

SEISMICITY MAP OF CANADA
Descriptive Notes
by
F.M. Anglin, R.J. Wetmiller, R.B. Horner,
G.C. Rogers, J.A. Drysdale
Geological Survey of Canada

CARTE DE LA SÉISMICITÉ DU CANADA
Notes descriptives
par le
F.M. Anglin, R.J. Wetmiller, R.B. Horner,
G.C. Rogers, J.A. Drysdale
Commission géologique du Canada

INTRODUCTION

The first permanent seismograph stations in Canada capable of recording large earthquakes were established in 1897 in Toronto, 1898 in Victoria and 1906 in Ottawa. It was not until after the strong 1925 Lawrence Valley and 1949 Vancouver Island earthquakes that more sensitive seismographs suitable for recording nearby earthquakes were established in eastern and western Canada. The first national seismograph network was established in the 1950s, and considerably expanded in the 1970s. The Geological Survey of Canada now operates more than 100 seismograph stations throughout Canada.

Information on earthquakes that occurred prior to the establishment of appropriate seismographs has been obtained from written accounts (diaries, newspapers, etc.) of earthquake shaking and damage. This historical record extends back to the 17th century in eastern Canada but only to the early part of the 19th century in western Canada.

The plotted earthquakes are from the Canadian Earthquake Epicentre File, which contains information on more than 24,000 earthquakes known in, or near, Canada from 1568 to 1988. The mapped earthquakes are extended outside the Canadian border to the dotted boundary, e.g., in Alaska and Washington, to include earthquakes that can potentially affect Canadian territory. To produce a fair representation of Canadian seismicity, all known earthquakes of magnitude larger than 5.0 since 1568, magnitude 4.0 and larger since 1900, and magnitude 3.0 and larger since 1965 are selected. Earthquakes since 1965 are indicated by dark red symbols, as coverage is much more complete after the completion of the national seismograph network in that year. In some areas, many earthquakes are very close together and it has been necessary to screen the data to remove some of the overlapping points. Details of the selection and screening process, and a list of plotted earthquakes, are given by Anglin (1990). Information on some of the larger and damaging Canadian earthquakes is given in the inset Table.

THE SEISMICITY MAP

WESTERN CANADA. The most intense earthquake activity occurs along the coast of British Columbia and is caused by the interaction of the Pacific, North American and Juan de Fuca crustal plates. In the Vancouver Island-Lower Mainland region, the seismicity is associated with the Cascadia subduction zone, where earthquakes occur in the subducting Juan de Fuca plate as well as in the over-riding North American plate. The 1946 earthquake (see Table) is the largest in this century in southwestern British Columbia, although there is geological evidence that prehistoric great subduction earthquakes may have occurred beneath southwestern British Columbia at intervals of several hundred years. The Queen Charlotte fault off the west coast of the Queen Charlotte Islands has been the site of several major earthquakes, including the 1946 north-american-plate earthquake. Further north in the St. Elias region, motion along the plate boundary undergirds a transition from strike-slip to convergence. An unprecedented sequence of three major earthquakes occurred in the Yukon-Terrace Bay area in 1929. The plate interaction in this region results in a significant number of earthquakes in the southwest Yukon Territory and adjacent northwest British Columbia.

Along all of the Cordillera except in north-central British Columbia, where very few earthquakes are observed. More intense seismicity occurs in the northern Cordillera, particularly in pockets in the Richardson Mountains of the northern Yukon Territory, and in the Mackenzie Mountains in the eastern Northwest Territories. The largest known earthquake in the eastern Cordillera occurred in the Nahanni region of the Northwest Territories in 1965.

SOUTHEASTERN CANADA. To a first approximation the stress field in Canada east of the Cordillera is compressional from the northeast due to ocean-floor spreading at the mid-Atlantic ridge, and causes thrust or strike-slip earthquakes. Most of the significant earthquakes can be associated with an old system along the St. Lawrence Valley. This seismicity occurs mainly in three clusters: western Quebec, which includes the 1732, 1935 and 1944 earthquakes; Charlevoix-Kamouraska, northwest of Quebec City, a repetitive source of large events; 1791, 1860, 1870 and 1929; and a continuous source of smaller events; and the lower St. Lawrence near Baie-Comeau, a diffuse cluster of mostly small earthquakes nearly all involving thrust faults at depths of 10 to 30 km within the Precambrian shield. Moderate activity occurs in the Appalachian region throughout most of New Brunswick. The most recent widely felt earthquake in eastern Canada occurred in the Saguenay region in 1980.

