

2 What is the Marine Sector?

Marine Sector Overview

Canada's extensive 243,000 kilometers of coastline (the longest of any country in the world!), and its many lakes and rivers, mean that the marine sector is a major contributor to our country's economic, environmental and social fabric. Here are 10 ways that the marine sector plays a vital role in our daily lives!



1. Connecting Canadians to the global marketplace

Look around you at the items in your classroom, the food in your lunch bag or even what you are wearing today. Chances are these items were delivered to your community by a ship! International vessels bring goods and materials from all around the world into a vast network of ports and private commercial docks in Canada, where they are then offloaded into rail cars or trucks to bring to production facilities or your local stores. More than 70 per cent of the goods Canadians use daily are brought to Canada by ship. Marine shipping is also vital in getting Canadian products and resources to international markets. We learned a lot about the importance of these global connections during the COVID-19 pandemic, when disruptions to international supply chains led to shortages of different products like cars and furniture, and ultimately contributed to increases in prices for some goods.



2. Delivering goods locally

Did you know that Canada has fleets of vessels crewed by Canadians that deliver containerized goods, and Canadian-produced products and raw materials between our cities and towns on the East Coast, in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region, the Arctic and on the West Coast? Canadian farmers, food producers, manufacturers, energy, mining, forestry and construction companies, to name just a few, rely on our coastal and inland "marine highways" to deliver vast quantities of raw materials to their manufacturing facilities and their finished products to marketplaces. These vessels also deliver trade between Canada and the U.S. and sometimes even further afield.



3. Lowering the price of goods

It costs less to transport large volumes of cargo, long distances, by ship, tanker or tug and barge; and has the added benefit of taking traffic off our congested highways. For example, one cargo ship sailing on the St. Lawrence Seaway can carry as much cargo as 963 transport trucks or rail cars in one trip.



4. Linking Island and Remote Communities

Marine is often the only link for many island and remote communities throughout Canada. Along with other types of vessels, ferries connect provinces to each other in the Atlantic, connect popular international ports in the Pacific, and connect indigenous communities, remote locations and islands all over the country to major centres and emergency services. Ferry operators alone transport more than 60 million passengers and 22 million vehicles annually, and billions of dollars of goods.



5. Supporting Recreational Activities and Tourism

Canada's many ports, harbours and waterways also support recreational boating, tour vessels and cruise ships throughout the country – helping the tourism industry, local businesses and creating jobs. Oceangoing cruise ships alone brought 1.9 million travellers to our country in 2025.

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6. Environmental Stewardship

Did you know that marine shipping is already Canada's greenest way to transport goods? Ships are the most fuel-efficient and produce the least amount of carbon emissions per-ton-kilometre compared to trucks and trains. In just 10 years, [Canadian ship operators have also reduced their CO2 emissions by 19 per cent](#). Marine organisations from vessel operators, ports, and the St. Lawrence Seaway to marine terminals and shipyards go above and beyond standard regulations to reduce their impact on all aspects of the environment through voluntary certification programs like [Green Marine](#).



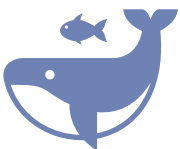
7. Advancing Technology

The Canadian marine sector is constantly evolving, with research and technology being developed for digitalization and Artificial Intelligence machine-learning, 3D imaging, smart buoys, and underwater autonomous vehicles. Cutting-edge technology, data, and engineering are more important than ever as the sector works to meet its decarbonization targets and develop lasting climate solutions.



8. Designing and Building Canada's next generation of ships

Ship and boat yards are crucial to the marine sector, providing jobs in their facilities but also creating economic spinoffs and jobs with naval architecture, design, engineering and technology firms, marine industrial suppliers, trades and service providers. Canada's facilities build, refit, repair, and maintain vessels of all sizes and purposes, from large Navy vessels and cargo ships to 100-foot sailboats and smaller. Currently, the federal government has embarked on a National Shipbuilding Strategy, a long-term plan to renew the fleets of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG). Project contracts awarded between 2012 and the end of 2025 are estimated to have contributed approximately \$49.7 billion (\$3.3 billion per year) to Canada's gross domestic product (GDP). They also created or maintained more than 25,000 jobs annually between 2012 and 2025.



9. Protecting our marine environments

The dedication to environmental protection across the marine sector means there are more ways than ever to make a difference. Government, ocean sciences, environmental and academic organisations conduct research and restoration work both in the field and laboratories and partner with shipping organisations to develop new practices and technologies to protect marine wildlife and water quality.



10. Ensuring Marine Safety

From Coast Guard to Transport Canada to the Transportation Safety Board, thousands of individuals lend their expertise to help ensure the safety, security and sustainability of the industry. Government's critical roles include creating marine policies and regulations, safety and security inspections, marine personnel certification, accident investigation and operational support in areas such as search and rescue, traffic management and icebreaking. Check out our [Why Marine? Quiz](#) to find out how many calls for assistance the Canadian Coast Guard responds to in one year.