

"LOVE THE WAY WE LIVE"

Halifax

The host city for this year's G-7 Summit is a modern community that is the base for many companies involved in leading-edge technologies.

If there's one thing that Atlantic Canada is noted for it's hospitality. The friendliness of the people makes most visitors agree with the slogan used by the Halifax Tourist Bureau — "Love the way we live."

Before European contact, the Micmacs occupied various sites along what is today the Halifax Harbour—one of the largest natural ports in the world.

The area was explored by Samuel de Champlain in 1605. Founded in 1749, it was first called Chebucto. The city was renamed shortly after in honour of George Dunk, earl of Halifax and chief lord of trade and plantations, who masterminded its settlement. Shortly after the founding, the *Halifax Gazette* started publishing to become Canada's first newspaper.

The first settlers were a group of 2,500 recruited mainly from England and led by Colonel Edward Cornwallis. Today, Halifax's population reflects this heritage; 80% of its people are of British origin.

In the early days, the city's economic growth was based on trade, with a "Golden Age" in the mid-19th century. During the two world wars of this

century, the strategic importance of Halifax was highlighted. It became a major assembly point for North Atlantic convoys, and their naval escorts. Its function as a naval dockyard continues today.

Since the 1950s, the economy of Halifax has been built on trade and distribution, transportation, and public administration. Today, the city is a major transportation hub, providing access to all major North American trade routes via air, land, and sea. The urban area is home to 12 colleges and universities so higher education is an important industry. So too is scientific, medical, and ocean research. More recently, industries such as: information technology, aircraft components, film, and high-technology manufacturing have successfully moved into the region.

Halifax is the capital of the province of Nova Scotia and largest city (population: 330,000) in Atlantic Canada. More than a million people live within a three-hour drive of the city. Its location on the sea surrounded by the forests of Nova Scotia produces a quality of life unusual in a major city. Central Halifax has been revitalized by extensive redevelopment around the original central square and waterfront. It is a bustling, dynamic, and contemporary urban centre. The city has one of the best educated and technically skilled workforces in North America.

Halifax is also the cultural centre of Nova Scotia. From its founding, music, art, and theatre have been central attractions. The Neptune Theatre, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and the Atlantic Symphony continue these traditions. Many well-known writers have been associated with the city — Thomas Chandler Haliburton, Thomas McCulloch, Thomas Raddall, Hugh MacLennan, and Charles Ritchie among them.

Halifax is two hours closer to Europe by air than is New York or Toronto, and is one full day's sailing closer to Europe than any other mainland port in North America.

THE BIG BANG

Shortly after 9 a.m. on 6 December 1917, the entire north end of Halifax ceased to exist. It was flattened when the French munitions ship *Mont Blanc* exploded in Halifax Harbour after colliding with another vessel. It was the largest man-made explosion before Hiroshima. Windows were shattered in Truro, 100 km away, and it was heard in Prince Edward Island, 200 km distant. The *Mont Blanc's* anchor, weighing 500 kilos, came to earth on the other side of the Northwest Arm, five kilometres away. The tidal wave and fires triggered by the explosion added hundreds to the death toll caused by the collapsing buildings. To make things worse, that same evening, it began to snow and a blizzard raged for several days. Out of a population of less than 50,000, more than 1,600 people died and 9,000 were injured. For months, the people of Halifax struggled to rebuild their city. Help poured in from across Canada, the New England states, and from as far away as Australia and New Zealand.