

Though Manitoba is one of Canada's three prairie provinces, it has a remarkably varied topography: more than a hundred thousand lakes, covering an area of 101,592 km<sup>2</sup>; forests covering 257,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and a 650-km coastline along Hudson Bay, complete with a salt-water port that handles ocean-going traffic. It is the country's sixth-largest province in area. From north to south it extends 1,225 km and stretches 793 km at its widest point.

More than a million people live in the province, but there are, on average, fewer than two Manitobans for every square kilometre of land. Most of the population is concentrated in the south, near the United States border. It is here that Manitoba's largest city, Winnipeg, is located. Winnipeg, the provincial capital, has a population of 580,000 and is Canada's fifth-largest city.

Landforms have greatly influenced the economic activities undertaken in the province. In the north, trappers and loggers search for game and reap the harvest of the forests. Whole communities have been constructed to harness the power of fast-flowing rivers that drain into Hudson Bay. Miners and prospectors work the minerals found in large quantities in the northern part of Manitoba. In the south, farmers, merchants, businessmen, labourers, engineers and other professionals perform the same services and trades that are carried on in Canada's nine other provinces.

### *The land*

Much of Manitoba is situated on what was once an immense glacial lake. The province's three largest lakes — Winnipeg, Manitoba and Winnipegosis — are the greatest remaining sections of the ancient Lake Agassiz. As the level of the lake dropped, many beaches, which can still be seen today, were exposed. Below the surface of the topsoil, further reminders of the Ice Age can be found.

The flat land that surrounds Winnipeg is not typical of Manitoba. There are many valleys, plateaus and even several mountains in the southwestern part of the province. Most areas are cut by rivers — rivers such as the Red, Assiniboine and Souris that drain southern Manitoba, and the Nelson, Saskatchewan and Churchill in the north that supply hydro-electric power for the province. The northern areas are especially rugged. Farther north still is the Arctic tundra with its permafrost, permanently frozen earth, just a metre or so under the topsoil.

The soil itself ranges from the famous Manitoba black gumbo (which is just as sticky as the word "gumbo" suggests) of the Red River Valley to the light sandy soil varieties of the southeast.

### *Call them Manitobans*

Canada's multicultural mosaic is fully reflected in the composition of Manitoba's population. From the era of