

THE CHARLOTTETOWN CONFERENCE

On September 1, 1864, the small Maritime municipality of Charlottetown became the site of a conference of five delegates from each of the colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. Convened with the approval of the Colonial Office, the conference met to consider the proposed political union of the three Maritime colonies. The project met with little enthusiasm. Interest in the conference increased, however, when the Government of the United Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada (now Ontario and Québec) requested permission to send eight leading political figures to the meeting. The delegates, accordingly, postponed their discussion of Maritime union until the Canadian representatives had been heard.

Upon their arrival, the Canadians put before the conference a persuasive case for the political union of all the provinces of British North America. When the Maritime delegates met a few days later to consider their own project further, they were unable to agree. The conference ended on September 9, and the delegates proceeded to Halifax, Saint John, and Fredericton, the main centres of the eastern Provinces. In each city, the Canadians held large public meetings and effectively forwarded their case for a broad political union. The Maritimes, along with representatives from Newfoundland, were then invited to attend a second conference to be held at Quebec that October. At that city, the feasibility of a union of all the provinces in British North America was considered in detail.