Map showing the historical development of railways and canals in Canada, emphasizing the early railway routes and their impact on the development of the country. The map highlights key cities and regions such as Quebec, Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa, illustrating the network of railways and canals that were instrumental in the economic growth and integration of the country in the 19th century.
Canada East — Background

Population (circa 1860): 1,112,000

Urban centres: Montreal (107,225)
               Quebec (59,700)

Key figures: George-Etienne Cartier (1814-1873)
             Alexander T. Galt (1817-1893)
             Thomas D'Arcy McGee (1825-1868)
             Hector L. Langevin (1826-1906)
             Etienne P. Taché (1795-1865)
             Jean Charles Champsais (1811-1885)

By the 1860s, the Province of Canada (encompassing both Canada East and Canada West) is the most populous, the largest in size and the most powerful of the British North American colonies. Canada East is dominated by the lumbering industry and an agricultural economy. The colony's urban centre, Montreal, is the most populous city in British North America. It is, in fact, almost double the size of Quebec, the second largest city in the colonies. The wealthy lumber merchants are central members of the city's elite, along with a rising group of industrialists: owners of iron and steel plants, flour mills and steamship lines. This group, dominated by Scotsmen, have built grand mansions along the slopes of Mount Royal, in the centre of the city. Though English speaking Protestants make up only 15 percent of the colony's population, they dominate the commercial and political life of the colony.

It is the rural habitant, however, the French Canadian farmer, who makes up the bulk of the rural population. Living, by and large, along the shores of the St. Lawrence River, the French speaking, Roman Catholic habitant lives a traditional way of life, producing potatoes, rye, buckwheat and livestock.

A serious problem, magnified by the recent growth in Canada West, is the political deadlock in the Canadian Parliament. The inability to form a majority government led to three different administrations between 1861 and 1864. In 1864, however, the Great Coalition was formed. Made up of Conservatives, Clear Grits and Reformers from Canada East and Canada West, the Great Coalition called for, among other things, a federal union of the British North American colonies. Many feared the destruction of French culture in any union of the British North American colonies. But George-Etienne Cartier, the French Canadian member of the Coalition, believed that only in a federal union of the colonies would French Canadian culture survive and, in turn, flourish. In the new federal union, he argued, French Canadians would still control all matters concerning language, religion, civil law and education within the province.

The Grand Trunk is the colony's central railway line. With its headquarters in Montreal, and an impressive network of lines (including the Victoria Bridge, which spans the St. Lawrence and is the world's longest bridge), transportation is still hampered by two factors. Not only does the colony lack a year-round, ice-free port, but also one cannot travel from Canada East to the Maritime colonies without travelling through the United States. For six months of the year, Canadian imports and exports are carried on American railways, on American soil and, often, shipped in and out of American ports. The solution, in many Canadian minds, is an Intercolonial Railway. If the Intercolonial were built, it would run
through New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and end in Halifax. Canada East's commercial potential would be immense.

The Intercolonial Railway would also help in the defence of British North America. Great Britain's reluctance to defend the colonies has made closer ties between the British North American colonies crucial to security. The threat of Fenian raids along the Canada-United States border near Montreal, as well as the threat of American invasion during the Civil War, make an Intercolonial Railway necessary for mobilizing troops.
Canada East — Viewpoints


1. Thomas D'Arcy McGee's vision of a new Northern Nation (1860)

I have spoken with a sole single desire for the increase, prosperity, freedom and honour of this incipient Northern Nation. I call it a Northern Nation—for such it must become, if all of us do our duty to the last... I see in the not remote distance one great nationality, bound, like the shield of Achilles, by the blue rim of Ocean. I see it quartered into many communities, each disposing of its internal affairs, but all bound together by free institutions, free intercourse and free commerce. I see within the round of that shield the peaks of the Western Mountains and the crests of the Eastern waves, the winding Assiniboine, the five-fold lakes, the St. Lawrence, the Ottawa, the Saguenay, the St. John, and the basin of the Minas. By all these flowing waters in all the valleys they fertilize, in all the cities they visit in their courses, I see a generation of industrious, contented, moral men, free in name and in fact—men capable of maintaining, in peace and in war, a constitution worthy of such a country!

