

Ensuring the Health of the Oceans and Other Seas

INTRODUCTION

Canada is a coastal state with vital sovereign interests in three bordering oceans. It has the world's longest coastline (almost 250 000 kilometres) and second largest continental margin (roughly 6.5 million square kilometres). Its 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Fishing Zone, declared in 1977, and 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone, declared in the new Oceans Act in 1996, represent 37 percent of Canada's landmass. Approximately 6.5 million Canadians (23 percent) live in coastal communities, and only one northern Inuit community is not located on the Arctic coast. Many major cities are coastal ports or are located on the St. Lawrence/Great Lakes system, one of the world's longest and most heavily used waterways. Weather and climate, which are driven by oceans processes, determine the location and success of our important fishing, agriculture, and forestry industries. Canada's fishing industry is a major exporter of fisheries products and the mainstay of hundreds of small communities in coastal areas. Canada is richly endowed with freshwater resources—7.5 percent of the country's surface area is covered by freshwater.

The oceans sector generates more than \$7.9 billion of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP). Approximately 40 percent of that is primary and secondary production in fisheries and aquaculture, which contributes \$3.2 billion to the GDP. The remaining \$4.7 billion is divided among the marine shipping sector (33 percent), shipbuilding (14 percent), manufacturing and services (10 percent), and the oil and gas industries (4 percent). In addition to these direct impacts, the oceans sector generates significant indirect economic activity in other sectors of the Canadian economy.