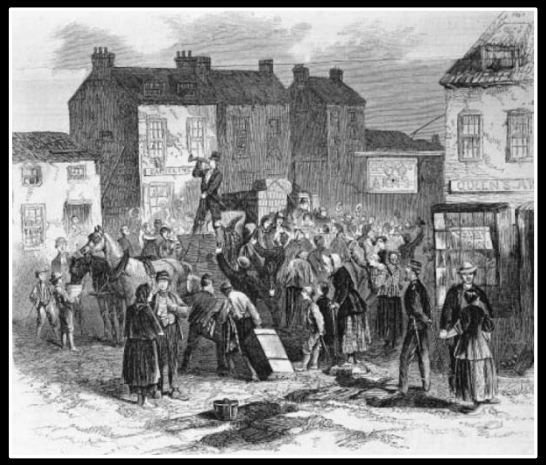
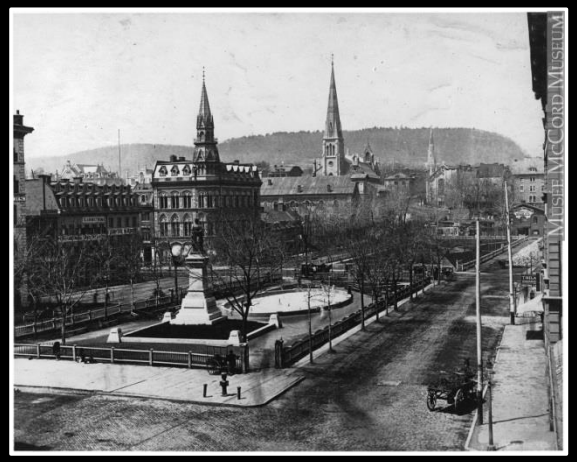
Chapter 1

1840-1896:

The Formation of the Canadian Federal System

Section 3: Responsible Government





Pages that correspond to this presentation

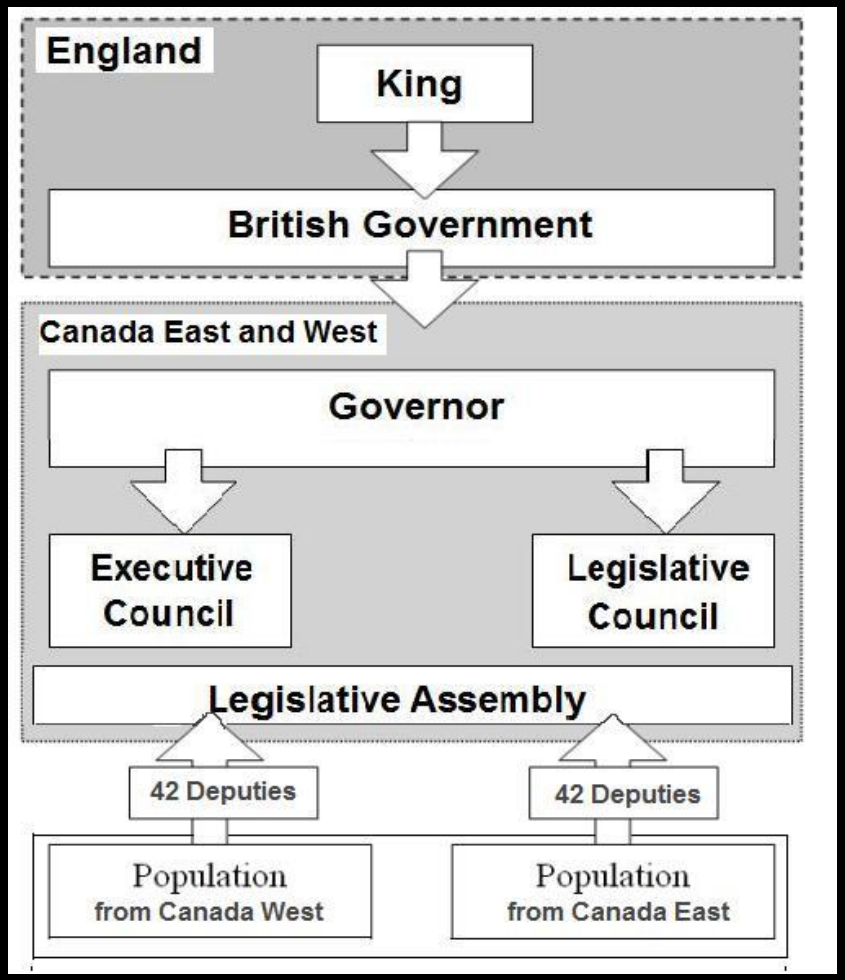
Responsible Government:

