

branch of Laval was opened in Montreal in 1878, and in 1920 it received a civil charter as the University of Montreal. Today Montreal, with enrolment at its affiliated colleges included, has more students (23,717) than any other Canadian university. It is followed by the University of Toronto (23,684), the University of British Columbia (18,977), the University of Alberta (15,854), McGill University (15,012), Laval University (14,634), the University of Saskatchewan (13,605), the University of Manitoba (11,535), and the University of Western Ontario (10,220).

Three King's Colleges (one at Windsor, Ontario, later re-established at Halifax, Nova Scotia, opened in 1790; a second at Fredericton, New Brunswick, opened in 1829; and the third at Toronto, Ontario, opened in 1843, though chartered in 1827) were among the first English-language institutions founded after French control of Canada ended. They were closely associated with the Anglican Church, and through it with the dominant governing bodies, at the time of their formation. Early attempts to limit enrolment to Church of England adherents, coupled with the movement towards responsible government in the provinces, made these colleges targets of religious and political criticism and led to two of them becoming provincial (i.e. state-controlled) universities (University of Toronto - 1850, and University of New Brunswick - 1859). The University of King's College at Halifax is an Anglican, co-educational institution associated with Dalhousie University.

Many denominational colleges were also founded in Ontario and the Atlantic provinces, owing to the desire of various religious denominations to educate their young people in the atmosphere of their own faiths. These included such institutions as Acadian University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia (Baptist - founded in 1838; denominational tests have never been permitted); Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario (Presbyterian when founded in 1841, but now non-denominational); Victoria College (founded in Cobourg, Ontario by Methodists in 1841 and now located in Toronto, under United Church direction); St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia (Catholic - founded in 1853); and Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick (Methodist, now United Church - founded in 1858). After the establishment of the University of Toronto, the Church of England founded its own University of Trinity College in 1851. Trinity is today federated with the University of Toronto.

The first non-denominational institution to be established was McGill University, Montreal, in 1821. It first gave instruction in 1829. Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, which was founded in protest against the exclusiveness of King's College, Windsor, dates from 1818. However, except for a few years between 1838 and 1845, it did not function as a university until 1863.

In the 40-odd years following Confederation in 1867, efforts were made to consolidate existing institutions and to establish monopolistic degree-granting provincial universities in Nova Scotia, Ontario and the four Western provinces. The result failed in Nova Scotia, succeeded in part in Ontario, and until quite recently was the accepted pattern in the West.

A provincial university, the University of Halifax, was established in Nova Scotia in 1878, on the pattern of the University of London, England,