

CANADA FOREST ACCORD

OUR FORESTS

The forest symbolizes Canada. Covering nearly half the Canadian landscape, some 418 million hectares, forests are integral to our environment, economy, culture, traditions and history. They are critical to realizing our aspirations as a society and as a nation.

Canada's forests are diverse from coast to coast and are crucial components of our natural environment. Canada has 10 per cent of the world's forests, which play an important role in protecting 20 per cent of the world's fresh water. Our forests provide habitat for wildlife, which includes plants, animals and micro-organisms. They moderate the climate and provide clean air and water. They enrich the soil, prevent its erosion, and regulate water flow. They provide wild and managed areas for the cultural, spiritual and recreational benefit of everyone in Canada.

Our forests are a natural resource whose care and stewardship is of interest to every Canadian and in a sense to all citizens of the world.

Most of Canada's original forest remains today. Of the 418 million hectares, 23 million are, by law, to be left in their natural state. Another 28 million hectares are excluded from timber harvesting, by policy. Commercial forests, both public and private, capable of producing timber along with a variety of other benefits, cover 235 million hectares. The balance of 132 million hectares is made up of open forests comprised of natural areas of small trees, shrubs and muskeg.

Our forests form a vital part of our economy, supporting some 337 communities and providing jobs for over 830,000 Canadians. The

interests of the majority of Canada's Aboriginal communities are also linked to forest conservation and use. With over 71 billion dollars of shipments annually, Canada is one of the world's largest suppliers of wood and paper forest products. Exports contribute some 32 billion dollars to the country's net balance of trade. In addition, Canadian forests support industries providing billions of dollars in sales, including tourism, recreation, wild foods, fur trade, Christmas trees and maple products.

Through sound forest management, a variety of timber and non-timber benefits can be produced from our forests on a sustainable basis to continue fulfilling this vital economic role.

Since 94 per cent of Canada's forests are publicly owned, all Canadians have a vital interest in their management. In Canada, forest management is the Constitutional responsibility of the provinces. In the Northwest Territories, the federal government has transferred responsibility for forest management to the territorial government. Similar transfers are under discussion with the Yukon. The federal government has direct or shared responsibility for industrial and regional development, trade, international relations, science and technology, the environment and federal lands. Various other forest community interest groups also play an important role in the decision-making process.

WE BELIEVE

* Healthy forest ecosystems are essential to the health of all life on earth.

* Our forest heritage is part of our past, our present and our future identity as a nation.

* It is important to maintain a rich tapestry of forests across the Canadian landscape that sustains biological diversity.

* Continued economic, environmental and social benefits must be maintained for the communities, families and individual Canadians who depend on the forest for their livelihood and way of life.

* The spiritual qualities and inherent beauty of our forests are essential to our physical and our mental well-being.

* As forest stewards, we must ensure the wise use of our forests for the environmental, economic, social and cultural well-being of all.

* All Canadians are entitled to participate in determining how their forests are used and the purposes for which they are managed.

OUR VISION

* All measures within our means will be taken to ensure healthy forests are passed on to future generations.

* We will fulfill our global responsibilities in the care and use of forests, maintaining their contribution to the environment and the well-being of all living things.

* Our needs will be met through developing and applying the best available knowledge, and through cooperation.

* Our forests will be managed on an integrated basis, supporting a full range of uses and values, including timber production, habitat for wildlife, and parks and wilderness areas.

* We will participate in setting objectives and priorities for managing our forests, based on how we value them and using the best available knowledge of their environmental, economic, social and cultural features.

- * A strong economic base for varied forest products, tourism and recreation will be supported within a framework of sound ecological and social principles and practices.
- * Advanced training, skills and education will be provided to those employed in forest-related activities, and stable, fulfilling employment opportunities will add to the quality of life in their communities.
- * Through consultation, mutual respect, sharing of information and clear and harmonious relationships among all those involved with forests, trust and agreement will be brought about and the effectiveness of forest conservation, management and industrial development will be improved.

OUR GOAL

Sustainable Forests

Our goal is to maintain and enhance the long-term health of our forest ecosystems, for the benefit of all living things both nationally and globally, while providing environmental, economic, social and cultural opportunities for the benefit of present and future generations.

OUR COMMITMENTS TO ACTION

We commit ourselves to apply our knowledge and expertise to fulfill our vision by, where applicable:

1. Improving our understanding of forest ecological processes, and enhancing our capacity to manage forests in a way that will maintain the biological diversity, productivity and resilience of

these ecosystems.

2. Planning for a range of environmental, economic, social and cultural values relating to forest use and conservation, guided by appropriate geographical and time scales.

3. Encouraging forest stewardship, continuously improving our silvicultural systems and practices, managing the economic, social and ecological impacts of fire, insects, disease, competing vegetation and climate change, and ensuring the prompt renewal of disturbed forests.

4. Heightening public awareness and knowledge of forests and of sustainable forest management, facilitating access to information on forests which meets the public's needs, and ensuring that the views of the public are considered in forest management.

5. Enhancing the long-term competitiveness of Canada's wood, paper and other forest-based industries, further developing economic opportunities for non-timber products and promoting Canadian goods, services, technologies and expertise in world markets.

6. Ensuring that processes used in forest management and product manufacture are environmentally sound, economically viable and socially acceptable, maintaining a framework of regulations and incentive measures that are conducive to long-term investments, and ensuring international recognition and acceptance of Canada's sustainable forest management regimes and practices.

7. Performing focused and collaborative science and technology.

8. Enabling the forest and forest-related workforce to contribute fully to, and benefit from, sustainable forest management opportunities, and improving the capabilities of forest-dependent communities to develop and diversify their economies.

9. Recognizing and making provision for Aboriginal and treaty rights, ensuring the involvement of Aboriginals in forest management and decision-making, consistent with these rights, supporting the pursuit of both traditional and modern economic development activities, and achieving sustainable forest management on Indian Reserve Lands.

10. Promoting regional landscape management and planning that includes private woodlots and increasing the environmental, economic, social and cultural benefits derived from private woodlots.

11. Maintaining, enhancing and demonstrating the contribution that forest ecosystems make to the health of the planet, and meeting Canada's commitments arising from international Conventions.

12. Seeking concrete, effective results in international efforts to improve the management of the world's forest ecosystems through cooperation among nations and enhancement of the international legal regime for forests, and assisting other nations to improve their capacity to sustainably manage their forests.

13. Preparing, before the end of 1998, public and measurable action plans in response to these commitments and appropriate to our respective circumstances and capabilities, and encouraging others to do the same.

We, the Canadian Ministers responsible for forests, endorse this Accord and undertake, on behalf of all Canadians, to support its spirit and to advance its goal.

We, the undersigned members of the Canadian forest community, endorse this Accord and pledge our cooperation, assistance and

energies toward the goal of sustainable forests, nationwide.

Ottawa, May 1, 1998 (reprinted April 1, 2001