Pages 35-36

Background

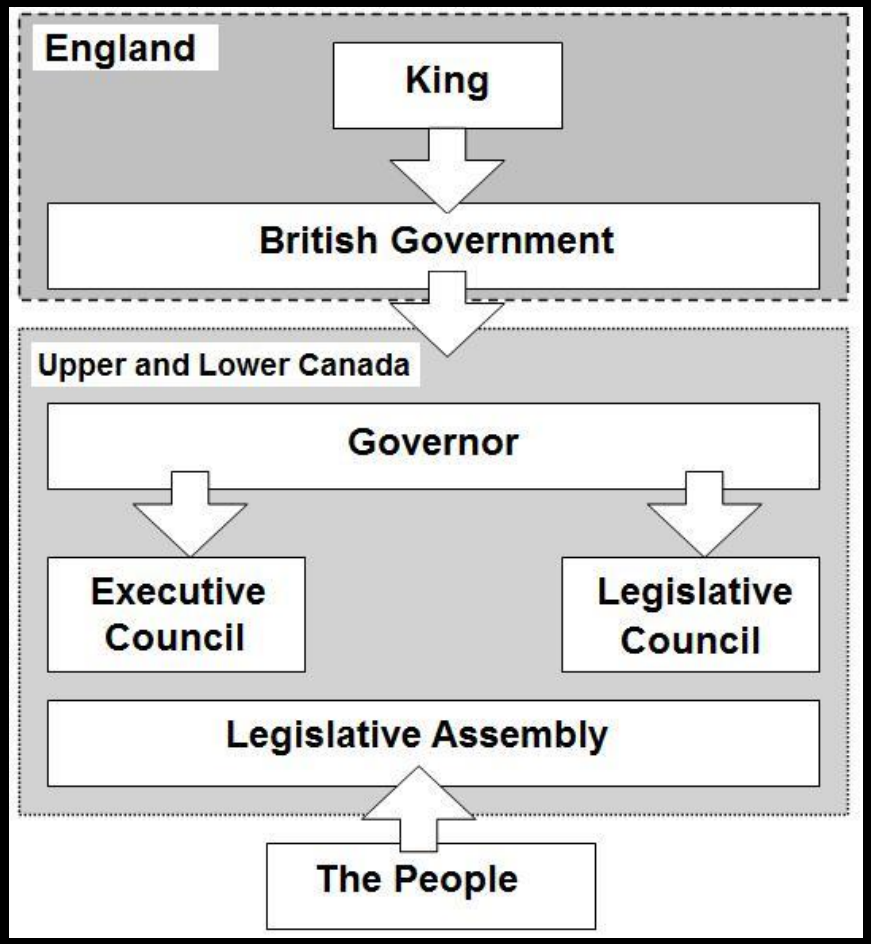
- The structure of the government changed
- ONE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY for whole colony → no more split between Upper/Lower Canada
- 42 members from Canada West AND 42 members from Canada East
- Legislative Council is STILL appointed by governor
- NO RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT → GOVERNOR STILL HAS POWER OF VETO
- Both French & English population demand responsible government that is elected!

