

Conserving Canada's 'Precious green mantle'

MOUNTING WORLD CONCERN ABOUT THE FATE OF THE WORLD'S FORESTS HAS MADE CANADA INCREASINGLY CONSCIOUS OF ITS OWN RESPONSIBILITIES IN PRESERVING THE FORESTS AND WOODLANDS THAT COME UNDER ITS CONTROL. RENEWING THIS NATURAL RESOURCE MAKES OBVIOUS SENSE FROM AN ENVIRONMENTAL POINT OF VIEW – AND FROM AN ECONOMIC ONE, TOO.

One billion new trees: that is what Canada will plant this year which is double the number planted in 1985. Moreover, in the last decade, expenditures on silviculture – which includes site preparation, regeneration, fertilisation, weeding and pruning – have quadrupled. While forests may be at risk in some parts of the world, in Canada they are not. Forest conservation there is taken very seriously.

One third of the world's land surface is covered by forests, and ten per cent of those forests – some

1.3 million square miles – are in Canada. With such a vast natural resource, there is a danger that it might be taken for granted. But in Canada there is widespread support for the concept of 'sustainable development' – the keynote of the Brundtland World Commission Report on Environment and Development.

In fact, Canada was one of the first countries to endorse the Commission's recommendations and to adopt the principle of sustainable development as formal government policy.

Early this year – as a reflection of the high place that Canada's forests have on the political agenda there – the Canadian government established a new department of forestry with the passage of the Forestry Act (1990). This is a significant step which acknowledges the importance of both the economic and environmental aspects of forestry. Additionally it is the first time any Canadian act of parliament has incorporated the principle of sustainable development.

Canadians, says Frank Oberle, the country's new Forestry Minister, are aware that their forests are 'a precious green mantle of vital importance to the entire planetary life support system.' The planting of one billion new trees this year is just one indication of Canada's commitment to its 'green mantle'.



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Photo: Dave Reels