

# Canada Is Not a Big Empty Flophouse

*The big little country up north*

BY TIM MURRAY

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Some Canadians have suggested evacuating 40 million Japanese citizens to Canada because they believe it is so empty. Let's play the conventional game of comparing population densities. How "spacious" is Canada really?

## Fukushima Canada

In the wake of the Fukushima disaster, there were alarmist reports that Japan would need to evacuate 40 million of its citizens. Many people suggested that Canada would be a good place to park them. As one person, an immigrant, and a quintessential echo chamber of PC group-think so typical of her generation, said to me, with a sweep of her hand, "We have lots of space. We could put them here (gesturing to the treed lot across the street). They could farm the land."

Unfortunately, however, only 5 percent of Canada's land is arable, and most of that exists in that portion of the country which is most under pressure from population growth. In Ontario alone, according to Ontario Farmland Trust, following the implementation of the bipartisan policy of mass immigration, 600,000 acres of prime farmland were developed between 1996 and 2006, and immigration-driven urban sprawl in the Fraser Valley was so alarming that a \$2.4 million federally commissioned report by Dr. Michael Healey and his team called for a Population Plan for Canada. What most Canadians—and those abroad—fail to understand is that land capacity does not define "carrying capacity." Antarctica is, theoretically, a big place with room enough for lots of people, but how many could it support? It is not therefore how many people a nation can contain but how many it can *sustain*.

## Ideology of empty spaces

But let's leave that fact aside for a moment, and play

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the conventional game of comparing population densities. How "spacious" is Canada? On the face of it, if 34 million Canadians belong to a nation that has the second largest land surface of any country on earth, Canada is a big empty place, so big and empty that many commentators and politicians still think that it begs for more people. Irvin Studin and Steve Lafleur, for example, think that we should aim for a population of 100 million citizens, while almost all politicians in Ottawa believe that Canada should continue to grow its population by at least 1 percent per annum. No wonder Canada rivals Australia for the highest immigration intake per capita in the world, and has had the fastest population growth in the G8 group for the past decade.

Does this political agenda reflect an accurate vision of the country?

## Learning from population densities

First, let's take a look at the stats on relative population densities. <http://geography.about.com/od/populationgeography/a/popdensity.htm>

Canada, 10.4 people per square mile; United States, 76 people per square mile; North America, 32 people per square mile; South America, 73 people per square mile; Europe, 134 people per square mile; Asia, 203 people per square mile; Africa, 65 people per square mile; Australia, 6.4 people per square mile; Planet, 105 people per square mile; excluding Antarctica, 115 people per square mile.

Ninety percent of the world's human population lives on about 10 percent of the land.

On the surface, these statistics seem to confirm the stereotype. Only Australia and Antarctica have fewer people per square mile than us. But like the planet as a whole, there is a reason why most of the land surface is unpopulated. It is virtually uninhabitable. Folks just can't live there—for a variety of reasons. In Canada, those reasons are not hard to find. (see previous article, "The Cold Hard Truth about Canada for Dummies.")

Let's look at Canada more closely.

## Good reasons for Canada's sparse population average

The extreme width of Canada is 5,780 miles, but most of the population lies within a 2,785 mile long belt from Victoria, B.C. to Halifax, Nova Scotia, 100 miles north of

the American border. <http://www.funtrivia.com/en/subtopics/Welcome-to--Halifax-Nova-Scotia-93129.html>

So while the extreme north-south depth of Canada is 2,873 miles, what is relevant for population density is that 100-mile belt whose total area is 278,500 square miles, or 7.3 percent of Canada’s total land surface of 3.8 million square miles.

Country	Population Number	Population Density
Cameroon	17,340,702	181,251 96
South Africa	44,187,637	471,444 94
Latvia	2,274,735	24,903 91
Faroe Islands	47,246	541 87
United States	298,444,215	3,539,225 84
Madagascar	18,595,469	224,533 83
Zimbabwe	12,236,805	149,293 82
Liberia	3,042,004	37,189 82
United Arab Emirates	2,602,713	32,278 81
Bahamas, The	303,770	3,888 78
Estonia	1,324,333	17,413 76
Venezuela	25,730,435	340,560 76
St. Pierre & Miquelon	7,026	93 76
Congo (Kinshasa)	62,660,551	875,520 72
Laos	6,368,481	89,112 71
Kyrgyzstan	5,213,898	76,641 68
Mozambique	19,686,505	302,737 65
Brazil	188,078,227	3,265,059 58
Djibouti	486,530	8,486 57
Peru	28,302,603	494,208 57
Sweden	9,016,596	158,927 57
Chile	16,134,219	289,112 56
Solomon Islands	552,438	10,633 52
Uruguay	3,431,932	67,035 51

According to NationalGeographic.com, “The Canadian Shield and rugged western mountains experience subarctic climates, resulting in a near empty north—an estimated 75 percent of Canadians live within 161 kilometers (100 miles) of the U.S. border.” Other sources put it at 80 percent. [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What\\_percentage\\_of\\_Canada\\_population\\_lives\\_along\\_us\\_border](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_percentage_of_Canada_population_lives_along_us_border)

In other words, 75-80 percent of Canadians live on just 7.3 percent of the country’s land surface. Effectively, then, 25,500,000–27,200,000 Canadians live on 278,500

square miles, for a *population density of 91.6–97.6 people per square mile*. This would indicate that “Canada,” the Canada that is habitable, has a *larger* population density than the U.S., larger than South America, larger than Africa, and not much less than the global average.

In fact, if “people per square mile” is a valid criterion of “capacity,” then migrants seeking more “room” might find more of it in the following countries than in Canada:

(See table opposite: The first column indicates the population of each country, the second column the land surface of each country in square miles, and the third column the number of people per square mile. The data are somewhat dated, but not enough to skewer the results for 2012.)

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0934666.html>

Come to think of it, I am feeling rather claustrophobic these days. Canada is not, relatively speaking, a bad place to live, but I am looking for greener pastures. Maybe Uruguay, or Chile, or Peru, or Mozambique or Laos, or Venezuela or Zimbabwe would be the place for me.

### Canada’s leap-frog policy

I assume that migrants would follow the Canadian practice and not only accommodate my cultural and ethnic particularities, but embrace them. In fact, I would expect to be the beneficiary of an “Employment Equity” program that would allow me to leap-frog over native-born job applicants into coveted public sector positions. Perhaps I could get a job as a weather forecaster for their state broadcaster or PA announcer in an airport and speak in an accent unintelligible to the locals. Or maybe I could find employment in their booming taxpayer-funded ethnocultural industry and be given tax subsidies to promote my Canadian culture even when its core values are antagonistic to those of the host country. Maybe I could realize my dream of having the space to be who I am without having to make any adjustments or concessions to the people already resident there. And if someone made comments critical of my attitude or my culture, I could find generous recompense from a kangaroo court that would pick up my legal costs, win or lose.

On second thought, I don’t think there is another country that stupid. Other than Oz or the US of A, Canada is the only country that thinks that it should be home to the world, open for business and open for displacement. After all, there is no one here but us Indians. ■