



## THE TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY NETWORK

The Trans-Canada Highway is the world's longest national road. Stretching 7,821 kilometres from St. John's, Newfoundland to Victoria, British Columbia, it took over 20 years to complete, and cost more than \$1 billion. The project officially began in 1949 when the federal government tabled the Trans-Canada Highway Act, which committed the Canadian government to building a high quality, paved, two-lane roadway across the country. However, the government was faced with one major problem: where should the road go?

In the past, the provinces had decided the route their highways would take. Unfortunately, these provincially planned routes did not usually link up with one another at provincial borders. If the Trans-Canada Highway was going to stretch from one end of the country to the other, it needed to be organized to ensure that it connected at provincial boundaries. However, since highways are the responsibility of the provinces in Canada the federal government could not simply tell the provinces where to build their roads. They had to negotiate and co-operate, to ensure that the Trans-Canada Highway would become a reality.

Agreeing on a point of connection between each of the provinces was further complicated by each province's desire to connect their major cities to the Highway. The federal government tried to get the provinces to design the "shortest practicable east-west route", but this was sometimes impractical. The addition of Newfoundland to the Canadian federation meant that the shortest route to Canada's eastern coast would no longer include major Atlantic cities like Halifax, Nova Scotia and St. John, New Brunswick. Even Western Canada, where most cities had been built along the railway line (which had been built on the shortest practicable east-west route) had a strong lobby to bring the highway on a more northern route through Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and Edmonton, Alberta.

Ultimately the Trans-Canada Highway changed from a single roadway into a road network to accommodate the needs of the provinces and their major cities. Today there are two different routes from New Brunswick to Nova Scotia, several different routes through Ontario, and an alternative northern route in the West known as the "Yellowhead Highway". The various routes, as well as different provincial road-numbering systems, mean that there is no single number assigned to the entire Trans-Canada Highway. Instead, the Highway can be identified by green signs with white maple leaves. If you find yourself on a road with these signs, you know you are travelling on the world's longest national road – or on any of the special routes that turned it into a road network.

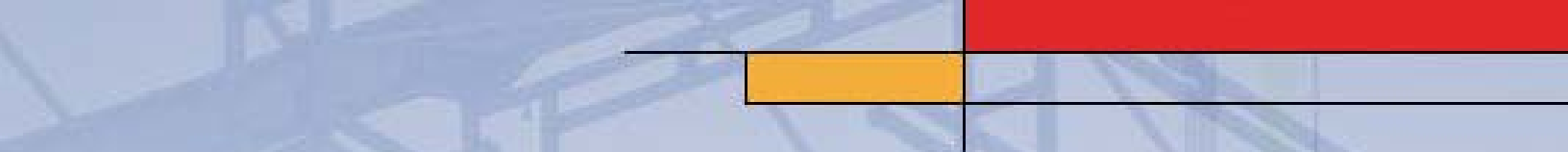
### For More Information:

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