

Acid rain, affecting central and eastern Canada the most, is the result of the release of sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) into the air. The gases are byproducts of industrial processes (power plants, foundries) and automobiles. In the air, they change into sulphuric or nitric acid and cause deterioration and death to lakes and trees when they fall as rain.

Canada has committed itself to reducing SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> emissions by half before 1994. But because the United States is the source of half the acid rain which falls on Canada, every effort has been made to negotiate an acid rain accord with the U.S. Recent proposals by the Bush administration for an acid rain control program have given Canada reason for optimism.

## Water

Canada has nearly 9 per cent of the earth's fresh water, and its coastline, the longest in the world, extends over 244 000 km. With the population concentrated in the south and the staggering increase in demand for water over the years, this resource is in danger. This is why Canada has adopted a national water policy to manage this precious resource sensibly. Already, there are drinking water treatment plants for nearly 80 per cent of Canadians. The governments of Canada and Quebec have agreed on a plan to clean up the St. Lawrence River, and Canada and the United States are working together to clean up the Great Lakes.

Canada has already protected almost 30 wetlands under the terms of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Significance. Together with the U.S., Canada has also prepared a North American waterfowl management plan to protect, conserve and restore bird habitats.

Canada is the largest fish exporting nation in the world, and, in 1986, it drew up a national policy on fish habitats, based on conservation and restoration principles. To protect fish resources, annual fishing seasons are being limited and quotas for catches are being fixed.

## Soil

Only a small part of Canada's landmass (5 per cent) is suitable for major crops. Of this land, 90 per cent is within 160 km of large cities.

Canadian soil, as a general rule, is quite productive. A growing number of farmers are using sound soil management methods of crop rotation, preservation of organic matter and biological control agents to counter acidification (acid rain and nitrogen fertilizers), salinization (excessive irrigation), pollution (pesticides) and erosion (poor farming methods).

In fact, the greatest present danger to most farmlands is urbanization. Because of this, more and more provinces are passing legislation to protect the most productive farmlands from pressures of development. The Canadian Land Inventory, one of the most exhaustive studies of its kind, encourages rational land use.

## Parks

Since 1885, Canada has established a network of over 30 national parks. The areas have preserved a number of remarkable ecosystems for present-day enjoyment and as a heritage for generations to come. Park wildlife is protected by the strictest poaching regulations in the world.

## The Fight against Pollution

Canada is exercising ever-closer control on the release and disposal of pollutants. The Environmental Choice Program, for example, allows the Canadian consumer

to choose products bearing a logo indicating that they are "environmentally friendly."

The Environmental Protection Act, adopted in 1988, has as one of its concerns the protection of Canadians against any form of pollution caused by toxic substances. The legislation covers the entire life cycle of the substances from preparation to elimination, including manufacture, transport, use and storage. Offenders are liable to fines of up to a million dollars or five years in prison. Polluters can also be forced to pay for the clean-up. Any Canadian can ask for an investigation of a presumed infraction or can instigate a court action.

To date, Canada has been reacting to ecological problems, but reaction is no longer enough. From now on, Canadians must anticipate, plan and prevent. Canada has embraced the concept of "sustainable development" as outlined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission). Canadians will do their utmost to ensure environmental concerns are an integral part of all economic, social and political decisions. They are resolved to take an active part in preserving their rich natural heritage so as to allow future generations to enjoy a healthy and productive environment.

*Environmental Choice*

*Program logo:*

*The intertwined birds indicate to the Canadian consumer that the product identified poses no risk to the environment.*



*The St. Lawrence belugas are one of the many threatened species that will benefit from the massive St. Lawrence River clean-up plan.*



Robert Michaud, "Grenn"