**Canada**

Canada is the second largest country in the world. It covers the northern part of North America and its total area is 9,975,000 square kilometres. Canada's only neighbour is the USA. The border between the two countries is the longest unguarded border in the world.

Canada's motto, "From Sea to Sea," is particularly appropriate because the country is bounded by three oceans — the Pacific, the Arctic and the Atlantic. Its vast area includes some of the world's largest lakes and countless smaller ones. One-third of all fresh water on Earth is in Canada.

Canada's name comes from an Indian word kanata, which means "village". The first French settlers used the Indian name for the colony, but the official name was "New France". When the area came under the British rule in 1897, the new country was called the Dominion of Canada, or simply Canada. Canada is a union of ten provinces and two territories.

Compared with other large countries, Canada has a small population, only about 27,300,000. The country, however, is one of the world's most prosperous. Canadians I developed its rich natural resources and, in the process, have achieved a high standard of living.

Canada is a constitutional monarchy. It is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and Queen Elizabeth II is its official head of state. Although the Queen holds this high position, she doesn't rule. She serves as a symbol of British tradition. Her representative in Canada is the Governor General, whom she appoints on the advice of the Canadian Prime Minister. The Governor's duties are limited to symbolic, mostly ceremonial acts.

The real power belongs to the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. The Canadian Parliament consists of two chambers: the House of Commons and the Senate.

There are two official languages in the country: English and French. All Canadian children have to learn both French and English at school, but Francophones and Anglophones do not enjoy learning each other's language.

"We have two races, two languages, two systems of religious belief, two sets of laws ... two systems of everything," said one Canadian journalist.

There was a time when Quebec Province (its population is 90% French) decided to separate from Canada and form a new country. Fortunately, the movement has waned.

The capital of Canada is Ottawa.