

the British granted official recognition to French civil laws and guaranteed religious freedom. In 1791, the province was divided in two to satisfy immigrants from the United States who, after the American War of Independence, wished to remain under British rule. Upper Canada (today's Ontario) and Lower Canada (Quebec) were created. The Act of Union (1840) formed the two into the United Province of Canada with English as its sole official language.

In 1867, Quebec joined the new federal nation of Canada and thus regained official and full control over its language and political institutions.

Initially, the province's mainly rural roots and institutional domination by the Roman Catholic Church made it a traditional society. With the advent of a second industrial revolution between 1920 and 1940, urbanization and higher standards of living came to Quebec.

It was during the Quiet Revolution, which began in 1960, that Quebec really came into its own. This important period of transition was marked by rapid economic expansion, a revamping of government institutions to meet the needs of contemporary society, and a surge in cultural pride.

Clashes between Quebec and the federal government had occurred in the past. But continued tensions during this period and the 1970 bombings and political kidnappings by the Front de libération du Québec brought the issue of Quebec's status within Canada into sharp relief.

In 1976, Quebecers elected the separatist Parti Québécois (PQ). The PQ passed a law rendering French the province's sole official language but lost a 1980 referendum on sovereignty (separation from Canada). In 1985, the Liberal Party won the provincial election.

Throughout Quebec's history, the survival of the "French fact" in Canada as well as in Quebec has been central to the political and cultural life of Quebecers. It has produced — and still produces — tensions between Francophones and Anglophones in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. Yet it is this very aspect that assures Quebec a distinct place in Canadian Confederation and gives Canada a bilingual character and cultural richness unique in the world.

## Culture

Once characterized by rural and folk traditions, Quebec's cultural life now has a reputation for innovation and dynamism. At the same time, it retains a distinctly made-in-Quebec stamp, born from its artists' passion for the province.

Quebec is home to several symphony orchestras, including those of Montreal and Quebec City; an opera company; more than 150 theatre troupes; thriving dance, literature, visual arts and film communities; and international film and jazz festivals. In addition, its television and graphic arts industries are considered among the best.

Quebec's artists have distinguished themselves at home and abroad in almost every cultural field. Songwriters and singers Gilles Vigneault, Félix Leclerc, Robert Charlebois, Louis Quilico, Raoul Jobin, Monique Leyrac, Diane Dufresne and Pauline Julien have long been recognized outside the province, as have, among others, writers Gabrielle Roy (originally from Manitoba), Anne Hébert and Mordecai Richler; filmmakers Claude Jutra, Denys Arcand and Gilles Carle; and artists Jean-Paul Riopelle, Paul-Émile Borduas and Alfred Pellan.

Recently, they have been joined by a new generation of talented artists in the forefront of new trends, such as singers Michel Rivard and Daniel Lavoie (originally from Manitoba), artist Françoise Sullivan, and impersonator André-Philippe Gagnon. Bold innovators such as Michel Lemieux, La La La Human Steps and Le Cirque du Soleil, who produce dazzling performances, have helped make Quebec a leader in theatrical improvisation, dance, music, mime and the circus.

## Economy

Highly industrialized and quite diversified, Quebec's economy is strong and full of promise. The province has abundant natural resources and energy, along with well-developed manufacturing, agricultural and service sectors. Its citizens rank ninth in the world in terms of their standard of living.

Quebec's entrepreneurs have been quick to seize on the economic potential of their province. Enthusiastic and aggressive, they have developed a wide variety of top quality products for export, such as air traffic control equipment, computer diskettes, subway trains,

helicopters, compact discs, children's construction blocks and air purifiers.

Montreal, the province's commercial capital, has developed competitive space and aeronautics (Canadair, Spar Aerospace), telecommunications (Northern Telecom, Bell Canada), energy (Hydro-Quebec) and transportation (Bombardier) industries.

Quebec now exports 40 per cent of its total production, mainly from three sectors: the forest industry (printing, paper, lumber); the mining industry (aluminum, iron ore); and transportation equipment. Quebec also exports electricity, engineering know-how, electronic products and telecommunications equipment. (Vidéotron, the sixth-largest cable company in North America, is internationally recognized for its technology.)

## Exciting Future

Quebec is a province that defies easy description. At once desirous of preserving its history, it is also driven to keep moving forward. Indeed, modern Quebec boasts an impressive technological sector, and some of the most progressive social programs and environmental legislation in North America, along with strong government support for cultural and historical exploration and protection.

Quebec takes profound pride in its French roots and character. At the same time, it retains a deep feeling for its North American heritage. It is this co-existence of contrasts that makes Quebec such a special province and one whose development will undoubtedly continue to prove exciting and challenging.