2. French Canadian distrust of Confederation
(L'Ordre Montreal, 4 May 1860); translation

What French Canadian has not in his heart cursed a hundred times the Union of the two Canadas?... Others have wanted in turn to anglicize us and protestantize us; after a century of ignoble hopes and base efforts, convinced of their failure, they now want to destroy our constitution.... What would Upper Canada be today without the Union? Nothing more or less than a forest put up for auction by British capitalists to repay their investments. The only solution is repeal of the Union. Upper Canada does not like living with us: we like it less.

3. Provincial rights in the Union
(Le Courrier du Canada Quebec, 10 October 1864); translation

Let us give to each province its own distinct autonomy, let each province be master in its own house in matters of social organization, ownership of public property, preservation of its language, laws and institutions, while protecting minorities everywhere, and let us unite all parts into a federal agreement covering matters in which a common defense and common interests see us all joined on the same ground.

4. George-Etienne Cartier
(Canadian Parliament, Winter 1865)

(If union were attained, we would form a political nationality with which neither the national origin, nor the religion of any individual, would interfere... with regard to the objection based on this fact, to the effect that a great nation could not be formed because Lower Canada was in great part French and Catholic, and Upper Canada British and Protestant, and the Lower Provinces were mixed, it was futile and worthless in the extreme. Look, for instance, at the United Kingdom, inhabited as it was by three great races. Had the diversity of race impeded the glory, the progress, the wealth of England? Had they not rather contributed their share to the greatness of the Empire?... In our own Federation we should have Catholic and Protestant, English, French, Irish and
Scotch, and each by his efforts and his success would increase the prosperity and glory of the new Confederacy.

5. **Joseph Perrault**  
   (Canadian Parliament, Winter 1865)  
   (W)ith Confederation, as we shall be in the great minority in the General Parliament, which as all the important powers in relation to legislation, we shall have to carry on a constant contest for the defence and preservation of our political rights and of our liberty.

6. **D'Arcy McGee on the American threat**  
   (Canadian Parliament, 9 February 1865)  
   These are frightful figures [U.S. military] for the capacity of destruction they represent, for the heaps of carnage that they represent, for the quantity of human blood spilt that they represent, for the lust of conquest that they represent, for the evil passion that they represent, and for the arrest of the onward progress of civilization that they represent. ... They [the Americans] coveted Florida, and they seized it; they coveted Louisiana, and purchased it; they coveted Texas and stole it; and then they picked a quarrel with Mexico, which ended by their getting California. ... had we not the strong arm of England over us, we would not now have had a separate existence.

7. **Alexander T. Galt on the need for Intercolonial trade**  
   (Canadian Parliament, 7 February 1865)  
   Intercolonial trade has been, indeed, of the most insignificant character; we have looked far more to our commercial relations with the neighbouring—though a foreign country—than to the interchange of our own products, which would have retained the benefits of our trade within ourselves; hostile tariffs have interfered with the free interchange of the products of the labour of all the colonies, and one of the greatest and most immediate benefits to be derived from their union, will spring from the breaking down of these barriers and the opening up of the markets of all the provinces to the different industries of each.

8. **Hector L. Langevin on the fate of French Canadians in Confederation**  
   (Canadian Parliament, Winter 1865)  
   But what would be the fate of the French Canadians in the case of annexation to the United States? Let us profit by the example of the French race in the United States, and enquire what has been the fate of the French in Louisiana? What has become of them? What has become of their language, their customs, their manners and their institutions? After the war, hardly a trace will remain to show that the French race has passed that way ... we live in peace at the present day and are perfectly comfortable; Catholics and Protestants have the same rights and religious liberty, and they live peacefully together as there was but one religion in the land.
Canada West — Background

Population (circa 1860): 1,396,000

Urban centres: Toronto (56,000)
    Hamilton (26,700)
    Ottawa (21,500)
    London (15,826)
    Kingston (12,400)
    Brantford (8,100)

Key figures: John A. Macdonald (1815-1891)
    George Brown (1818-1880)
    William McDougall (1822-1905)
    Alexander Campbell (1822-1892)
    Oliver Mowat (1820-1903)
    James Cockburn (1819-1883)
    William P. Howland (1811-1907)

By the 1860s, the Province of Canada (encompassing both Canada East and Canada West) is the most populous, the largest in size, and the most powerful of the British North American colonies. Overwhelmingly Protestant and English speaking, Canada West's population is now greater than Canada East's and it is growing at a faster rate. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find good farm land in a colony where over 80 percent of its residents live in the countryside. To prevent young farmers from moving to the American West, and to halt American expansion into the British North West Territory, many politicians and newspapermen—led by George Brown and his Toronto Globe—are calling for Canada to acquire, to settle and, ultimately, to govern the Western lands, presently controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company.

