

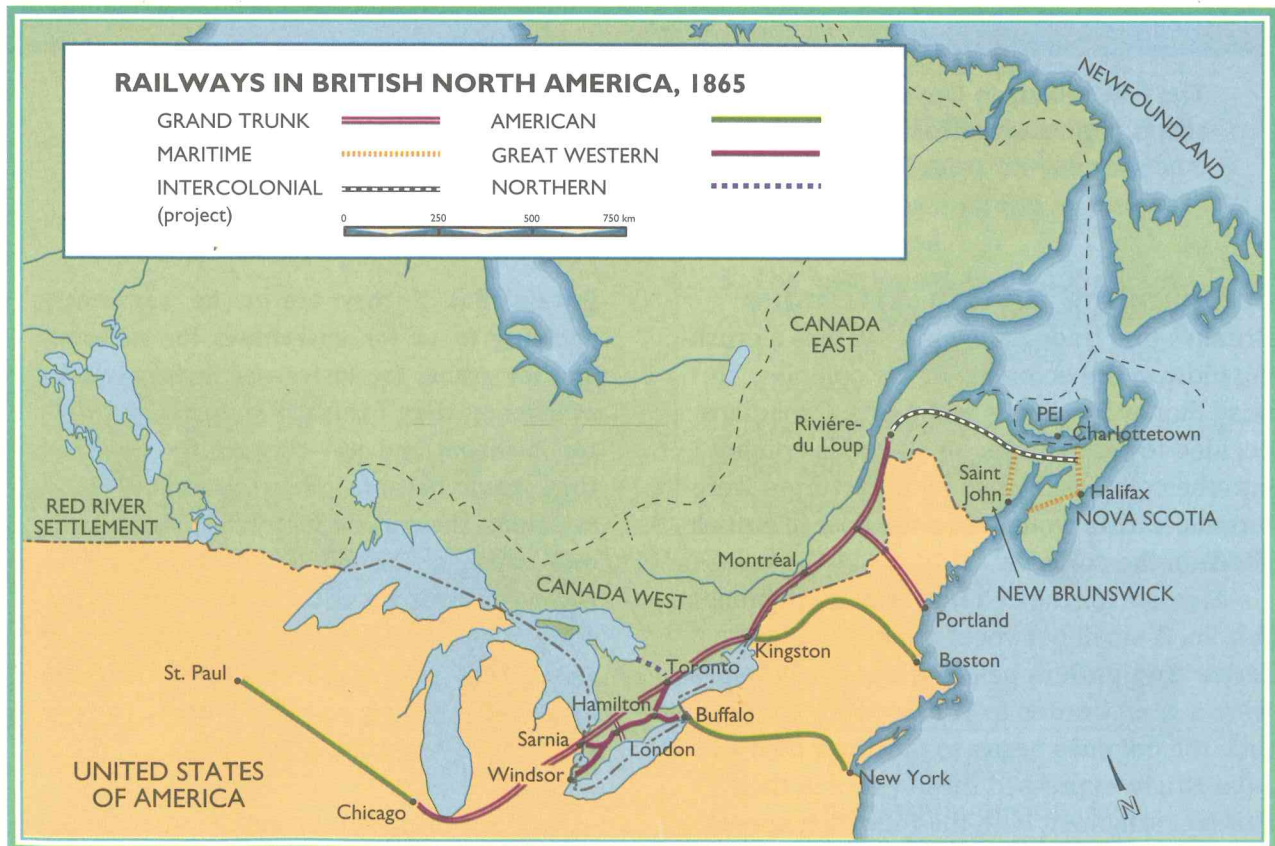
#### 4. The Need For Rail Links

If there was going to be trade among the colonies, there had to be a railway link. In 1850, there were only 106 km of track in British North America. In comparison, there were 14 484 km in the United States. Much of the railway business was going to the American railways. It was time, Canadians thought, to build their own railways.

Between 1850 and 1867, 3570 km of track were added in the colonies. The most ambitious railway project was the Grand Trunk Railway. It was to be an all-British route linking Canada West with the Atlantic Ocean at Halifax. By 1860, the Grand Trunk had stretched from Sarnia only as far east as Rivière du Loup. It cost a tremendous amount of money to build and it was on the verge of being bankrupt.

Many people thought that the only way the Grand Trunk could be completed to Halifax would be if the colonies were united. Then expenses could be shared. The railways would also provide a communication and trade link between the colonies. Some even dreamed of one day extending the railway right across the continent to British Columbia and the Pacific.

A railway connection with the Atlantic colonies was essential for the defence of Canada. Suppose Canada was attacked by the United States during the winter. Troops from Britain could be rushed to Halifax. But the St. Lawrence River would be blocked by ice. There would be no way British troops could get to Canada from the Maritimes by rail without crossing through the United States. A railway link between the colonies was essential for trade and defence. It was another reason for Confederation.



List the railways you would have to travel on to reach Toronto from Saint John, New Brunswick. Why is this trip not possible by rail in 1865? What other route could you take? What problems do you see with this route?