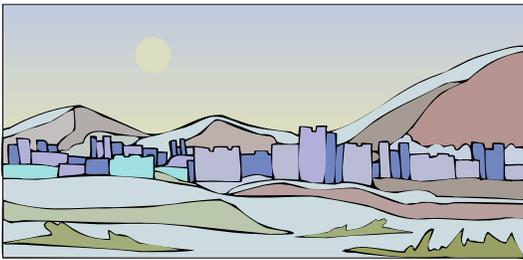


# Rural, Urban, and Remote Communities— The Best Place to Live?

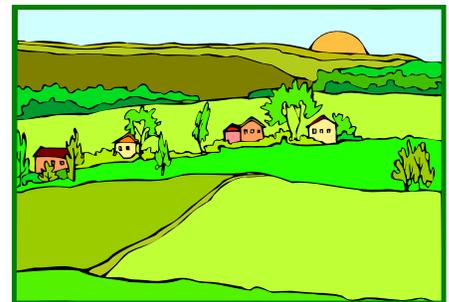
Canada is the second-largest country in the world in terms of geographical size; however, it has a small population compared to many other countries. Most Canadians live in the southern portion of the country, with the largest concentrations in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowland region. A relatively small number of Canadians live in the shield regions of the near north and even fewer live in the northern territories. Prior to European arrival in what is now Canada, Aboriginal peoples occupied most regions of the country, although population numbers and densities were generally very low.



From the viewpoint of the early European explorers and settlers, Canada itself was a remote country since it was far away from the centres of population, power and wealth in Europe. The term “**remote**” means out of the way, or located far from the main centres of population and society. A small portion of Canada’s settlements are still

considered remote because they are located in isolated regions, often in the North. Many of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples still live in remote settlements in areas occupied by their ancestors. They make a living through hunting, fishing, gathering, and often working in modern resource development industries in remote northern locations. Many other Canadians have chosen to live in remote settlements where they may have jobs related to mining, forestry, hydro, and tourism industries in the Canadian Shield or Canada’s Arctic regions.

Many of Canada’s early immigrants were attracted by the promise of free or low-cost farmland and saw this as an opportunity for a better life than they had in Europe. Much of western Canada was settled through advertising campaigns to attract farmers to the vast open spaces of the prairies. The development of **rural** settlement focused on farming and established a rural way of life that is still important in Canada today. Early rural life was



characterized by large families, neighbours helping each other out with tasks such as constructing farm buildings and harvesting, as well as active community social activities such as dances, ball games, and church going. Although families might have lived some distance apart, neighbours always knew each other and could count on each other for help and support. A similar rural way of life still exists in many parts of Canada today. Approximately one out of every five Canadians lives in a rural settlement.

## Rural, Urban, and Remote Communities— The Best Place to Live?

Canada's cities began to develop early in its history as centres of trade, as transportation nodes, as places where resources were processed, and places where artisans could ply their trades. Cities were able to develop once food production was efficient enough so that not everyone had to be involved in farming or hunting and gathering activities. Consequently, **urban** dwellers could focus on other things such as industry and trade, developing the arts and culture, expansion of service industries, and the development of a variety of educational and recreational opportunities. Urban life is often viewed as very desirable and over the years many people, especially younger age groups, have migrated from rural and remote areas to the cities to live and work and enjoy the amenities offered in urban centres. Today approximately four out of five Canadians live in an urban settlement.

There are advantages and disadvantages of living in each type of settlement. Many Canadians may decide to stay in the settlement they were born in, while others may decide to move to another type of settlement for economic opportunities or other personal interests. All three types of settlements, however, are important components in the diverse fabric that makes up our Canadian society.