Another problem magnified by the recent growth is the political deadlock in the Canadian Parliament. The inability to form a majority government led to three different administrations between 1861 and 1864. In 1864, however, the Great Coalition was formed. Made up of Conservatives, Clear Grits and Reformers from Canada West and Canada East, the Great Coalition called for a federal union of the British North American colonies, "rep by pop" (representation by population), and the incorporation of the North West Territory into any Confederation. "Rep by pop," the central demand of George Brown's Clear Grits, would give Canada West the political power its increasing population deserves.

Agriculture and lumbering are the chief industries in Canada West. The wealthy wheat and lumber merchants form the core of the colony's elite. The key to Canada West's economy is the Grand Trunk Railway. The colony's already extensive rail network has made Toronto the commercial centre. Goods from all regions of the colony flow into the growing city, ready for export or to be shipped elsewhere within Canada West.

Trade, however, is hampered by two factors. Not only does the colony lack a year-round, ice-free port, but also one cannot travel from Canada West to the Maritime colonies without travelling through the United States. For six months of the year, Canadian imports and exports are carried on American railways, on American soil and, often, shipped in and out of American ports. The solution, in many Canadian minds, is an Intercolonial Railway. If the Intercolonial were built, it would run through Canada East, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and end in Halifax. Canada West's commercial potential would be immense.
The Intercolonial Railway would also help in the defence of British North America. Great Britain's reluctance to defend the colonies has made closer ties between the British North American provinces crucial to security. The threat of Fenian raids along the Canada-United States border in the Niagara region and along the St. Lawrence River, as well as the threat of American invasion during the Civil War, make an Intercolonial Railway necessary for mobilizing troops.
Canada West — Viewpoints


1. Opposition to the Intercolonial Railroad
   (Toronto Globe, 8 October 1858)
   The commercial advantages to be derived from a union of the Lower Provinces [the Maritimes] are hardly appreciable, while in the boundless west there lies open to us a field of enterprise which might cause wealth to flow into every city and village of our land. Why should Canada, at this moment, spend any portion of her means in building a road to Halifax? She will not... find in the Lower Provinces a market for any of her manufactures. As an outlet to the ocean, this intercolonial railroad is a mere farce. No one able to take ship at Portland [Maine, U.S.A.] or Quebec [City], would ever dream of travelling by railway to Halifax. And yet this work will engage four or five millions [£] of capital. If the Imperial Government [Great Britain] is willing to grant assistance for the development of British power in North America, let her grant it in aid of the Pacific Railway... Let her [Britain] expend it in founding a great colony on Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan.

2. The importance of the Intercolonial
   (Toronto Leader, 25 October 1862)
   A great country such as Nature has destined this to be would not be justified in refusing to acquire a winter sea-port, when the object can be obtained upon reasonable terms. Without it, what is the possible future of Canada? A back country, with no access to the seaboard, during six months of the year, but through the territory of a foreign power, occupies a position of deplorable dependence.

3. Opposition to the Intercolonial
   (St. Thomas Weekly Dispatch, 13 November 1862)
   What possible benefit can Canada derive from developing the resources of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick or the North West Territory. If the Intercolonial Railway was going to cut through rich portions of the fertile lands of Canada, like the Grand Trunk... there might be some reason to talk [as McGee does] of further development; but when it can only push our produce some five or six hundred miles further by rail through a barren country, when we can now send it by sea or by Portland [Maine, U.S.A.], and thereby make a commercial mart of Halifax instead of Montreal or Quebec, such development becomes mere delusion.

4. Support for federation
   (Oshawa Vindicator, 31 August 1864)
   No system of Government could be fairer, or could be better calculated to give satisfaction to all parties interested, than the federal system.

5. On American Aggression
   (Hamilton Evening Times, 18 March 1865)
   Are we going too far when we say there does not exist in the world a country more ineligible for defensive purposes than Canada? We are all frontier, and are open to attack at almost every point of that frontier... Inherently strong, and armed and
equipped at every point, the United States stands forth a giant encased in armor. What would our prospects be should we come into collision with this power?