Structure of the Government in United Canada after 1840

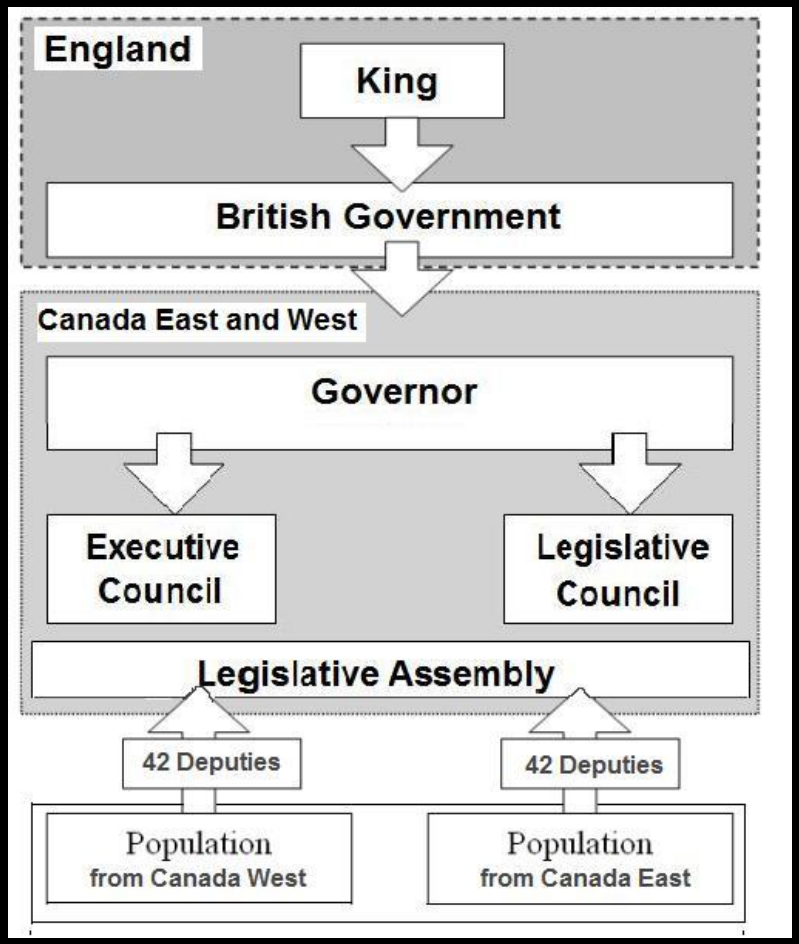


Background

Governmental changes in the territory after 1840



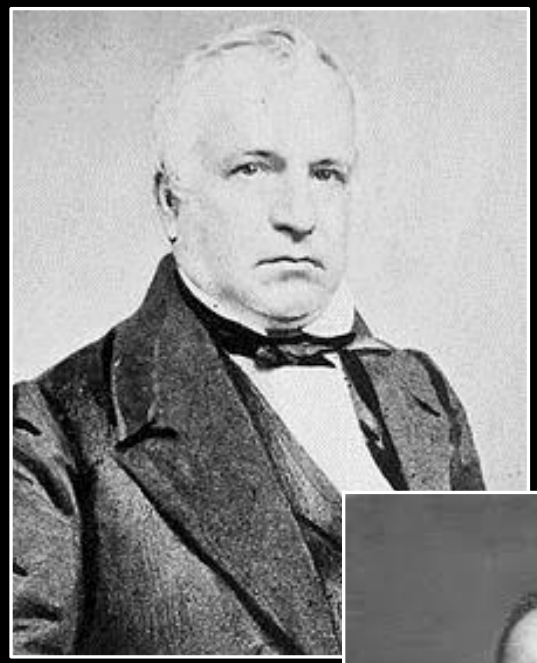
BEFORE 1840



AFTER 1840

The Push for Responsible Government

- Between 1840 and 1848
- Representatives from both Canada West and Canada East are unhappy
- French reps. of Canada East wanted responsible government and French to be recognized as an official language → lead by Louis Hippolyte-Lafontaine
- English reps. of Canada West wanted change in the economy → lead by Robert Baldwin
- They decided to support each other in the assembly → form an alliance



Lafontaine

Baldwin

The Push for Responsible Government

- Supporting each other in the assembly was called 'a political alliance' → they were a 'team'
- The name of the new political party (team) was the 'Reformers'
- Reformers = reform = want change
- In 1848 the reformers gained a majority of seats in the assembly → the formed the government in United Canada
- Another term for Responsible government = ministerial responsibility

