

1. INTRODUCTION

In the face of the dramatic rate of landscape alteration occurring globally and nationally, completion of Canada's pristine areas system is increasingly being viewed as ecologically essential. Ideally, this system should enable representative and sustainable samples of the range of our nation's biogeographic diversity and pristine natural landscapes to be bestowed upon future generations. Governments across Canada, at the federal and provincial/territorial levels, as well as a wide spectrum of citizens organizations, have recognized the urgency of this task. They have proposed a prompt timetable by which to accomplish the systems completion so as to:

- Fulfill the promises in the federal Green Plan.
- Meet the recommendations of the United Nations Brundtland Commission.
- Meet commitments which Canada has made to the international community regarding retention of the long-term biodiversity of our portion of the planet.

Accomplishing completion of the Canada's pristine areas system in the most effective, efficient and timely manner raises several questions:

- How can the efforts of the various senior governments be linked to achieve this task? What should the roles at the federal and provincial/territorial levels be?
- What information is needed to achieve systems completion? What of this information is already available and where are the deficiencies?
- What are the issues which could impede or accelerate the pristine areas process and how might these be addressed?

To answer such questions a National Pristine Areas Strategy needs to be developed to ensure that Canada's natural heritage will be passed on to future generations. However, prior to the development of this, a preliminary assessment is required to identify:

- 1) The need and urgency for completing Canada's protected area system.