

INTERIM PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS

Particularly in southern portions of Canada, development pressures placed upon the landbase are intense. As a result, areas proposed for protection can be impacted by roading, logging, mining, etc. before they have even been evaluated for their preservation value. Such activity can compromise biodiversity values and preempt protection options. For example, in British Columbia of the 122 candidate areas identified by The Valhalla Society in 1988 and proposed to complete that province's protected areas system, one third either been impacted by resource extraction and alteration by 1991 or were scheduled for resource extraction and/or roading within the next 3 years.²¹

The evaluation of individual sites can require several years of study before extractive resource and local economic considerations are reconciled and boundaries finalized. Furthermore, the time requirements for achieving systems completion clearly will take at least 8 years (until the 2000 AD target date) and likely longer (e.g. as for the National Marine Parks System). Therefore, unless development moratoria are put in place for candidate areas while they are evaluated, the values proposed for protection are likely to be impacted and often lost.

In undertaking its Protected Area Strategy, the British Columbia government has recognized this need for interim protection on some but not all locations. Quebec's move to identify a potential system of pristine areas in the north of that province by way of reserves presumably is intended to ensure interim protection while candidate site assessment is ongoing.

Such interim protection should be considered essential in those regions of the country where development could preclude preservation options during the time when they are being evaluated.

THE ENDLESS AGENDA: FACT OR FICTION

Critics of the protected areas initiative often state that it is impossible to reconcile economic and environmental needs. They claim that preservationists have an endless agenda which entails demanding that ever more areas be protected. The result of this, they say, will be vast job losses with mills, whole communities and even industries shut down.

There is a fundamental flaw to the argument. **The preservation agenda is and has to be finite given the very limited amount of pristine natural areas that remains in so much of Canada.** In the southern portion of the nation, development proponents already have access to 80% of the land base.