Postage stamp issued in 1927 depicting Lafontaine & Baldwin

Source: Canadian Postage Stamps. https://www.canadianpostagestamps.ca/stamps/15491/robert-baldwin-and-sir-louis-hippolyte-lafontaine

The Push for Responsible Government

- Baldwin & Hippolyte-Lafontaine could start pressuring the British government to grant responsible (democratic) government in United Canada
- At the same time → FREE TRADE → no more protectionism from England → this meant that United Canada needed to have more control over it's economic future
- England decided that United Canada had to have more economic responsibility → so it would be a good idea to grant United Canada political responsibility (responsible government) so they could control their economy through governance → make their own decisions
- These factors pushed the British government to grant RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT IN 1848

Responsible Government After 1848

- Results of responsible government being granted in 1848:
  - Lord Elgin is appointed the new governor in United Canada → he is asked to respect the new rules of responsible government
  - The Lafontaine-Baldwin Reformers make up the majority of the government → the control the laws that are put into place
  - The members of the Executive Council are now elected by the members of the assembly → they are responsible to the assembly
  - The members of the Executive Council are appointed by the governor at the recommendation of the Legislative Council
  - The French language is officially recognized within government debates

Responsible Government After 1848

Arrows show where the power comes from

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE GOVERNOR NO LONGER HAS THE POWER OF VETO

King of England

British Government

Governor in United Canada

Executive Council

Legislative Council (24 members)

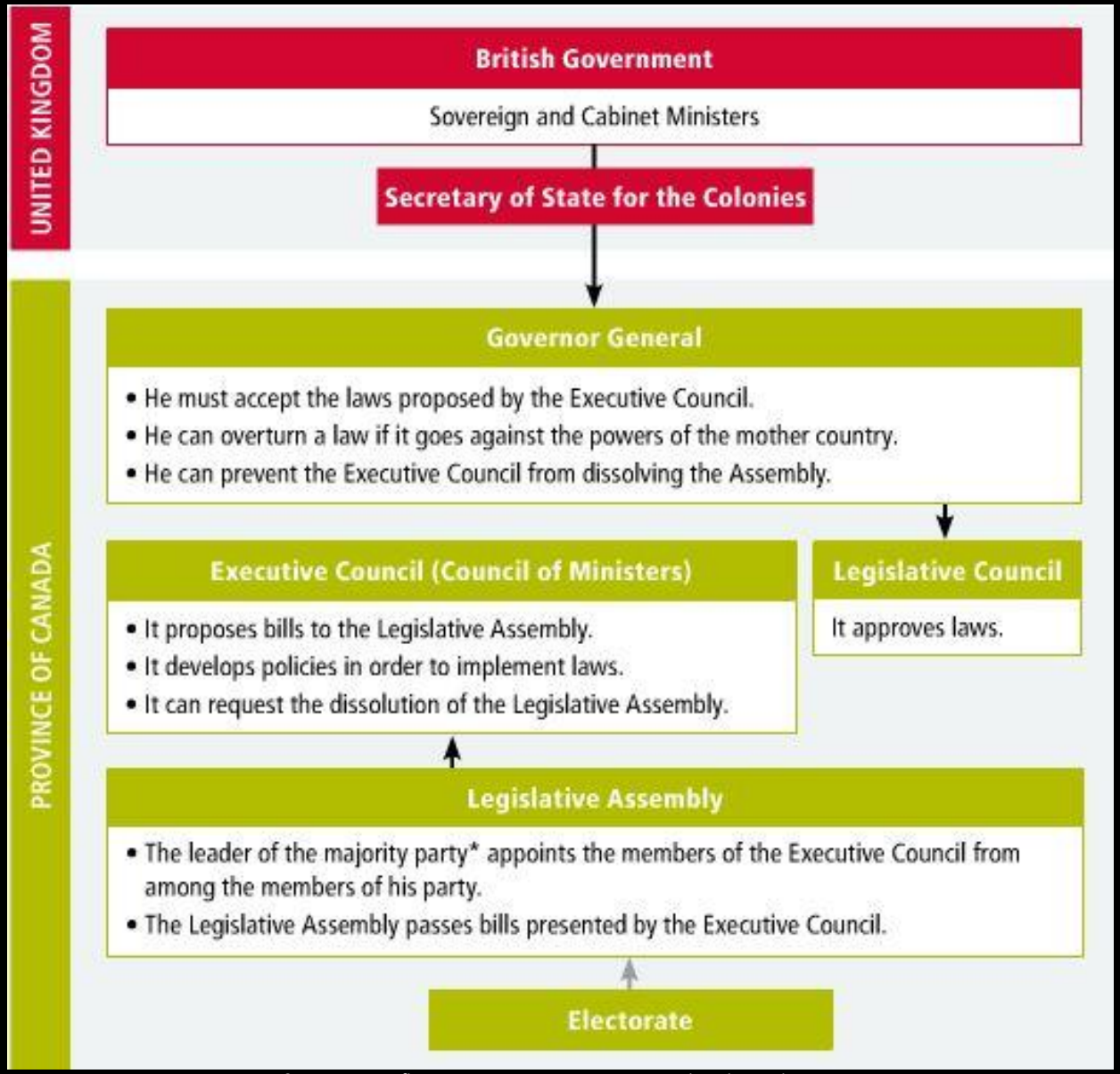
Legislative Assembly (voted in by the general population)