6. John A. Macdonald for the Intercolonial Railway
   (A speech in Halifax, 12 September 1864)
   (T)his railway must be a national work, and Canada will cheerfully contribute to the utmost extent in order to make that important link, without which no political connection can be complete. What will be the consequence to this city, prosperous as it is, from that communication? Montreal is at this moment competing with New York for the trade of the great West. Build the road and Halifax will become one of the great emporiums of the world. All the great resources of the west will come over the immense railways of Canada to the bosom of your harbour.

7. George Brown on the economic advantages of Confederation
   (Canadian Parliament, 8 February 1865)
   I go heartily for the union, because it will throw down the barriers of trade and give us the control of a market of four millions of people. What one thing has contributed so much to the wondrous material progress of the United States as the free passage of their products from one State to another? . . . I am in favour of a union of the provinces . . . because it will make us the third maritime state of the world. When this union is accomplished, but two countries in the world will be superior in maritime influence to British [North] America—and those are Great Britain and the United States.

8. Marching Song of the Fenian Brotherhood
   (From sometime in the 1860s)
   The group, formed in the United States in 1859, was dedicated to fighting for the independence of Ireland.

   We are the Fenian Brotherhood,
   skilled in the art of war,
   And we’re going to fight for Ireland,
   the land that we adore,
   Many battles have we won, along with
   the boys in blue,
   And we’ll go and capture Canada for
   we’ve got nothing else to do.
Prince Edward Island
- Background

Population (circa 1860): 80,000

Urban centre: Charlottetown (7,000)

Key figures:
- John Hamilton Gray (1812-1887)
- Edward Palmer (1809-1889)
- William H. Pope (1825-1879)
- Andrew A. Macdonald (1829-1912)
- George Coles (1810-1875)
- Thomas H. Haviland (1822-1895)
- Edward Whelan (1824-1867)

Made up of small, agricultural communities, Prince Edward Island is only one hundred miles long and thirty miles wide. The population is equally divided between Irish Catholics and Scottish Protestants. Largely self-sufficient, many of the residents have never been off the island. During the winter months Prince Edward Island is completely cut off by ice from the mainland. Farming, with the island's rich and fertile lands, is the main source of income. A great many people live on agricultural exports (potatoes, cereal and livestock) to America's New England states. Though a number of residents are fishermen, the United States dominates the island's fishery.

Charlottetown is the colony's urban centre. In fact, no one on the island lives more than a day's journey from the city. With rich church architecture and the impressive Legislature Building, Charlottetown is the colonial capital.

Sixty percent of the farmers on the island rent their land (they are tenant farmers). These islanders rent farms from people who live in Britain (absentee landlords). For over one hundred years, these tenant farmers have been clearing and working the land they do not own and sending rent to their landlords in Britain. Prince Edward Island wants Great Britain to force the landlords to sell their farms at a reasonable price; to the colonists.

After three to four generations as tenant farmers, resentment has grown and left the islanders suspicious of outsiders. To many, Ottawa is as distastefully distant as Imperial London. As an island, a railway link with the other British North American colonies is not an issue. Ultimately, Prince Edward Island is content to remain independent and detached from British North American society.

Though Prince Edward Island does not directly border on the United States and islanders do not fear an American attack, Britain's changing relationship with the colonies is of some concern. Great Britain's reluctance to defend the colonies in the future has made closer ties between the British North American provinces important to security.
Prince Edward Island – Viewpoints

Drawn from P.B. Waite, Confederation, 1854-1867 (Holt, 1972) and Waite, Pre-Conference (Prentice, 1965).

1. "Prospects of Confederation in Prince Edward Island"
   (Charlottetown Islander, 6 January 1865)

   The majority of people are under the impression that Confederation would ruin the Island. They have been told that if the Island should be united with the other Provinces, under a Federal government, the people would be heavily taxed—that they would be marched away to the frontiers of Upper Canada to fight for the Canadians; and that the completion of the intercolonial Railroad would bring the produce of Canada to St. John and Halifax, and thus injure the farmers of P.E. Island. Firmly believing that all these evils would come upon them were they to enter the Confederation the people, with but few exceptions, are unanimous in the cry "away with Confederation—we will have nothing to do with it." Confederation, in the terms of the resolutions of the [Quebec] Conference, will, we assume, at the coming Session, be almost unanimously rejected in both Houses of the Legislature of this Island.

2. On Union
   (Charlottetown Examiner, 22 August 1864)

   Shall we, then, think seriously about a Federal Union. We believe we ought. Great Britain is constantly urging upon our attention a Union of some kind. The only kind of Union we can have is a Federal one. That means little or nothing short of separation from Great Britain... If we make up our minds for an Independent Federation... we must prepare to bid goodbye to old Mother England.

