

Forestry

I would say that this motion, while so well intentioned and comprehensive, is well behind the leading edge of government policy and action on these two important fronts, both in forestry and environment. On acid rain, Canada is and has been on the move.

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this important issue.

Acid rain is a bilateral problem that must be addressed through bilateral channels. I will be talking about that. I also want to emphasize the phenomenon of the long-range transport of atmospheric pollutants and the potential accumulative affect it has on the environmental problems in my riding.

The environmental problems facing the North are extensive. The most serious include Arctic toxic pollution, ozone destruction, and the greenhouse effect. Canadians have made it clear that they want this country to take action on its many environmental problems, problems which are shared internationally. A new environmental responsibility is a political imperative, but it is also an undeniable necessity.

Our planet is diseased by man's environmental neglect. Human beings, indeed all living beings, are suffering the side effects. In Canada's North, we find that some Inuit people are ingesting unacceptable levels of PCBs.

Most environmental damage is irreversible and the accumulative effects are degrading the environment at an astounding rate. In the last 100 years, man has done infinitely more damage to the planet than since humans appeared on the scene millions of years ago.

Today, we are at an historical transition between a world inherited and one profoundly different, a global biosphere whose vital functions we have altered.

Do we want future generations to inherit an exhausted planet with which they will live at odds, or do we want to leave a heritage of health and harmony, a society with a clean house and values to keep it that way? Obviously, we want the latter.

Humans can adapt this value to live in harmony with the environment. It will require re-examination of materialism and modern development, but there is no reason to believe the challenge cannot be met.

By treating our environment right, we will be treating ourselves right. This is what will breed kinder and gentler nations.

Canada must lead the world in practising environmentally responsible statecraft. This means defining and implementing a strict concept of sustainable development, securing global co-operation to immediately eliminate critical problems, and fostering an environmentally-conscious populace through public education and involvement.

Ranging across some 30 per cent of the planet's land surface, forests have been described as "the climax ecosystems of a green and flowering world—the most exuberant expressions of nature." Forests perform protective, productive and regulative functions. They play a vital ecological role in the planetary recycling of oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon. They influence temperature and rainfall. They act as enormous sponges, collecting and distributing water. They protect the soil from water and wind erosion. They maintain biological diversity. They actively contribute to economic development.

Recently, however, new problems such as acid rain and other air pollutants have emerged which may stress forests beyond their regenerative capacities.

Forest management is the keystone of a natural resource conservation strategy.

Canada is a world leader in forestry. No country trades more extensively in global forest products, the latter accounting for 15 to 20 per cent of Canada's total export earnings. Over the years, Canadians have developed a broad range of modern forestry skills and techniques, and much of this technology has proved to be adaptable to tropical forest conditions.

Acid rain potentially may affect all sectors of the environment, including human health. The most persuasive evidence has been assembled for aquatic systems. It is now well known that freshwater bodies begin to show biological damage at about a very moderate level of acidity. It is feared that forests, in particular, are being damaged by acid rain and by associated pollutants such as ozone. It is also known that man-made materials are susceptible to damage from acid rain and from associated air pollutants.