

# ***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.