

Subsection 1.—Inland Waters

The inland waters of Canada (not including saltwater areas that are a part of Canada) are extensive, constituting about 7.6 p.c. of the total area of the country. Aside from their basic essentiality to the support of life, Canada's fast-flowing rivers and chains of lakes have had a great bearing on the development of the country and on its economic and social well-being. In the early days of exploration and settlement, they were the avenues of transportation and often the source of subsistence. These functions have now diminished in importance; with the exception of the St. Lawrence and certain water routes in the interior and the Far North, the rivers and lakes have assumed other roles in the domestic, industrial, agricultural and recreational life of the people. They still serve as efficient carriers of pulpwood from the forests to the mills and their waters are harnessed to provide power for industry or are dammed and diverted to irrigate and bring life to otherwise waste land.

The inland waters of Canada are best studied by segregating the main drainage basins. The Atlantic drainage basin is the most important, being dominated by the Great Lakes—St. Lawrence system which drains an area of approximately 678,000 sq. miles and forms an unequalled navigable inland waterway through a region rich in natural and industrial resources. From Duluth, Minn., at the head of Lake Superior to Belle Isle at the entrance to the Gulf of St. Lawrence the distance is 2,280 miles. The entire drainage area to the north of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes is occupied by the southern fringe of the Canadian Shield—a rugged, rocky, plateau region over the edge of which tumble many swift-flowing tributary rivers. These rivers, as well as the St. Lawrence itself, provide the electric power necessary to operate the great industries of the area. South of the St. Lawrence, the smaller rivers are important locally. The St. John, for instance, drains a fertile area and provides most of New Brunswick's hydro power.

