

fairly narrow strip extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific across the southern part of the country and north of this ecumene lies the sparsely populated or almost uninhabited part. This distribution of population has resulted from differences in the economy of the people which, in turn, stem principally from differences in physical environment. The far northern or arctic portion, a land generally treeless, is different from the sub-arctic where the climate is less rigorous and where forests dominate the landscape. Where the sub-arctic borders on the ecumene, there is a broad transitional zone where the economy of the south intermingles with that of the north. Thus the broad economic regions of Canada form four tiers or festoons—zones running across the country from east to west—but within these primary divisions there are marked differences in physical environment and economic activity as well as differences in the cultural origin of the population, which give rise to differing “communities of interest” These are shown on the inserted map and the following brief description of each of them brings out the differences.

Arctic Zone

This Zone can be set apart from the remainder of the country because of its treeless nature and its ice cap and tundra climates. It is dry and cold with long, dark winters and short summers. The warmest month does not average above 50°F. and the average January temperatures are from -10°F. to -35°F. The whole area is underlain by permanently frozen ground known as permafrost. It is a zone of treeless plains, covered in summer with grasses, sedges, mosses and many varieties of flowering plants, as well as dwarf species of willow and birch and other forms of tundra vegetation, which form grazing grounds for such animals as the musk-ox and caribou. The direct economic assets of the Arctic Zone are few. It has no trees and therefore no lumbering and, as there is almost no summer (in the southern sense of the word), there is no agriculture. The small, scattered population is serviced by isolated administrative and scientific outposts. The region is almost completely devoid of roads; local travel is by dog team but air travel is increasing and the use of ice-breaking ships is also becoming more important. In reality, the Zone may be considered as being made up of two tiers of three regions.

Queen Elizabeth Islands.—This is the region in the extreme north, whose ice-girt shores make them almost inaccessible by ship. They have been avoided by Eskimos and there are no economic activities in the generally accepted sense. However, many of the islands are of sedimentary rock where oil and natural gas might be found and active exploration for these minerals is taking place. The only permanent settlements are small weather stations and RCMP posts. The Arctic south of Parry Channel may be divided into two regions, between which there is very little intercommunication.

Western Arctic Region.—This region lies west of Boothia Peninsula and Somerset Island. It is serviced chiefly from the west, usually from the Mackenzie Valley, but occasionally from around the coast of Alaska. Most of the inhabitants are Eskimos living on a subsistence basis with hunting and trapping as the mainstay of an elementary commerce.

Eastern Arctic Region.—This region includes Hudson Bay and Strait and Foxe Basin, with the treeless mainland and islands around them. It is supplied from the east, either from Churchill or from the Atlantic and St. Lawrence ports. The extreme east is mountainous and generally more rugged than the west but nearly all of the region is part of the Canadian Shield. Metallic minerals are known to exist but, so far, the only modern economic activity that has resulted from this knowledge is the nickel mine at Rankin Inlet. Two railways lead from the south into the region, terminating at Churchill in Manitoba and Moosonee in Ontario.

Sub-arctic Zone

The Sub-arctic tier of regions immediately to the south of the Arctic Zone has a sub-arctic climate which is a climate of extremes, with very bitter winters and short but surprisingly warm summers. Temperatures range from a record low of -81°F. to a record