(Canada West: 42 members)

(Canada East: 42 members)

The population of United Canada

Responsible Government After 1848



Fortin, S., Lapointe, D., Lavoie, R. & Parent, A. *Reflections.qc.ca.: 1840 to Our Times*. Cheneliere Education. 2017. Page 35

Responsible Government after 1848

- It is important to notice the arrows
- The governor longer gets to choose the Executive Council → the people on this council are now chosen by the Legislative Assembly

Reactions After Establishment of Responsible Government

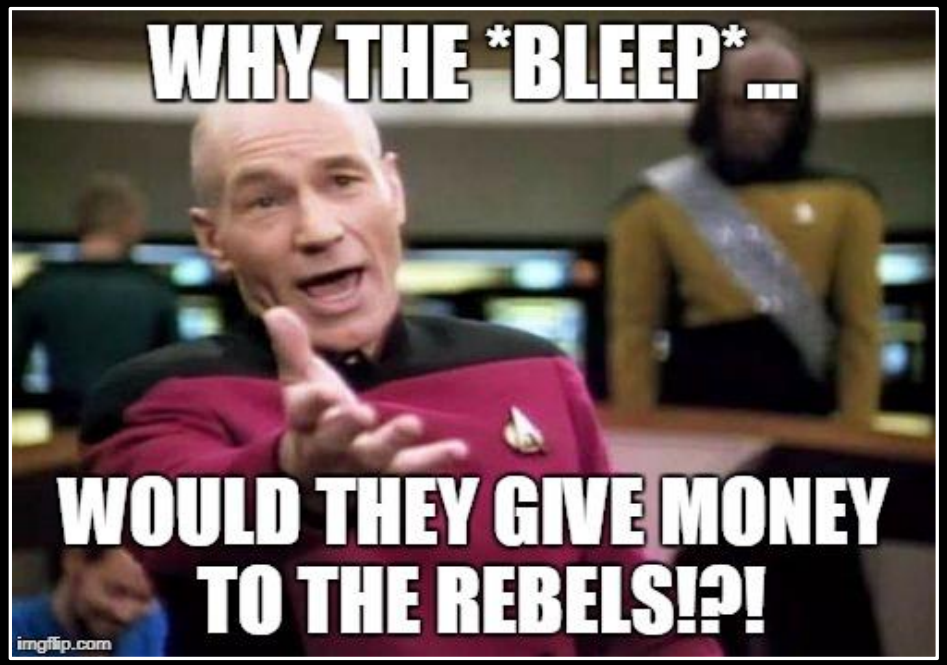
- Backlash after the first year of the Reformers' majority government:
  - Baldwin & Lafontaine's Reformers establish a law called the 'Rebellion Losses Bill' in 1849
  - This law gave people compensation (dolla dolla bills y'all) for damaged or lost property during the rebellions of 1837-1838 in Lower Canada
  - A person was compensated EVEN if they were involved in causing the damage → the rebels got $$$

"Yes!!! Another meme in Mr. O'Neill's notes! This is awesome!"

