

Nova Scotia is one of the four original partners in the Canadian Confederation of 1867. The province extends southwest into the Atlantic Ocean, a position which gives it a great commercial advantage and marks it as a natural highway for travel between Europe and Canada.

Geography and climate

Nova Scotia's major Atlantic ports lie almost astride the Great Circle Route to Europe and are a full day's sailing closer to Europe than any other North American mainland port. This geographic location, together with large, ice-free, and deep-water harbours, has been a key factor in the province's economic development. Nova Scotia's 55,491-km² (21,425-square-mile) area is larger than Denmark although somewhat smaller than Scotland, after which it is named. The 579-km (360-mile) length of the province is a one-day journey by car, and the average width of 128 km (80 miles) means that no part is far from the sea.

Nova Scotia is a mosaic of rugged headlands, tranquil harbours and ocean beaches. Its indented shoreline stretches 10,424 km (6,479 salty miles), while inland is a myriad of lakes and streams. The land is framed by the rocky Atlantic uplands, the Cape Breton highlands and the wooded Cobequid hills. The agricultural areas of Nova Scotia are predominantly lowlands. When the glacial ice withdrew from coastal Nova Scotia fifteen to

eighteen thousand years ago, the level of the ocean rose and flooded ancient river valleys and carved from the upland coasts hundreds of small protected harbours which later became fishing ports. The immense tides of the Bay of Fundy are another phenomenon of the Maritimes. Average tides range from 5 metres (16 feet) at the Bay of Fundy's entrance to 11 metres (36 feet) at the head of Minas Basin. There maximum tides reach 16 metres (53 feet) and are the highest in the world.

Nova Scotia lies in the northern temperate zone and although it is almost surrounded by the Atlantic and its coastal seas, including the Bay of Fundy and the Gulf of the St. Lawrence, the climate is continental rather than maritime. The temperature extremes of a continental climate, however, are modified by the ocean. Though temperatures vary, the average growing period for farm crops is 156 days. Annual precipitation ranges from 39 to 63 inches.

Its geographic location, straddling the 45th parallel, gives the province a greater variety of forest cover than most areas its size. There are ten native softwood and 14 native hardwood trees with 13 less common hardwoods and several dozen species introduced from outside. Forests cover 80 per cent of Nova Scotia, a higher proportion than that of a century ago. Some 12 species supply industrial wood. The first foresters in Nova Scotia were probably the "King's