from the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP) and the Government of Ontario through the Ontario Book Initiative.

National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data

Profiles of Canada / edited by Kenneth G. Pryke, Walter C. Soderlund.—3rd ed.

Includes bibliographic references and index.
ISBN 1-55130-226-8

I. Canada—Textbooks. I. Pryke, Kenneth G., 1932– II. Soderlund, W.C. (Walter C.)

FC51.P78 2003 971 C2003-901530-0
F1008.P76 2003

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Cover design and maps by Zack Taylor
Text design and layout by Brad Horning

03 04 05 06 07 08 7 6 5 4 3 2

Printed and bound in Canada by AGMV Marquis Imprimeur Inc.

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acknowledgements

The third edition of *Profiles of Canada* would not have become a reality without the help of many people—most importantly our contributors, to whom we express our sincere gratitude. Finding a publisher for a small market text is not an easy task, and our thanks on this score go to Jack Wayne, Althea Prince, and Rebecca Conolly of Canadian Scholars' Press for their encouragement and advice along the way.

Secretarial support from the Department of History provided by Rose Maisoneuve and Terry Whelan, from the Department of Political Science by Barbara Faria and Valerie Allard, and from the Centre for Social Justice by Linda Kennedy has been outstanding. The work of Lorraine Cantin at the university's Word Processing Centre was instrumental in getting a coherent manuscript ready for publication within our time constraints. Our thanks go to all of the above.

Helpful as well has been the feedback, both positive and negative, that we have received from students and professors who have used the book in introductory Canadian Studies courses. To a greater extent than was the case for the previous edition, we have attempted to revise *Profiles* to meet the stated needs of its users. Hopefully, we have succeeded in putting together a team of authors that has produced a text that explores the various dimensions of the Canadian experience in a timely, interesting, and understandable manner. If there are any shortcomings, they are, of course, the responsibility of the editors.

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introduction

kenneth g. pryke and walter c. soderlund

The first edition of *Profiles of Canada* was published in 1992 between the first and second Quebec referenda, and the introduction contained the following statement:

The Canadian experience, not an especially easy one to understand at the best of times, seems even more problematic now, with the future of the country in doubt. The past is frequently interpreted in light of current concerns, and this book is no exception.

It was written at a time in Canadian history when factors that had come more or less to be taken for granted (federalism, bilingualism, multiculturalism and an economic system distinct from that of the neighbouring United States) were being called into question by a significant number of Canadians.

While the weighting of problems facing Canada has changed over the past ten years, the message retains its relevance. Indeed, as we write the introduction to the third edition, almost a year to the day after the attacks on New York City and Washington, DC, on September 11, 2001, it is obvious that it is too soon to reach any definitive conclusions regarding the long-term impact of these events on Canadian-American relations and on life in Canada itself. While the ultimate outcome may be uncertain, it is possible to conclude that September 11 acted as a catalyst to elevate Cana-

dian-American relations to the premier position among Donald Smiley's three axes of Canadian federalism—the remaining two being English-French relations and relations between the “core” and the “periphery” of the country.¹ Further, Canadian-American relations are likely to remain at the forefront of importance to Canada during the time that this book will be used as a text. While questions related to the continuance of a publicly funded health care system and the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, for example, are certainly on the agenda of important issues facing the country, the issue of Quebec sovereignty has all but disappeared from political discussion.

The impact of September 11 aside, the socio-cultural, economic, and political landscapes of Canada have changed significantly since we began working on the first edition of *Profiles of Canada* over a decade ago, and these changes are reflected in the new and revised chapters in the book. The most significant of these changes, and the one that has affected all basic elements of Canadian society, is a changed Canadian posture toward the United States—specifically toward US-style solutions to key societal problems.

For most of Canada's history—with varying degrees of intensity and commitment—its citizens have dealt with the overwhelming presence of the republic to the south by relying on their government to build and maintain unique socio-cultural institutions. While there was a long tradition of trying to establish a strong Canadian economy, in the latter half of the twentieth century there have also been significant moves toward some form of integration with the American economy. As Canada enters the new millennium, this long-held resolve to maintain some distance from the United States appears to have been seriously challenged. Yet as paradoxical as it may seem, while many Canadians seek to identify with Americans, they also proclaim their own identity as Canadians, as growing unease with following American foreign policy attests.

