National Core

- A term used by political geographers to refer to:
  1. the original area from which a country subsequently grew and developed; and/or
  2. a region containing a country’s greatest development, wealth, and densest populations; and/or
  3. the part of a country where people have the clearest sense of national identity.

Not all countries have a well-defined core. Canada does!
Canada’s National Core

Extends from Quebec in the east to Windsor in the west.

More than 50% of Canada’s people live here.

Includes 5 of Canada’s 10 largest cities:
  - Toronto (#1)
  - Montreal (#2)
  - Ottawa (#4)
  - Hamilton (#9)
  - Quebec (#10)

Includes prime agricultural land, Niagara Falls and the Thousand Islands
Canada’s National Core

• It really is a national core.
• Historically, a highly contested region with a persistent cultural divide (English/French).
• A highly productive agricultural area.
• Distinctive rural landscape and toponymy.
• Site of Canada’s major urban-industrial area.
• The **St. Lawrence Seaway** allows ocean-going vessels access to the region.
Core Area of Canada

Also called Canada’s “Main Street” because it accounts for **over half** of Canada’s population.
Main Street vis-à-vis Megalopolis
This area was settled early in the colonial period. The French came from the east. (Cartier 1535; settlement 1608). The English came from the south. (Late 1700s after French & Indian War and again after the American Revolution). They encouraged settlement to counter the existing French influence. (English Protestants vs. French Catholics).
Physical Environment of the Core

Area of moderate climate, long growing season and good soils allowed an agricultural base to develop.

Ample precipitation.

Long frost-free period

Young, fertile glacial soils

Climate moderated by Great Lakes.
Montreal Canadiens vs. Toronto Maple Leafs: A Cultural Geography?
French-speaking Canadians have resisted assimilation from the time of the English take-over.

French Language as a Mother Tongue
All Canadians - 23%
Quebec – 82%
New Brunswick – 33%
Ontario – 6%
Nova Scotia – 4%
Quebec Sovereignty Movement

- A political movement aimed at secession of Quebec from Canada and creation of a new French-speaking country.
- Would divide Canada into 3 pieces: The Maritime provinces (which would be isolated from western Canada), Quebec (new nation) and the rest of Canada.
Quebec Sovereignty Movement

Defeated by two plebiscites. Rural areas tended to favor secession; urban areas (especially metropolitan Montreal) largely opposed it.
Quebec Sovereignty Movement (cont’d)

• **Negative impact on the economy of Quebec.** Many companies (especially foreign-owned ones) decided to relocate, because of the proposed “French language-only” laws.

• **Further attempts at secession are currently unlikely.** Due to devolution (“surrender of power to local authorities by a central government”) and realization of potentially negative consequences, Quebec residents have not pursued independence.
“Quebec” comes from an Algonquin word/term meaning “where the river narrows.”

“Canada” comes from a Wendat (Huron-Iroquoian) word *kanata*, meaning “village.”

In 1535 native people used *kanata* to direct the French explorer Jacques Cartier to a village near the site of present-day Quebec City.

*Kanata* became *Canada*, and got applied to the entire region, and later to the entire country.
Quebec City

National Geographic Society photograph
Quebec City

• The French “cultural capital” of Canada.
• An “acropolis site” that commands the place where the St. Lawrence estuary meets the much narrower river.
• A “chokepoint” at which water travel can be controlled.
Quebec City with *La Citadelle*

*La Citadelle* overlooks the St. Lawrence River and controls river traffic that has to slow down to make the curve.
Battle of Quebec
French and Indian War

Quebec campaign, 1759

British troops scale the heights at Quebec, Sept. 13, 1759
French Long-lot System

Officially known as the Seigneurial System.

System of land division involving long narrow lots used by the French during colonial times.

This system guaranteed access to property.

No property owner could be isolated or dependent on his neighbor.
The Seigneurial System

- Large land grants (seigneuries) were awarded by the king to entrepreneurs (seigneurs), who sub-granted parcels (rotoures) to peasant colonist-farmers (habitants).