THE EASTERN MARGIN. Along the eastern continental margin, the seismicity includes the 1929 Grand Banks and the 1933 Baffin Bay earthquakes. These and similar events are concentrated at the ocean-continent transition zone and appear to be caused by rift faults formed during the rifting of the continental margin. The Atlantic Ocean and Baffin Bay. In the mid Labrador Sea, earthquakes are associated with the extinct spreading ridge and its associated transform faults.

ARCTIC CANADA. In this region, earthquakes occur mainly in the Beaufort Sea, along an arcuate band between the Boothia and Ungava peninsulas, in the Sverdrup Basin, and in the Beaufort Sea. The Baffin and Boothia-Ungava earthquakes are spatially associated with steep gradients in the geopotential uplift rate, suggesting that they may occur because of differential uplift. The Baffin Island earthquakes are unique in eastern Canada in that some of them involved normal faulting. The Sverdrup Basin earthquakes represent strike-slip deformation beneath a thick accumulation of sediments. The passive Arctic Ocean margin has a rifted ocean-continent transition comparable to the Atlantic margin but it appears to be seismically active only where it has been recently loaded by thick sequences of sediments, most notably in the Beaufort Sea. Most of the information on Arctic earthquakes dates from the completion of the national seismograph network in 1965, and it is quite likely that not all of the active zones have been identified.

Canada has yet to experience a destructive earthquake, although significant damage was caused by a number of the events listed in the Table. The seismic design provisions of the National Building Code of Canada are updated every ten years to include improvements in our understanding of seismicity and seismotectonics and in the structural aspects of earthquake-resistant design. Although earthquakes cannot be prevented, their effects can be mitigated by constructing buildings to survive the earthquakes that might occur.

REFERENCES

Adams, J.
1989. Crustal stresses in eastern Canada. In Earthquakes at North Atlantic Passive Margins. Neotectonics and Postglacial Rebound, Ed. S. Gengenot and P.W. Bosham. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Netherlands, p. 289-297.

Adams, J. and Bosham P.W.
1989. The seismicity and seismotectonics of Canada east of the Cordillera. Geoscience Canada, v. 16, p. 3-16.

Anglin, F.M.
1990. Preparation of the Seismicity Map of Canada. Geological Survey of Canada, Open File Report.

Bosham, P.W., Weichert, D.H., Anglin, F.M. and Berry, M.J.
1985. New probabilistic strong seismic ground motion maps of Canada. Seismological Society of America, Bulletin, v. 75, p. 562-595.

Mine, W.G., Rogers, G.C., Riddiough, R.P., Hyndman, R.D. and McMechan, G.A.
1979. Seismicity of western Canada. Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences, v. 15, p. 1170-1193.

Stevens, A.
1980. History of some Canadian and adjacent American seismograph stations. Seismological Society of America, Bulletin, v. 70, p. 1381-1393.

1988. Earthquake hazard and risk in Canada. In Natural and Man-Made Hazards, Ed. M.J. El-Sabih and T.S. Murty, D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, Netherlands, p. 43-61.

