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History Records show that as long ago as 1671 pioneer settlers were making wool materials for clothing and furnishings. Eventually, there were hundreds of custom carding and cloth-fulling mills scattered in communities throughout Upper and Lower Canada and the Maritimes. The first complete factory system of woollen cloth manufacture started in 1826 when Mahlon Willett established a mill at l'Acadie in Lower Canada. Some evidence exists that a small cotton mill operated at Chambly (or St Athanase), Lower Canada, from 1844 to at least 1846. However, more evidence exists that a cotton mill was built in Sherbrooke, LC, in 1844. It operated until it burned in 1854 and, as it had some knitting machines in use, may have a claim to being the first knitting mill as well. In 1853 a small cotton mill was established at the St-Gabriel lock on the Lachine canal; it operated until at least 1871. Other early records
include a knitting factory with powered knitting machines established in a mill at Ancaster [Ont] in 1859 and the Lybster Mills, established in Merritton [Ont] in 1860. The first silk-manufacturing concern was established in Montréal by Belding Paul & Co in 1876.

The age of synthetics began in 1925 when Courtaulds (Canada) Ltd built a plant in Cornwall, Ont, to make the then new viscose rayon, often called artificial silk. Courtaulds was quickly followed in 1926 by Celanese Canada, which erected a plant in Drummondville, Qué, to make acetate yarn. In 1942 the first nylon yarn was produced in Canada by DuPont. At the time, the height of WWII, nylon remained a well-kept secret; the first production was 45 denier yarn for weaving into parachute cloth. The first product made after the war was nylon hosiery yarn.

Polyester was introduced to Canada in the 1950s by ICI Ltd. Later, DuPont and Celanese became important manufacturers of this synthetic fibre, with the trade name "Dacron" used by DuPont and "Fortrel" by Celanese. Another major producer of nylon fibre in Canada is Badische Canada, of Arnprior, Ont. Its product is used mainly in carpets. Polypropylene, a most versatile synthetic fibre made by Celanese, is widely used for indoor-outdoor carpeting and for types of nonwoven textiles.

There are about 1085 textile-manufacturing plants in Canada, most of them located in Québec and Ontario. The Canadian clothing or apparel industry, with 2465 plants, is the largest single consumer of textiles, using about 40% of
the industry's output (fibre-weight equivalent). The ability of the textile industry to supply its home furnishings and industrial customers depends, in large part, on the continued existence of the clothing industry. Without the economies of scale made possible by the total market, almost every subsector of the textile industry would be threatened. Thus, textiles and clothing, while separate industries, are indivisible from the standpoint of industrial survival. They are also only 2 links in a long chain that starts with the consumer, goes back through retailers to apparel manufacturers, dyers and finishers, weavers and knitters, fibre producers, the PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRY (from which the raw materials for synthetic fibres come), and finally to the oil and gas wells. The disappearance of any link would weaken, perhaps fatally, the rest of the chain.

The employment links are also important. The weighted average employment multiplier for the textile and clothing industries has been estimated to be 1.65; ie, each job in textiles and clothing supports 1.65 jobs elsewhere in the economy. By this measure, the industries' 170,700 jobs support 281,650 additional jobs in other sectors.

Canada remains a relatively open market for textile and clothing imports from developed and developing nations. Canada's consumption of textiles and clothing by volume is about 2% of the world's total, and Canadian mills now supply less than 50% of this amount. The largest proportion of textile imports comes from developed countries (although in recent years this proportion has decreased somewhat as more come from developing countries); the largest
proportion of clothing imports from developing countries. Despite substantial import-restraint legislation, Canada accepts 9 times more per capita in textiles from developed countries than the US and 3 times as much as the European Economic Community. Steps by the Canadian government, assuring the textile industry of the continuation of special protection measures, have created a fairly stable climate of confidence and have stimulated investment.

![Chart 3. International Trade and Market Share, Primary Textile Industry](chart.png)

Source: Statistics Canada, Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division, Annual Survey of Manufactures

The proposed **FREE TRADE** agreement with the US has caused some uncertainty about the future in the industry; however, it would favour free trade with the US if "the adjustment and transition conditions are adequate" to retain this level of confidence.

The Canadian textile industry is internationally competitive with other developed countries in price, quality and product variety. The primary industry is as technologically efficient and productive as any in the world. Major technological advances have been introduced to accompany the shift from natural to synthetic fibres and blends, including the adoption of advanced spinning, weaving, knitting, nonwoven and finishing machinery, electronic and computerized control equipment and methods of reducing energy consumption. Canada was a pioneer in introducing a new open-end type of yarn spinning and is a leader in the use of shuttleless weaving machines.
Canada rates with the leaders in the production and technical development of nonwoven fabrics, particularly in their use in GEOTEXTILES. (eg, ASBESTOS fibres). Computers and microprocessors are widely used in manufacturing operations.

Today the industry consists of the survivors of an extended and rigorous period of rationalization. The remaining firms are efficient, cost conscious and adaptable to the changing marketplace. Dominion Textile Inc, headquartered in Montréal, was by far the largest textile manufacturer in Canada, with annual sales of about $927 million in 1986. The company had 40 manufacturing facilities, 26 located in Canada, 7 in the US, 6 in Europe and one in Hong Kong. Of the Canadian plants, 17 were in Québec, 8 in Ontario and one was in NS. The total employment was at 10,500 until it was sold to the American Plymer Group in 1988.

The textile industry continues to spend large sums on new machinery and modernization of facilities. For example, spending on capital equipment and repairs during the 1970s amounted to $1.8 billion, and it will be more than $3.0 billion in the 1980s. The industry has improved its export performance without imposing sacrifices on its domestic customers. To be successful in the export of commodities, such as textiles, a secure domestic base must underpin the higher risks, costs and lower net returns inherent in export marketing. The industry has recently operated in a more confident climate, which has encouraged a strong flow of investment into efficient, highly productive textile processes.