

Canada 2003 World Today Series Canada



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Canada Today
Against All Odds
It has often been said that Canada is a
"geographic improbability" a huge
sparse-ly settled country whose
diverse people have in common only a map and a preference not to be

absorbed by the United States. As poet A. L. Purdy put it "an opposite nation talked into existence. Because of Canadians enormous differences in language and cultural heritage it is difficult to call them a nation. Nevertheless they have shaped a democratic peaceful and prosperous country seemingly against all odds. Canada was created in the mid-19th century by Americans. More than 100,000 Canadians gathered on Parliament Hill to honor the victims of the largest gathering there ever known and the American embassy was deluged with flowers. Charter buses carried several thousand to New York for a grand "Canada Loves New York" weekend in December 2001. Vancouver firefighters raised \$535,000 for their fallen comrades and a fourth of them traveled to New York at their own expense to help rebuild the stricken city. New Yorkers on the sidewalks stopped to shake their hands and one businessman spoke for an entire nation when he told them: "This has been so hard for us all but because of people like you we'll all get through it. You have no idea what this means to us. As your neighbor I thank you. The next year Prime Minister Jean Chrétien was given the "Statesman of the Year Award" in New York. John F. Kennedy had said about Canada: "Geography made us neighbors. History made us friends. And economics made us partners." A quarter century later President Ronald Reagan made no secret about his reasons for meeting with the Canadian prime minister in March 1985 a practice that is usually repeated twice a year: "No other country in the world is more important to the United States than Canada and we are blessed to have such a nation on our northern border." In both his terms in office his first foreign trip was to Canada and Brian Mulroney visited the President in Washington on his eighth day as Prime Minister of Canada. The first foreigner to fly into space with American astronauts was a Canadian Marc Garneau. He worked at NASA the rest of the century and flew his third shuttle mission in 1999. Other Canadians served in the space station (Julie Payette) or walked in space (Chris Hadfield). Canada is the only foreign country that is permitted to locate its embassy on Pennsylvania Avenue. Former Canadian Ambassador Derek Burney had this to say about the modern building opened in 1989 and situated halfway between the White House and the Capitol: "It conveys the message that I want to convey: Canada counts." Ottawa extended the same privilege to the United States by allowing it to open its new embassy in 1999 on the Area: 3,849,670 sq. mi. = 10,693,528 sq. km. Population: 31 million. Capital City: Ottawa (Pop. 715,000 estimated). Other Principal Cities: Toronto (3.89 million) Montreal (3.12 million) Vancouver (1.6 million) Edmonton (680,000) Calgary (620,000) Winnipeg (605,000). Climate: Varying climatic regions from moderate to bitterly cold Arctic with generally mild summers in the southern areas and long cold winters. Neighboring Countries: The United States of America ("The States"). Official Languages: English and French. Other Tongues: A broad spectrum of languages spoken by immigrants from Europe and Asia. Smaller groups speak native Indian and Inuit dialects. Principal Religions: Christianity (Roman Catholic 54%; Protestant 40%). Chief Commercial Products: Canada is a highly industrialized nation producing a

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