3. On debt
   (Charlottetown Examiner, 22 October 1864)

   Canada proposes to deal with the Maritime Provinces in the most broad and liberal spirit. She emphatically declares that the burden of her debt shall fall upon Upper and Lower Canada—and upon Upper and Lower Canada alone.

4. Edward Palmer at the Quebec Conference: Fears for the Future of Prince Edward Island
   (Charlottetown Monitor, 15 December 1864)

   I fear our little Island is to be sacrificed [in the Federal Union]. The Canadian ministers or their leaders are clever and ingenious men. They are in this position: their government must stand or fall in the accomplishment or failure of the Union... The paltry proportion of representation we are now likely to have in both branches of the [central] Legislature is little more than nominal, and leaves us at the mercy of the other Provinces... In short, I am thoroughly disgusted at the course things have taken here and would be disposed to "sit... and weep" for years, if I thought our Island people would be taken in by the scheme.
Nova Scotia — Background

Population (circa 1860): 331,000

Urban Centre: Halifax (29,580)

Key figures: Charles Tupper (1821-1915)
Willaim A. Henry (1816-1888)
Jonathon McCully (1809-1877)
Adams G. Archibald (1814-1892)
Robert B. Dickey (1811-1903)
John William Ritchie (1808-1890)

Nova Scotia plays a key role in sea communications between Great Britain and the United States. It is common for ships bound for New York and Boston to stop at Halifax and for ships bound for Liverpool and London to also dock here. For many seafaring Nova Scotians, the British West Indies feels closer than Quebec. Above all, Halifax is the central base for the British Navy in the West Atlantic. With an ice-free harbour and the citadel, a grand fortress on a hill overlooking the harbour and the city, Halifax stands out as a symbol of Imperial Britain's power.

A great majority of Nova Scotians make their living, in one way or another, from the ocean. Almost half of the colony's residents are fishermen, while others work on ships exporting cod and importing coal and wool. Over one-third of Nova Scotia's exports are fish and fish products. Shipbuilding is an enormously prosperous industry, and Nova Scotians produce and own more ships than residents in any other British North American colony.

Politics is highly sophisticated in Nova Scotia. The first British North American colony to achieve responsible government, in 1848, Nova Scotian politics is marked by its leaders. First, Joseph Howe, and later, Charles Tupper, brought unity to the colony by bringing together various regional and cultural interests. A federal union, though not initiated by the Nova Scotians, is something to be considered, discussed and debated.

The significant British military and naval presence in Halifax reduces the immediate threat of an American attack. But Great Britain's reluctance to defend the colonies in the future makes closer ties between the British North American provinces crucial to security. Any change in British policy would have a serious effect on Nova Scotia because of this close relationship.

There is no railway connection between Nova Scotia and the Canadas. Many prominent British North Americans believe an Intercolonial Railway must end in Halifax. The Intercolonial would not only help in the defence of British North America, but it would also open up other North American markets to Nova Scotian businesses. Since the 1850s Nova Scotia has relied on reciprocity (free trade) with the United States. It is crucial to Nova Scotia's future to secure other North American markets, in case the United States imposes tariffs on Nova Scotian goods.
Nova Scotia — Viewpoints

1. Anti-Confederate on Nova Scotia’s natural connection to the United States (1865)

Look at the geographical position of this continent and consider what seems to be the most natural arrangement. We have thirty millions of people directly before us [the United States], in every way more convenient to us than Canada; they are of the same stock, same feelings as ourselves... I do not think that the people of Nova Scotia want annexation to the United States, but why should you drive them against their interests and inclinations into a union with Canada—with which they have no natural means of communication, and no sympathy?

2. M.I. Wilkins on the Union of British North America
(Halifax British Colonist, 13 June 1854)

A union of the B.N.A. Colonies I believe to be indispensable. ... We may become independent without casting off our allegiance to Britain. Colonies are like children. ... when they arrive at maturity they require different treatment. ... They have a right to look about the world and set up for themselves. ... But does it follow from this that all connection between them must cease? By no means. With regard to a federal union I will waste few words. There is an old saying but a very true one that “Union is strength.”

