

Canada's most distinctive geological feature is the Canadian Shield, which wraps around Hudson Bay and underlies almost half the country. The part that is largely forested is the **Southern Shield** region. The northern half of the Shield is treeless and is considered as part of the Arctic region. The Southern Shield consists of three ecozones: the Boreal Shield, the Taiga Shield, and the Hudson Plains.

The Southern Shield has very little farmland, but is otherwise a very resource-rich area, with its extensive forest areas and mineral resources each giving rise to a large number of extraction and processing towns. The total area of timber-productive forest land in this region is 1 178 000 square kilometres — 48 percent of Canada's total forest land of 2 446 000 square kilometres. The southern rim of the region (the Boreal Shield) is almost continuously forested and includes almost all of the forest lands of the region. In 1998, this region also produced more than 75 percent of Canada's metal output, with production being almost entirely composed of a small, diverse range of minerals: gold, copper, iron ore, nickel, and uranium. The Southern Shield is also Canada's main source of another resource, hydroelectric power.

This region includes one area not technically part of the Shield, but very similar in overall appearance to it. This is the island of the province of Newfoundland. It has some forest resources, but is otherwise barren. Its offshore fishing banks, however, were the first known natural resource of Canada, and settlements to exploit these grew up along the coasts of the island. The exceptionally rich fishing banks are not as productive now as they have been due to a variety of factors, both human and natural. However, they are being carefully monitored by Canada so as to ensure a viable future fishery. In recent years, other natural resources have become important to Newfoundland, notably the offshore oil and gas resources.

The **Atlantic Maritime** region consists of a single ecozone: the Atlantic Maritime. Both consist of all areas in the three Maritime provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) and a substantial neighbouring area of Quebec. A common element of this region is the Appalachian Mountains, which underlie the entire area.

The terrain is a varied one, usually of low mountains, hills, and substantial valleys, except for Prince Edward Island, which is an entirely flat, agricultural area. Otherwise there are few agricultural areas in the region; instead, the economy is based on forestry, fishing, manufacturing, and government services. There are some mineral resources, with the newest one being natural gas from areas off Nova Scotia.