

# Ontario

## **Entered Confederation: 1867**

In the years before Confederation (1840 to 1867), what we now call Ontario and Quebec were part of a British colony called the Province of Canada. Many people in Ontario, including the co-"Prime Minister" John A. Macdonald, wanted to form a new country with the other British colonies -- Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. There were four main reasons for this:

- Between 1854 and 1864, the Province of Canada was changing governments very often. This made it very difficult to make important decisions. Many politicians in Canada West (Ontario of today) and Canada East (Quebec of today) agreed that creating a new country called Canada was the solution to this problem. This meant that Ontario would get its own provincial government to make important decisions. The government in Ottawa would make decisions for all the people of the new country.
- The leaders believed that a closer connection with the other colonies would help to make the economy stronger.
- Just before Confederation, the United States fought in a civil war over slavery. Great Britain helped the Americans who wanted to keep slavery but the ones who wanted to get rid of slavery won. Great Britain was afraid that the winners would take revenge on the British colonies. People thought that if the Province of Canada was not a British colony anymore, but a new country, the Americans would not want to attack their new neighbour.
- Before Confederation all the British colonies helped to build railroads. This cost a lot of money and many colonies had no more money. But a transcontinental railroad was still needed. With the creation of a new country the old colonies would get help in getting money from the government in Ottawa. Ottawa would back the construction of this new railroad across the land.