3. Charles Tupper on the need for a new nation
(Halifax Evening Reporter, 23 January 1862)

It must be evident to everyone that as we are now situated we are entirely without name or nationality, destitute of all influence and of the means of occupying that position to which we may justly aspire. What is a British [North] American but a man dependent on an Empire which, however glorious, gives him no share or interest in it!

4. On Charles Tupper
(Halifax Citizen, 5 November 1864)

(H)aving got power, Tupper intends to keep it at all hazard, and hence he flies to the Confederation scheme. ... We have very little faith in Confederation as a practical measure; but we have a good deal of faith in Tupper as a political intriguer. Nothing can serve his turn better just now than to divert public attention from Provincial politics. He would annex this province to Canada, or to Massachusetts, or to the moon, or propose to do so, if by that means he could keep people from talking about his school bill, his retrenchment, his railway duplicity, his tyranny to officials.

5. On Union
(Halifax British Colonist, 28 February 1865)

Union is immediately necessary on account of commercial causes. ... Union is immediately necessary so as to abolish all differences in currency, and in trade regulations. Each little Province has now its own Government, and even its own postage stamp. Prince Edward Island has one system of currency; Nova Scotia another; New Brunswick another; Newfoundland a fourth; and Canada a fifth. Here is endless
confusion and a fruitful source of local jealousy, of sectional alienation, and narrow provincialism. ... Union is immediately necessary for political reasons. The Nova Scotian is now without a country. He cannot call himself an American. He is not an Englishman. As a Nova Scotian he is nothing.

6. John A. Macdonald for the Intercolonial Railway
(A speech in Halifax, 12 September 1864)

(this railway must be a national work, and Canada will cheerfully contribute to the utmost extent in order to make that important link, without which no political connection can be complete. What will be the consequence to this city, prosperous as it is, from that communication? Montreal is at this moment competing with New York for the trade of the great West. Build the road and Halifax will become one of the great emporiums of the world. All the great resources of the west will come over the immense railways of Canada to the bosom of your harbour.
Newfoundland — Background

Population (circa 1860): 122,000

Urban centre: Saint John's (30,475)

Key figures: Frederick B.T. Carter (1819-1900)
Ambrose Shea (1815-1905)

Newfoundland is largely unknown to the other British North American colonies, especially the Canadas. Without Labrador, it is nearly the size of the other three Maritime colonies put together. Most of the island is uninhabited. Its coasts are charted, but the island’s interior—consisting of dense forest, swamps, rock, without roads of any kind—remains unmapped. The land is so rugged that fewer than one hundred square miles are cultivated.

The colony’s population settled in the southeast corner of the island. St. John’s, the colony’s capital and urban centre, is at the easternmost point of North America. These geographical factors make Newfoundland’s link with Britain—to the east across the Atlantic—more immediate than its ties to North America. From its earliest days, Newfoundland has traded fish with Britain, in exchange for manufactured goods. The colonists wear British-made clothes, read British newspapers and magazines and, for many, London feels closer than Ottawa.

Fishing and seal hunting, traditionally the backbone of the Newfoundland economy, have been virtually nonexistent for years. Without these staple industries, many Newfoundlanders are nearly destitute. Debt is common among fishermen, and one-third of all money generated in Newfoundland is used to help the poor.

Britain’s new attitude towards the colonies has left many Newfoundlanders worried. Since the early eighteenth century, French fishermen have caught fish in Newfoundland’s waters and dried them on the island’s west shore. Newfoundlanders suspect that the French would like to use this land for more than drying fish. Newfoundland relies on the British navy for protection. Though Newfoundland does not directly border on the United States and there is no threat of an American attack, Britain’s reluctance to provide colonial defence in the future worries Newfoundland. As an island, a rail link with the other British North American colonies is irrelevant. But without the support of the British navy Newfoundlanders wonder how they will defend themselves.
Newfoundland — Viewpoints


1. Anti-Union
   (St. John’s Patriot, 29 November 1864)
   We have no faith in a political union with Canada at all. We deem it—“Better to endure the ills we have, than flee to others that we know not of.”

2. Complexity of Confederation
   (St. John’s Patriot, 6 December 1864)
   Nor can we duly comprehend the magnitude of being the contemptible fag-end of such a compact. . . . This Federal scheme is an after-thought of the Canadians. We cannot deny that it is a brilliant thing on paper—this Confederation this Great United British America, which shall reach from “Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains” but its brilliancy does not dazzle us as to the duties which must necessarily fall to our share. . . . That TAXATION for all local purposes will be resorted to, is as plain as ABC.

