



The "Dominion" of Canada

During the Charlottetown Conference of 1864, John A. Macdonald, who later became the first Prime Minister of Canada, talked of "founding a great British monarchy", in connection with the British Empire. He advocated, in the fourth Canadian draft of the British North America Act, the name "Kingdom of Canada."

Canada's founders, led by Sir John A. Macdonald wished their new nation to be called the "Kingdom of Canada". The Governor General at the time, Viscount Monk, supported the move to designate Canada a kingdom, however, officials at the Colonial Office in London opposed this potentially "premature" and "pretentious" reference for a new country. They were also wary of antagonizing the United States, which had emerged from its Civil War as a formidable military power with unsettled grievances because of British support for the Confederate cause and thus opposed the use of terms such as kingdom or empire to describe the new country.

As a result the term *dominion* was chosen to indicate Canada's status as a self-governing nation of the British Empire. New Brunswick premier Sir Samuel Tilley suggested the term, inspired by Psalms 72:8 (from the King James Bible):

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

This is also echoed in Canada's motto: *A mari usque ad mare* (Latin for "from sea to sea").

Its adoption as a title for Canada in 1867 served the purpose of upholding the monarchist principle in Canada; in a letter to Queen Victoria, Lord Carnarvon stated: "The North American delegates are anxious that the United Provinces should be designated as the 'Dominion of Canada.' It is a new title, but intended on their part as a tribute to the Monarchical principle which they earnestly desire to uphold."

F.Y.I.: While the provinces' delegates spent little time, if any, in settling on 'Canada' as the name for the new country, others proposed a variety of other names:

Albion

Albionoria — "Albion of the north"

Borealia — from 'borealis', the Latin word for 'northern'; compare with Australia

Cabotia — in honour of Italian explorer John Cabot, who explored the eastern coast of Canada for England

Colonia

Efisga — an acronym of "English, French, Irish, Scottish, German, Aboriginal"

Hochelaga — an old name for Montreal

Laurentia

Mesopelagia — "land between the seas"

Norland

Superior

Tuptionia — derived from 'The United Provinces of North America'

Transatlantica

Ursalia — "place of bears"

Vesperia — "land of the evening star"

Victorialand — in honour of Queen Victoria