

The inland fishery

Canada's freshwater fisheries are based on lakes and rivers covering an area of 755 000 square kilometres (only slightly less than the total area of Australia).

These resources have become the base for a flourishing freshwater fishery sector that employs 8 000 fishermen. The inland fisheries harvest includes perch, pickerel, pike, smelt, tullibee and whitefish. In 1983, landings of the freshwater fisheries totalled 50 000 tonnes with a landed value of \$51 million.

The gear used in these fisheries varies from small open boats powered by outboard engines, to 300 vessels 12 to 25 metres in length which fish on the Great Lakes and other large freshwater bodies. These include Great Bear Lake which lies partly in the Northwest Territories, and Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories, one of the largest lakes in the western hemisphere, where the annual commercial fishing catch exceeds \$2 million.

By far the greatest share of the inland fisheries is based in Ontario, on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes.

Commercial fishing which started in Lake Ontario in the first half of the nineteenth century, has had to contend with many obstacles. The Great Lakes became the centre of industrial expansion in both Canada and the United States, causing habitat damage and water pollution. Another challenge was the introduction of the sea lamprey, an eel-like predator that decimated commercial stocks until joint action by the Canada-US Great Lakes Fishery Commission brought the problem under control.

Today, Ontario's commercial freshwater fishery is the largest in the world with 1983 landings of almost 27.5 thousand tonnes of fish with a landed value of about \$28 million. Nationwide, in 1983, Canada's freshwater landings were 48.8 thousand tonnes valued at \$49 million.