3. The need for change
   (St. John’s Newfoundlander, 5 January 1865)
   If any of the Provinces more than another should seek a change, it is this. We do not mean to assert that we should adopt a change blindly, but unlike our Sister Colonies, our circumstances—the condition of our Trade—the depressed state of our people, demand a change, even if Confederation had never been proposed.

4. Caution
   (Harbour Grace Standard, 7 December 1864)
   Confederation of the British North American Colonies seems to be the all-absorbing question just at present. . . . This is certainly a matter of vital importance to this country, and should be approached with the greatest caution by the people of Newfoundland.
New Brunswick — Background

Population (circa 1860): 252,000

Urban centre: Saint John (28,805)

Key figures: Samuel Leonard Tilley (1818-1896)  
John M. Johnson (1818-1868)  
William H. Steeves (1814-1873)  
Edward B. Chandler (1800-1880)  
John Hamilton Gray (1814-1889)  
Peter Mitchell (1824-1899)  
Charles Fisher (1808-1880)  
R.D. Wilmot (1809-1891)

Since the early nineteenth century, New Brunswick life has been dominated by the timber trade. The economy and even the colonial character are shaped by it. The vast forests in the western part of the colony are the bedrock of this industry and, in many ways, form a natural barrier between New Brunswick and the rest of the continent. In fact, only three to four percent of the colony’s trade is with the Canadas, while twenty percent of all British timber imports come from New Brunswick. This rich supply of lumber has led to a thriving shipbuilding industry in Saint John. And while people in the colony are also involved in farming and fishing, any significant growth of an agricultural economy is impeded by the attractive profits in the lumber industry.

Though it is not the colony’s capital, Saint John is one of the Maritimes’ largest cities. Deeply influenced by the rugged life of the timber trade, Saint John is known as a “fast city,” with lively and aggressive residents. Fredericton, a sleepy town by comparison, has been chosen the colonial capital because it is upriver and easier to defend in case of attack.

The fear of attack from the United States army, or the Fenian marauders, is very real. The colony’s long border with the United States is poorly defended and not easily accessible to troops from outside New Brunswick. British troops sent to defend the colonies during the winter months of the American Civil War had to travel by sled through New Brunswick. Britain’s reluctance to defend the colonies in the future has made closer ties between the British North American provinces crucial to security.

The solution to any questions surrounding colonial defence is an Intercolonial Railway. Though it would be too costly for New Brunswick to pay for on its own, the rail line would be central to the colony’s defence and, if built, would open up New Brunswick economically to both the Western and the Eastern North American markets. Saint John would now be connected to Montreal in the West and Halifax in the East.
New Brunswick — Viewpoints


1. Marching song of the Fenian Brotherhood
(From sometime in the 1860s)

The group, formed in the United States in 1859, was dedicated to fighting for the independence of Ireland.

We are the Fenian Brotherhood,
skilled in the art of war,
And we’re going to fight for Ireland,
the land that we adore,
Many battles have we won, along with
the boys in blue,
And we’ll go and capture Canada for
we’ve got nothing else to do.

2. On nationhood
(St. John Morning News, 2 June 1858)

The experience of history tells us that Colonies cannot be Colonies forever; and Canada in time will assume that character among the Nations of the world which her position, her wealth, and her intelligence will entitle her to.

3. On Union and the Intercolonial Railway
(Saint John Morning News, 25 August 1858)

We regard the building of the inter-Colonial Railroad to be an absolute condition [of British North American union]—for there can be no union of feeling and sentiment, or harmony of understanding and action, while such physical difficulties are geographically described, stand in the way of the people of Canada West and those of Nova Scotia, separated by a distance of 800 miles, and who can only communicate with one another through American territory.

4. Britain’s view of British North America
(St. John Morning Telegraph, 12 September 1864)

(The Mother Country [Great Britain] is becoming tired of her Colonial dependencies. This is undoubtedly the prevailing sentiment among the English Statesmen. . . . It does not pay at present to retain the British North American Colonies. . . . Why, then, should the British take any special interest in our welfare? Blood goes for nothing these days, for Anglo-Saxon blood is everywhere. Commerce is everything—and everything must succumb to commercial calculations.

We consider, then, that the time is near at hand when we shall be told to shift for ourselves; and the American difficulty, if we are not greatly mistaken, has brought the time considerably nearer to our doors than it otherwise would be.