

The **Western Cordillera** region consists of three ecozones: the Montane Cordillera, the Boreal Cordillera, and the Taiga Cordillera. The region covers almost all of British Columbia and Yukon, and overlaps slightly into Alberta. The distinctive feature of this area is its north-south mountain ranges. To the west, the Coast Mountains run without a break for nearly 1500 kilometres, while along the eastern edge of the region there are the nearly continuous ranges of the Rocky Mountains and the Mackenzie Mountains.

Human activities are diverse in this region, with most being closely based on natural resources. Most of the area is forested, with the result that a very large forestry industry is found extending over most of British Columbia. (British Columbia as a whole produces about 40 percent of Canada's wood production by volume.) The Western Cordillera region also has rich energy and mineral resources; along the eastern edge, these are more likely to be energy resources, such as coal or hydrocarbons, whereas in the rest of the area, they are mainly metals.

The **Interior Plains** region also consists of three ecozones (from south to north): the Prairie Plains, the Boreal Plains, and the Taiga Plains. This region spreads over four provinces and two territories, but is concentrated in the Prairie provinces — Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

Settlement and economic patterns in the region vary markedly from south to north. The southern part contains most of Canada's farmland; Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba together have 286 000 square kilometres of cropland, 82 percent of Canada's overall total cropland area of 349 000 square kilometres. These lands are mainly a dryland area, with the best soils (chernozem, or black earth) being a band that runs north in Alberta up to Edmonton, then southeast to Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Prairies are world-famous for their production of wheat and other grains, and nearly as well known for their beef and other livestock activities.

The Prairie provinces are also well known as Canada's main location of energy resources. Alberta, in particular, has large oil and gas reserves, and also large areas underlain by oil sands. Saskatchewan and British Columbia also have a substantial oil and gas production industry. All three provinces have large coal resources from which come coal for export and for local electricity generation. The northern part of the Interior Plains is relatively remote and thinly populated, however, that part that falls in the Northwest Territories contains the bulk of the population of this territory.