The economic integration of the Canadian economy with the United States, or continentalism as it is sometimes called, has not proceeded without difficulties. One current dispute, which actually has been developing over several decades, involves American lumber interests' complaint that Canadian lumber is being subsidized by policies of various Canadian provincial governments. Whatever

the reasons, the dispute resolutions procedures, which were advanced as a major justification for the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 1988 and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, have not settled this dispute. As a result, the federal government and various provincial governments are considering whether they should adopt American policies and rely on market forces in the Canadian lumber industry. Yet, if such changes are introduced, there is no assurance that the controversy will end unless there is a marked decline in market share for Canadian lumber in the United States.

As Stephen Brooks argues, the economic gains associated with intensified integration, the FTA in 1988 and NAFTA in 1994 (which brought Mexico into the agreement), have seemingly overridden the importance of political security afforded in earlier times by sovereignty. Citing the power of economics, he argues that further economic integration, such as adoption of the American currency, is only a matter of time, regardless of what Canadians may say or do about it.

The desire for integration, moreover, extends far beyond the immediate area of the economy and applies to all areas of public policy. Any attempt to maintain a public policy that differs from American practice is often seen as a sign of rampant Canadian nationalism. Antonia Maioni indicates in her chapter on health care that in the early 1990s many Americans were looking to Canada for models to reform their own health care system; however, now Canadians are attempting to deal with problems in our system by turning to American models. Yet, as she illustrates, Americans spend more on health care than Canadians do and the American system has serious flaws for the public, as well as for medical practitioners. Given the symbolic importance of universal access to health care to Canadian identity, the current debate may well reflect a basic shift in the nature of that identity.

For several decades Canada has embarked on a policy of multiculturalism, a comprehensive policy that includes the highly controversial topics of Native peoples, ethnic nationalism, and refugees. A graphic description of the situation faced by Native peoples is provided by lawyer and long-time activist, Patricia Monture-Angus. In her account she challenges commonly accepted assumptions on such subjects as the dichotomy between private and public rights and the ideological justification for the Charter of Rights and

Freedoms. Many Native peoples live in the far North, an area that Bruce Hodgins in his chapter breaks down into the Arctic, the land of the Dene, and the provincial norths. According to Hodgins, Native peoples play an important role because, as he points out, in a large area of the North they form an absolute majority of the population, while in the remainder of that area they form a sizable minority. Despite a desperate need for more financial resources, he suggests that there is some improvement in view, especially in the new territory of Nunavut where the population is 85 per cent Inuit and in northern Quebec, where the northern Cree are managing to create a semi-autonomous region.

In her chapter on ethnic minorities, Tamara Palmer Seiler points out that many Canadians felt a sense of pride when Canada became the first country in the world to establish itself as a multicultural society, but, as she emphasizes, not all Canadians shared that enthusiasm, and in the decade of the 1990s the entire policy, and particularly that concerning refugees, became a bitter political issue. Yet it was not until after the events of September 11 that the government, faced with the very real likelihood of severe retribution from the United States, aligned its refugee policies with the much more restrictive American regulations. As Yasmeen Abu-Laban emphasizes in her chapter on multiculturalism, this shift in Canadian policy merely illustrated her thesis that for the Canadian government, multiculturalism has always been a secondary policy and that the immigration and refugee policy was directed less by humanitarian motives than by a calculated strategy related to the global economy. Clearly, she argues, protecting its markets in the United States was a much higher priority than pursuing potential markets elsewhere in the world.

As Tamara Palmer Seiler stresses, however, while the bleak features of Canada's multicultural policies must be recognized, it is also essential to acknowledge that Canadians have developed a more inclusive and just post-colonial society. Writers and artists, she emphasizes, particularly those of minority voices, have been instrumental in the struggle to redefine Canadian identity. In her chapter on Canadian literature, Karen Macfarlane reinforces this point. She explores how Canadian English-language literature looks at issues in current critical discussions and explores ways in which the literature has reacted through various historical periods to many

specific, diverse elements, ranging from geographic features to social movements. In contending that the literature has established a distinctive voice, she illustrates the role of the arts in creating a public memory. In this sense, it is interesting to note Cynthia Hahn's argument that while French-language literature in Canada long reflected a distinct association with the culture of Quebec, it lost its insular orientation in the 1990s. In part because immigrant writers chose to write in French, the new literature explored a variety of themes and forms.

