
APPENDIX B

REGIONAL DIVERSITY

This appendix sets out some data illustrating the major differences — economic, social, demographic — among the regions of Canada. Regional disparity can sometimes be measured, but it is always felt by those who are victims of economic, social or perceived political inequality. Traditionally, economic indicators such as per capita income, participation rate and unemployment rate have been used to measure disparities; thus most emphasis has been placed on the economic situation in a region.

Social indicators such as family structure, suicide rates and health standards have not often been used in conjunction with economic indicators to measure the full range of differences between regions. According to O.J. Firestone, this may be a mistake since “in economic analysis, and particularly in regional analysis, explanations are offered in economic terms when in fact, many of the elements are non-economic—cultural, social, political and psychological”.¹

Several tables deal with the conventional economic indicators. In addition, we have provided tables showing certain social indicators and comparisons with other industrialized countries in order to give a more balanced view of the disparities between regions in Canada and between Canada and other western countries.

Demographic Information

Tables B-1, 2 and 3 show the growth in Canadian and provincial populations between 1891 and 1980. The largest increase in population in the west and British Columbia was during the settlement phase of 1891 to 1921. In general, the central and Atlantic provinces grew at a faster pace between 1931 and 1961. As a percentage of the total Canadian population, the populations of the Atlantic and central provinces have shrunk while that of the western provinces (in particular the prairie provinces) has grown; however, in real numbers, Ontario and Quebec remain the most populous provinces and will continue to have more than 50 per cent of Canada's population for the foreseeable future.

Table B-4 indicates the source of population increases in the country as a whole and in each province. In general, the rate of natural increase in

¹ O.J. Firestone, *Regional Economic and Social Disparity*, p. 215.