- Each *rotoure* was about 150-200 yards wide and arranged perpendicular to the St. Lawrence River and extended almost a mile inland.

- Once the river frontage was totally occupied, roads were extended inland to create a new rank (*rang*) of *rotoures*.

- This was repeated as needed.
Seigneurial System
Ile d’Orleans, Quebec
Seigneurial System, Quebec
Site of Montreal

- Located at the head of navigation of the St. Lawrence River.
- Located at the junction of a T-shaped lowland area (where the Lake Champlain Lowland meets the St. Lawrence river valley).
- East-west and North-south routes radiate from the site.
Lachine Rapids on the St. Lawrence R.
(between the Island of Montreal and south shore)

Rapids blocked inland movement of ships (head of navigation) until the St. Lawrence Seaway was built.
Montreal

- Canada’s most important eastern port city.
- The world’s 2nd largest French-speaking city.
A system of locks, canals and channels that permit ocean-going ships to travel from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes.

The system was jointly built by the United States and Canada between 1950-56.

It is jointly administered and maintained by the US and Canada.
St. Lawrence Seaway

It extends from Montreal to Lake Erie (including the Welland Canal and the channels that weave through the Thousand Islands between NYS and Ontario). Additional navigational facilities allow ocean-going ships to reach the western tip of Lake Superior 2400 mi. from the Atlantic.

It is an example of international cooperation between two countries along a common border.
Nearly 2500 miles from Duluth, MN on Lake Superior to the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Atlantic Ocean.
Thousand Islands Region
between Canada and the United States

Extends from Cornwall, Ont./Massena, NY to Kingston, Ont./Cape Vincent, NY.

Consists of over 1000 rocky outcrops that geologically link the Canadian Shield to the Adirondack Mts.

To be classified an island, there must be a tree or bush on it. Otherwise it is a shoal.
Thousand Islands Section
St Lawrence Seaway
Eisenhower Locks, St. Lawrence Seaway
Massena, NY
The Niagara Escarpment is a cuesta (exposed edge of resistant rock formation) running from western NYS through southern Ontario and into Wisconsin, Michigan and Illinois. It is responsible for numerous waterfalls, the most famous of which is Niagara Falls.
Niagara Escarpment
southern Ontario
Niagara Falls
(a beautiful impediment to shipping)

Horseshoe Falls,
Canadian side of
Niagara Falls
Niagara Falls
The Welland Canal

The Welland Canal was built to counter America’s building of the Erie Canal.

It links Lake Ontario with Lake Erie and allows ships to get around Niagara Falls by raising and lowering them over the Niagara Escarpment.
Welland Canal
Ottawa

• Canada’s capital and 4th largest city
• Site selected in 1857
  – Only town of size on the border between Canada East and Canada West (now Quebec and Ontario)
  – A geographical compromise between English and French speaking areas
  – Relatively immune to possible American attack (a lesson from the War of 1812)
Ottawa: Parliament building in winter
Toronto: LANDSAT Image

Originally noted for its small protected harbor and portage to Georgian Bay.

Canada’s largest city and 5th largest city in North America. Has a better hinterland than Montreal. Has excellent links to the US Midwest region.
About 25% of Canadians live in the Toronto metro area.

It is a world financial center as well as a diversified manufacturing center.
Hamilton

Located in the center of the “Golden Horseshoe” which extends from Toronto to the Niagara River.

A natural sandbar provides it with a protected harbor. The Niagara Escarpment is located to the south.

It is a center for heavy industry producing c. 60% of Canada’s steel.

More than 100 waterfalls have been identified within its boundaries, so Hamilton is known as the "City of Waterfalls".
Canada’s National Core
Ontario Peninsula Agriculture

- Good soils
- Relatively mild climate
- Relatively long growing season
- Proximity to large cities and lots of people.
- Well-educated and fully mechanized farmers.