



4 Regionalism and Canadian Politics

Chapter Summary

- The Unexpected Persistence of Regionalism
 - The Party System
 - Western Alienation
 - Economic Disparities
 - Intergovernment Conflict
- Predicting the Demise of Regionalism
 - Regionally Based Elites
 - The Failure of National Institutions
 - Structures
 - Policies
 - Regional Economic Interests and Social Characteristics
 - Demography
- Mapping Regionalism in Canada
 - Canada's Economic Regions
 - Tariffs
 - Terms of Entry into Confederation
 - The National Energy Program (1981)
 - Canada's Cultural Regions

- Cross-Border Regions
- Regional Identities and Western Alienation
 - Individual Equality
 - Provincial Equality
 - Populism
- The Atlantic Provinces
- Summary

Learning Objectives

After reading Chapter 4 in *Canadian Democracy*, you should be able to do the following:

- Discuss the history of Western alienation in Canada.
- Describe the different regions in Canada and how the different economies of these regions affect their political aspirations.
- Discuss the tensions between any two regions of Canada.
- List any national structures or policies that accommodate regional interests and perspectives.
- Discuss the Western Canadian conception of equality.
- Compose one or two paragraphs that use as many key concepts (listed below) as possible.

Key Concepts

Cross-border regions (CBRs) A distinct grouping of neighbouring and nearby provinces and states whose economic, cultural, and institutional linkages create commonalities between the members of this binational (Canada–US) grouping and set it apart from other regions (p. 109)

Equalization payments Payments made by the federal government to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of taxation (p. 101)

Inter-state federalism Conflict and co-operation play out between national and regional governments (p. 101)

Intra-state federalism Conflict and co-operation are contained within the institutions of the national state (p. 101)

Manifest destiny a nineteenth-century American belief that the United States was destined to expand to include all of North America (p. 96)

National Energy Program A program instituted by the Liberal government that limited the price (considerably below the world price) that could be charged in Canada for oil and gas from Canadian sources, resulting in an enormous transfer of wealth from Alberta to the rest of Canada (p. 107)

Populism An ideology that seeks to return power to the common people (p. 115)

Province building The phenomenon of powerful provincial governments using the constitutional, legal, and taxation levers to increase their control within their provincial borders and, consequently, their stature vis-à-vis Ottawa (p. 100)

Social license the approval by a community or by an alliance of interests or stakeholders for a proposed project. (p. 104)

Western alienation Western Canada’s awareness that the public realm—whose voices are heard and what counts as legitimate political discourse—belongs to others (p. 98)

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What issues related to regionalism exist in the United States? What are the similarities and differences with Canadian regional issues?
2. Conduct an online search of local newspapers throughout Canada. Check the various sections of the papers. Is there evidence of a different news agenda or different perspectives in different provinces?
3. Are Canada’s regions really that different? Are the supposed differences the result of the tendency of the media, scholars, and politicians to downplay the commonalities that exist among all Canadians?
4. Ask your peers or classmates from other provinces how they felt about moving to the current province (if applicable). What are some of the main challenges they faced fitting in to a new province? Why do you think these challenges exist? Given the cultural differences of each province, is it possible to form a national unity?
5. Is regionalism a dying concept in Canada, or is it stronger than ever? Why?

Additional Resources

Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, www.aims.ca. For information on issues from an Atlantic Canada perspective

Canada West Foundation, www.cwf.ca. For information on issues from a Western Canada perspective

CBC Archives, video clips on society: <http://archives.cbc.ca/society/>

CBC Archives, video clips on provincial/territorial politics:
http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/provincial_territorial_politics/

CBC Archives, video clips on economy and business: http://archives.cbc.ca/economy_business/

Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation, www.mowatcentre.ca. Undertakes research into a variety of public issues and advances policy proposals that are “informed by Ontario’s reality.”