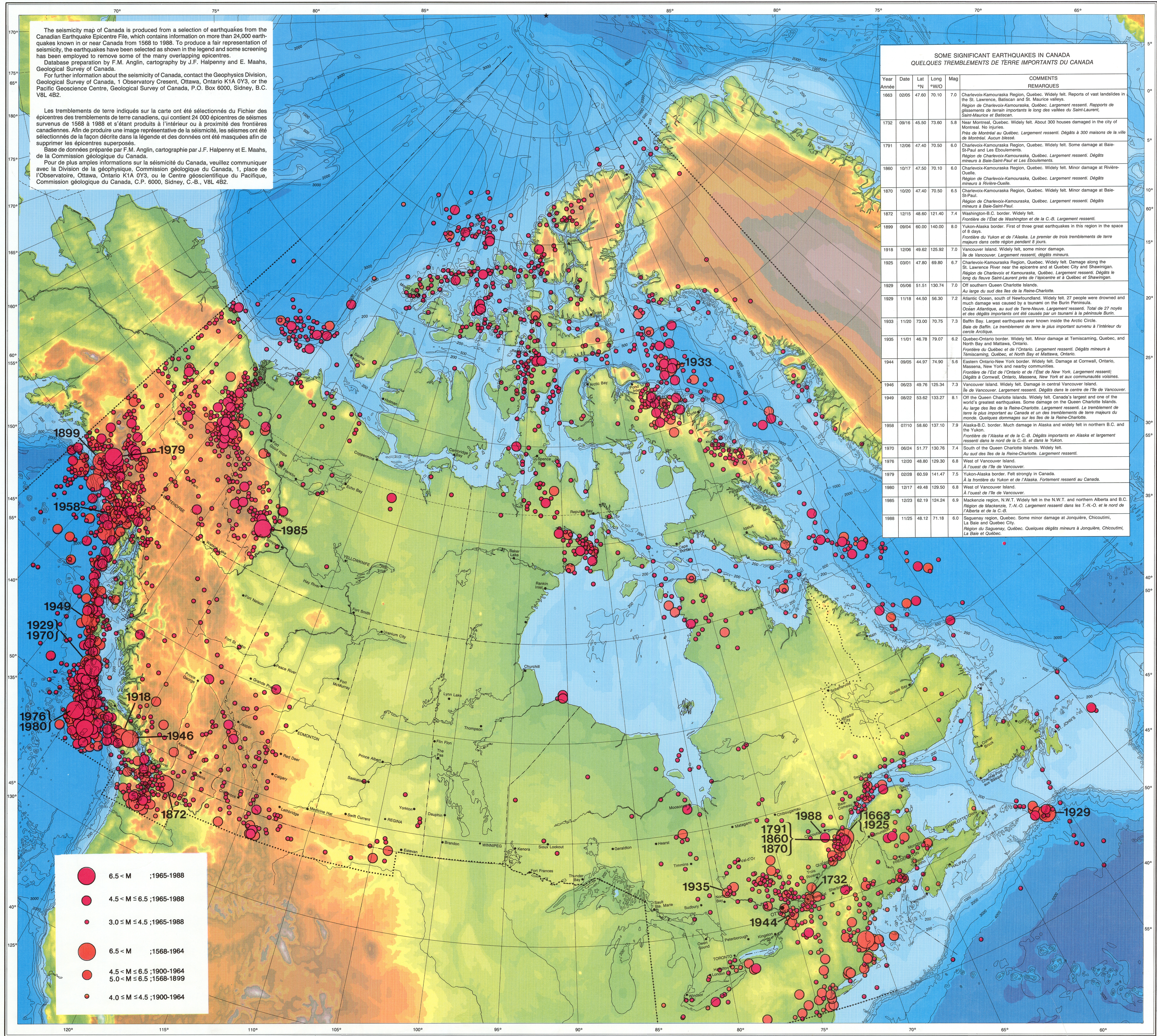
1988. Périls sismiques au Canada. In Risk Assessment and Management. Emergency Planning Perspectives, Ed. L.R.G. Martin and G. Lafont. University of Waterloo Press, Waterloo, Canada, p. 21-41.

Copies of this map may be obtained from the Geological Survey of Canada, 601 Booth Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S9 3B3 3rd Street, N.W., Calgary, Alberta T2L 2A7
Compiled by Geophysical Data Centre, Geological Survey of Canada
Published 1990. Printed by the Cartographic Information and Distribution Centre

Recommended citation:
F.M. Anglin, R.J. Wetmiller, R.B. Horner, G.C. Rogers, J.A. Drysdale, 1990. Seismicity Map of Canada. Geological Survey of Canada, Canadian Geophysical Atlas, Map 15, scale 1:10 000 000

Notation bibliographique conseillée:
F.M. Anglin, R.J. Wetmiller, R.B. Horner, G.C. Rogers, J.A. Drysdale, 1990. Carte de la sismicité du Canada. Commission géologique du Canada. Atlas géophysique du Canada, Carte 15, échelle 1/10 000 000

CANADIAN GEOPHYSICAL ATLAS - MAP 15



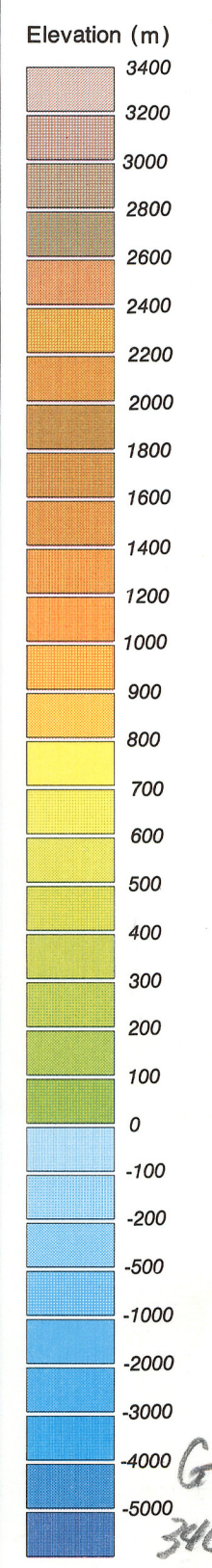
- 6.5 < M ; 1965-1988
- 4.5 < M ≤ 6.5 ; 1965-1988
- 3.0 ≤ M < 4.5 ; 1965-1988
- 6.5 < M ; 1568-1964
- 4.5 < M ≤ 6.5 ; 1900-1964
- 5.0 < M ≤ 6.5 ; 1568-1999
- 4.0 ≤ M < 4.5 ; 1900-1964

