

Thoughts on Canadian Geography

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Read the following quotations and select the two that best reflect the distinguishing elements of Canada:

"We are fortunate both in our neighbours and in our lack of neighbours. It may be that this fortunate position is not due to any special virtue on our part, that it is an accident of geography and of history, but one has only to be in any European country a day to realize how relatively fortunate a position it is, and what folly it would be to throw it away. It is equally true, I should add, that if some countries have too much history, we have too much geography."

~ William Lyon Mackenzie King, Prime Minister, speech, House of Commons, 1936

"Canada is so big as to seem invisible."

~ Brian Moore, novelist, *Canada* (1963, 1968)



"We're a long, thin country shaped like a railway..."

~ Pierre Berton, author and media personality, address to the Empire Club of Canada, Toronto, 7 November 1985

"Know something? Canada, which we tend to think of as a thin ribbon of city lights stretched out along the forty-ninth parallel, is as high as it is wide. It's as far from Eureka, on Ellesmere Island, to Point Pelee in Ontario (which is in fact south of parts of California) as from Carbonear to Skidegate. The north is enormous."

~ Peter Gzowski, journalist and host of CBC Radio's Morningside, "Whistling Down the Northern Lights," *The Fourth Morningside Papers* (1991).

"By the year 2000, more people will live in the cities of Calcutta and Greater Bombay than in all of Canada."

~ George J. Demko, geographer, *Why in the World: Adventures in Geography* (1992).

"Space, land, and winter - these are the overwhelming realities of Canada."

~ Wade Davis, ethnobotanist and writer, *Shadows in the Sun* (1992)



"So stand up and be proud and sing out very loud / We stand out from the crowd cuz Canada's really big."

~ Chorus of the song "Canada's Really Big," written and performed by the Arrogant Worms on their CD *Catterwaul and Doggerel*.

"As I sit in my Toronto home, I am 2,740 miles south of the northern tip of Ellesmere Island, Canada's northernmost land for all practical purposes. If I swivel my chair and look directly south, there, a bit over the horizon but the same distance away, is Bogotá, the capital of Columbia. The District of Columbia, in contrast, is a mere hour's travel by jet."

~ F. Kenneth Hare, geographer, "Canada: The Land," in *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, "In Search of Canada," Fall, 1988.

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"Whether one is crossing Canada on a train or just looking at it on a map, the country is too big for sparkle. The mind instinctively shies away from a subject that extends across so much territory."

~ Jan Morris, Anglo-Welsh traveller, "In Praise of Canada,"
The Toronto Star, 15 June 1922.

"Canada will always be so infinitely bigger than the small nation who lives in it - even if its population doubled - that this monstrous, empty, habitat must continue to dominate it psychologically and also culturally."

~ Wyndham Lewis, British artist, "Nature's Place in Canadian Culture" (1940–1944),
Wyndham Lewis in Canada (1971), edited by George Woodcock.

"There is a thousand miles of forest, / A thousand miles of plain, / A thousand miles of mountains, / And then the sea again."

~ Ditty quoted by Frederick W. Gershaw, Senator, address, Senate of Canada,
12 March 1959.

"Assuming a fertility rate of 1.7 and net migration (immigration minus emigration) of zero, Canada's population would stop growing in 2022 and then begin a long, lingering decline that would continue until the last Canadian, unable to find a mate anywhere from Victoria to St. John's, dies of loneliness in 2086."

~ David K. Foot and Daniel Stoffman, demographer and journalist, *Boom, Bust and Echo: How to Profit from the Coming Demographic Shift* (1996).

"We have virtually no monuments to the multicultural nature of Canada, to salute those who came here seeking a fresh and better future, which, when you think about it, includes just about all Canadians. We're a nation of boat people."

~ Peter C. Newman, columnist, "Pier 21," *Maclean's*, 22 July 1996.

"Canada is not so much a multicultural country as it is a country with a few multicultural cities."

~ Pat Carney, journalist and politician, "The Golden Dragon,"
Saturday Night, November 1989.

"Canada is one of the most urbanized countries in the world and yet our collective psyche is stuck in the country, as if there is an inherent contradiction between the idea of the north and the enjoyment of city life."

~ Joe Berridge, urban planner, *The Globe and Mail*,
31 May 1991.



All quotations from *Famous Lasting Words: Great Canadian Quotations*
by John Robert Colombo.