While Macfarlane focused on issues, Elaine Keillor in her chapter on music and Sandra Paikowsky on painting followed a narrative that explored the development of those two art forms in Canada. Paikowsky points out that regional schools of art have not developed in Canada because of the mobility of artists. Both Keillor and Paikowsky highlighted the variety of these art forms in both English-speaking Canada and Quebec. The chapter on theatre by Don Rubin shows that as a result of government funding, there was a marked increase in the number of theatres constructed across Canada in the 1960s and 1970s. This support for a theatrical infrastructure was justified in part by the government-provided jobs in towns such as Stratford. It was also justified as supporting a Canadian cultural identity that would serve as a bulwark against the growing economic integration with the United States. In more recent years artists and writers are increasingly described as just another special interest group, and both the provincial and federal governments have severely reduced the level of grants to cultural bodies. These cultural bodies are now instructed by various governments to follow the American policy of finding private sponsors. However, these same governments are not willing to match the tax relief supplied to such sponsors in the United States.

Government assistance has helped enrich many forms of artistic expression in Canada. In the area of feature films, which is a highly influential form of popular culture, however, the federal government has been unable or unwilling to provide the support that is required to maintain a viable industry. As André Loiselle indicates, government support has enabled directors in Quebec to make feature films with popular appeal, while English-language films have a very limited distribution in English Canada, although some do achieve considerable international critical success. On the other

hand, government subsidies and tax concessions to American companies have resulted in the production of a remarkable number of American feature films and TV series in Canada. To cite but one example, the film *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* portraying a Greek-American family in Chicago, was actually filmed in Toronto. The author and star of the film was from Winnipeg, so the film was eligible for a number of tax concessions and grants.

The arts have made, and will continue to make, important contributions to the culture of Canada. As Len Kuffert points out in his chapter, culture is a dynamic way of interpreting and interacting with the people, things, and ideas that constitute a society. Moreover, culture is constantly evolving in response to such forces as tradition, taste, belief, convenience, and difference. One area that illustrates particular features of Canadian culture is sports, as is well illustrated by Alan Metcalfe. He argues that sport is directly related first to the dominant economic models of industrial, consumer, and corporate capitalism and secondly to the dominant influence of the United States. He concludes that sport is controlled by a hegemony created and sustained by White, middle-class males. Furthermore, if we were to take a male-dominated, high-profile sport such as hockey as defining Canadian attitudes toward masculinity, then we would only be able to conclude that Canadian masculinity is marked by physical aggression, legitimized violence, and anti-female attitudes.

Metcalfe's argument concerning the nature of Canadian masculinity provides an interesting counterpoint to Heather MacIvor's chapter on the position of women in our society. She argues that in the past two decades women have made significant progress in a variety of areas, although some changes are more symbolic than real. Further, although there has been an erosion of the gendered division of labour in the workplace and older attitudes continue to fade, the gendered division of labour and the public-private dichotomy continue to show surprising resistance to changing realities.

Throughout many of the chapters there are frequent references to the existence of regionalism in Canada. Some commentators put forward the position that it has always been such a strong factor that confederation itself was primarily a political act and that politics remain the factor that holds Canada together.² This approach is developed by Michael Howlett in his examination of the

political institutions of Canada. He argues that the political party system's failure to contain regional tensions has compromised the Canadian government's ability to respond to nation-building initiatives. While for most of Canada's history, he argues, two major political parties offered the only viable alternatives to forming a federal government in Ottawa, the political fragmentation that began in 1993 with the electoral success of the Bloc Québécois and Reform parties (entrenched by elections in 1997 and 2000) seriously weakened the glue holding the country together. At the same time, Howlett points out structural flaws in Canadian political institutions.

Not all commentators necessarily accept Howlett's approach to the nature of Canada. For example, in his chapter, Kenneth Pryke argues that colonial union represented more than a political bargain. Further, while there is no denying that regionalism is a pervasive factor in Canadian life, Canadians have many identities and these identities are not necessarily coterminous with regional boundaries. Andrew Nurse deals directly with this subject in his chapter on regionalism when he argues that Canadians across the country share more common attitudes on subjects than would be expected if one were to concentrate solely on regional differences. Moreover, he adds, contrary to the opinion of many Canadians, regionalism is no stronger in Canada than in many other states. While Canadians accept quite readily the fact of regionalism, there is considerable disagreement as to what constitutes a region or what regionalism actually means. Nurse emphasizes that while regionalism remains a potentially disruptive force in Canada and must be dealt with, he suggests that regionalism is not quite as strong as the current strength of regional parties in the federal Parliament would suggest. The difficulty, he proposes, is that the electoral system benefits those parties which represent attitudes that are strongly concentrated in a limited geographic area, rather than those whose strength is spread more evenly over the country as a whole. Thus Nurse, like Howlett, maintains that governance of Canada is made more difficult by structural problems within its political institutions. Whether Canadians will find the will or (in view of the exceedingly rigid formula for amending our constitution) the means to deal with such structural problems is quite problematic.