

MANITOBA

Manitoba, twice as big as the British Isles, lies in the geographic centre of Canada on the edge of the prairies and next to the coniferous forests and granite outcrops of the great Canadian shield. In the north, where the Province touches Hudson's Bay, it is a land of muskeg and tundra. Manitoba is blessed with an abundance of fresh water, including three huge lakes, Winnipeg (a tidal lake bigger than Lake Ontario), Manitoba and Winnipegosis.

Some 585,000 people live in Winnipeg, the capital and single big city of the Province. Winnipeg has an exciting history, closely linked with the conquest and development of the Canadian West. It is undoubtedly this, as well as its distinguished fine arts, particularly ballet, which merit the triple star rating by the Michelin guide.

Economically, Manitoba is in a holding pattern; times have been worse but they could be better. In the early and mid-1970s, the Province's economic indicators were among the most discouraging in the country. Since then things have improved relatively. Manitoba is now doing as well as most of the other provinces, better than some. The population, which fell between 1978 and 1980, is climbing again - it is now an estimated 1,033,000. The cost of living is lower in Manitoba than the Canadian average. The Province had a 10.9 per cent inflation rate last year, compared with 12.5 for all Canada. This year it is expected to fall slightly. Long-term prospects are pretty good. Large scale investment plans are afoot, and central Winnipeg is getting a \$96 million overhaul.

Agriculture is one of Manitoba's most important economic activities. The most significant crops are grain, particularly wheat. Saskatchewan grows more wheat, and Alberta almost as much, but Manitoba has much of the marketing machinery - the Wheat Board and the Winnipeg Commodity Exchange are in downtown Winnipeg - and the centre of Canadian grain research is at the University of Manitoba. Manitoba's agriculture (unlike that of Saskatchewan or Alberta) has a great variety; it includes market gardening vegetables like potatoes and brussels sprouts, and livestock.

Manitoba's lakes hold eighty species of freshwater fish - the greatest variety in North America, but only fifteen are harvested commercially. Yellow pickerel and whitefish are 75 per cent of the catch, followed by perch, pike, tullibee, lake trout, yellow perch and mullet. The catch, second only to Ontario's, totalled 48.5 million pounds in 1981/82. It was marketed by the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation in Winnipeg (which markets all prairie fish) and brought an estimated \$42 million. Most of the harvest goes to the American market.

The market for the province's main minerals, copper and nickel, has been hurt by a slackening demand in the United States for steel, autos, housing and durable goods. The forestry industry has also suffered from the recession. Commercial forests extend over 40 per cent of the Province's land area, but high interest rates and low housing starts have hurt the sale of lumber. Inventories increased by 27.8 per cent in 1981, and this has caused short-term layoffs of workers.

Manufacturing is a bright spot. Employment has remained constant