- Every student ever

Reactions After Establishment of Responsible Government

- Backlash after the first year of the Reformers' majority government:
  - The elites in Montreal did not agree → they took it upon themselves to fix the problem…
  - What do you do when you don't agree with a law in 1839? You burn down the parliament building!



Reactions After Establishment of Responsible Government

Painting by Joseph Légaré of the burning of the Montreal parliament in 1849

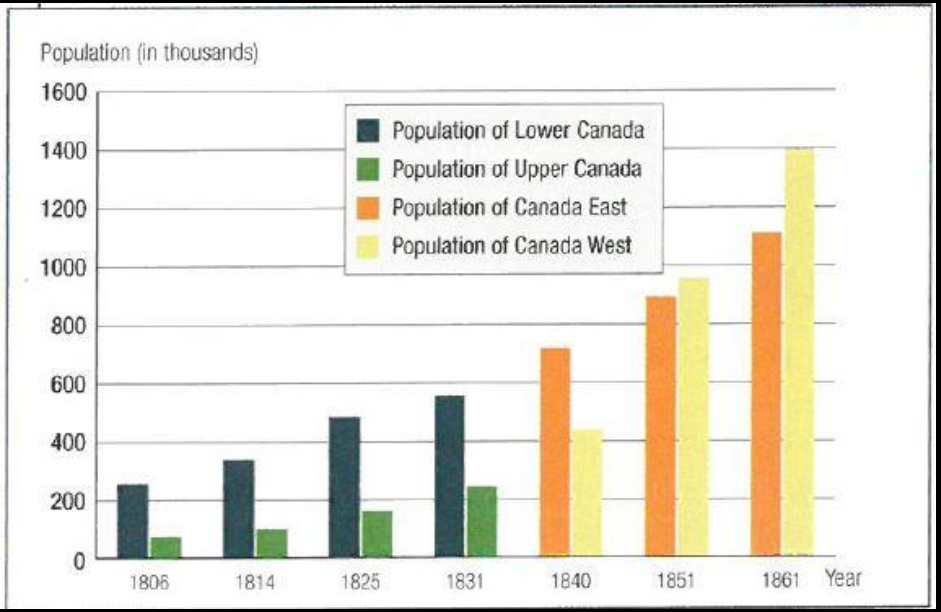
Source: The Canadian Encyclopedia Online. http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/montreal-riots/

Problems After Responsible Government in 1848

Political instability in United Canada:

- By the 1850s → Canada West (mainly English speaking) had a larger population than Canada East (mainly Francophone)
- However Both Canada East and West had the same number of representatives in the government
- Politicians (the 'Grit' party) in Canada West complained:
  - More representatives for Canada West because the population was larger → 'Rep by Pop.'