Scale 1:10,000,000 Échelle
KILOMÈTRES 100 0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 KILOMÈTRES

LAMBERT CONFORMAL CONICAL PROJECTION, STANDARD PARALLELS 46° AND 77°
PROJECTION CONIQUE CONFORME DE LAMBERT, PARALLÈLES D'ÉCHELLE CONSERVÉE 46° ET 77°

SOME SIGNIFICANT EARTHQUAKES IN CANADA
QUELQUES TREMBLEMENTS DE TERRE IMPORTANTS DU CANADA

Year	Date	Lat	Long	Mag	REMARKS
1663	02/05	47.80	70.10	7.0	Charlevoix-Kamouraska Region, Quebec. Widely felt. Reports of vast landslides in the St. Lawrence, Belizian and St. Maurice valleys.
1732	09/16	45.50	73.60	5.8	Near Montreal, Quebec. Widely felt. About 300 houses damaged in the city of Montreal. No injuries.
1791	12/06	47.40	70.50	6.0	Charlevoix-Kamouraska Region, Quebec. Widely felt. Some damage at Baie-St-Paul and Les Éboulements.
1860	10/17	47.50	70.10	6.0	Charlevoix-Kamouraska Region, Quebec. Widely felt. Minor damage at Rivière-Charlottetown, Rivière-Charlottetown, Quebec. Largement ressenti. Dégâts mineurs à Baie-Saint-Paul et Les Éboulements.
1870	10/09	47.40	70.50	6.5	Charlevoix-Kamouraska Region, Quebec. Widely felt. Minor damage at Baie-St-Paul.
1872	12/15	48.60	121.40	7.4	Washington-B.C. border. Widely felt. Frontière de l'état de Washington et de la C.-B. Largement ressenti.
1890	09/04	60.00	140.00	8.0	Yukon-Alaska border. First of three great earthquakes in this region in the space of 8 days.
1918	12/06	49.62	126.92	7.0	Vancouver Island. Widely felt, some minor damage.
1925	03/01	47.80	69.80	6.7	Charlevoix-Kamouraska Region, Quebec. Widely felt. Damage along the St. Lawrence River near the epicentre and at Quebec City and Shawinigan.
1929	06/06	51.51	130.74	7.0	Off the Queen Charlotte Islands. Largement ressenti. Dégâts mineurs.
1929	11/18	44.50	56.30	7.2	Atlantic Ocean, south of Newfoundland. Widely felt. 27 people were drowned and much damage was caused by a tsunami on the Burin Peninsula.
1933	11/20	73.00	70.75	7.3	Baffin Bay. Largest earthquake ever known inside the Arctic Circle.
1935	11/01	46.78	79.07	6.2	Quebec-Ontario border. Widely felt. Minor damage at Temiscaming, Quebec, and North Bay and Massena, Ontario.
1944	08/05	44.97	74.90	5.6	Eastern Ontario-New York border. Widely felt. Damage at Cornwall, Ontario, Massena, New York and nearby communities.
1946	06/23	49.76	125.34	7.1	Vancouver Island. Widely felt. Damage in central Vancouver Island.
1949	08/22	53.62	133.27	8.1	Off the Queen Charlotte Islands. Canada's largest and one of the world's greatest earthquakes. Some damage on the Queen Charlotte Islands.
1958	07/10	58.60	137.10	7.9	Alaska-B.C. border. Much damage in Alaska and widely felt in northern B.C. and the Yukon.
1970	06/24	51.77	130.76	7.4	South of the Queen Charlotte Islands. Widely felt.
1976	12/09	48.80	129.30	6.8	West of Vancouver Island. Au sud de l'île de Vancouver.
1979	02/28	60.59	147.57	7.5	Yukon-Alaska border. Felt strongly in Canada.
1980	12/17	49.48	129.50	6.8	West of Vancouver Island. À l'ouest de l'île de Vancouver.
1985	12/23	62.19	124.24	6.9	MacKenzie region. N.W.T. Widely felt in the N.W.T. and northern Alberta and B.C.
1988	11/25	48.12	71.18	6.0	Saguenay region, Quebec. Some minor damage at Jonquière, Chicoutimi, the Baie and Québec City.



MAP LIBRARY / CARTOTHEQUE

LIBRARY / BIBLIOTHÈQUE
OCT 3 1990

CANADIAN GEOPHYSICAL ATLAS - MAP 15
SEISMICITY MAP OF CANADA

ATLAS GÉOPHYSIQUE DU CANADA - CARTE 15
CARTE DE LA SÉISMICITÉ DU CANADA

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
COMMISSION GÉOLOGIQUE



Canadian Geophysical Atlas

51002
G4
0mmc
Map 15 C.2