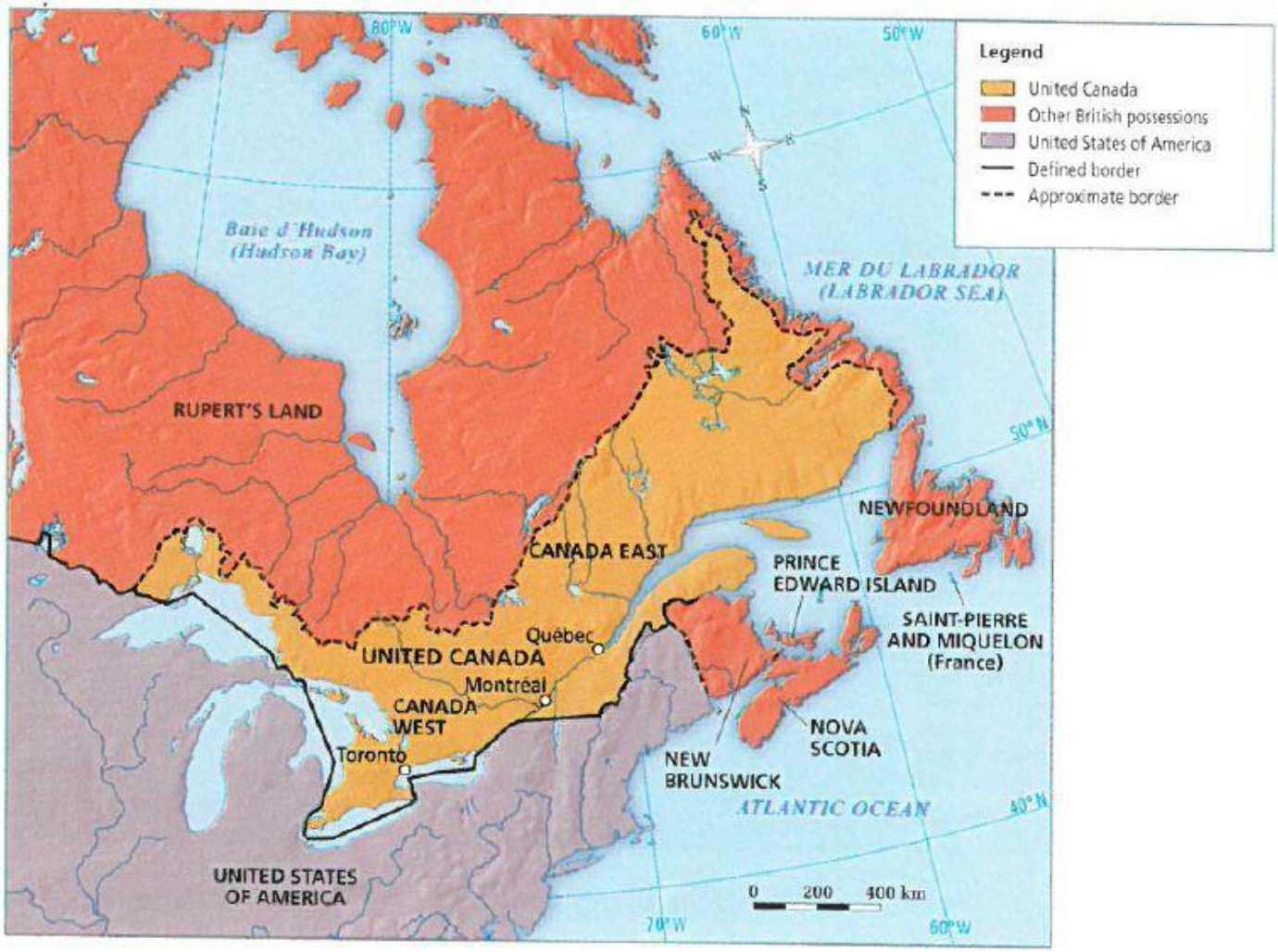
Population of Upper Canada/ Canada West & Lower Canada/Canada East 1806 - 1861



Source: Horgueli, C., Ladouceur, M., Lord, F., Rose, F. Panoramas: History & Citizenship Education. 2009. Page 57

Problems After Responsible Government in 1848

Map of The BNA Colonies around 1840 – With a focus on United Canada and the Maritime Colonies



The BNA Colonies included:

- United Canada (Canada West/East)
- New Brunswick
- Nova Sotia
- Prince Edward Island
- Newfoundland/ Labrador

Source: Horgueli, C., Ladouceur, M., Lord, F., Rose, F. Panoramas: History & Citizenship Education. 2009. Page 274

Problems After Responsible Government in 1848

- In addition two main political parties held majorities in each of the Canadas
  - The Grits in Canada West
  - The Conservatives (*Les Bleus*) in Canada East
- This caused many 'deadlocks' when it came time to vote on laws → no clear majority
- A majority in both Canada West AND East was needed….. Didn't happen very often
- This caused some problems:
  - Difficult to pass any legislation (laws) → nothing getting done
  - The representatives were voted on 10 times between 1854-1864→ 10 different governments in 10 years

Connections the MEES 'Precisions of Learning' / Knowledge to be acquired

Responsible government
a. Alliance of Reformers
b. Functioning of responsible government
c. Ministerial instability