

Canada can contribute to saving life on earth. We can launch a new era. It's in the Canadian character to care for nature. It will help nature, the planet and ourselves to survive. If we ratify soon and take early significant actions, Canada will continue to lead.³⁵

The Committee was encouraged by the ratification of the Convention on 4 December 1992 and hopes that the Canadian government will continue to work toward the goals of the Convention at home and abroad. As Walter Reid of the World Resources Institute in Washington, D.C. told the Committee: "The convention is an important first step toward coordinated international action, but it falls short of what is possible and what is needed."³⁶

TOWARD A NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

A. Information Resources

The protection of ecosystems, and the species which inhabit them, is a prerequisite for sustainable development. The need for the industrial countries to deal with their own environmental crises is evident. There is also a need for unprecedented international cooperation as most of the world's biological wealth, and those that depend on it, reside in the developing tropical nations. Witnesses before this Committee suggested a number of ways in which Canada could assist in this cooperation.

Don McAllister gave testimony to support the establishment of a Canadian Biodiversity Centre. In his testimony to the Committee, he stated that Canada's federal capabilities in biodiversity research, rather than remaining scattered in several different departments, should be strategically and cost-effectively re-grouped. A central department or institution could act as a centre which would serve the needs of government and industry in conservation, resource management and biotechnology. It would focus on research, biological inventory, and the communication of knowledge on biosystematics and biodiversity both within and outside Canada. The Committee recognizes the complex nature of biological diversity. This necessitates the need for communication and networking between all levels of government, institutions and interested parties.

Recommendation No. 5

This Committee recognizes the importance of organizing Canada's scientific resources and expertise in order to optimize our capacity and effectiveness in meeting our international obligations under the Biodiversity Convention. The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada examine the feasibility of re-grouping agencies and professionals working in the area of biodiversity in various federal departments to ensure effective communication and networking.

Our witnesses agreed that a problem in measuring impacts on biodiversity is that there are few baselines: no one knows how many species exist in Canada or elsewhere. There is no country that has anything approaching a national inventory of biodiversity. Witnesses suggested that the acquisition of knowledge about species worldwide, as well as the communication of this knowledge internationally, would both assist in the preservation of biodiversity and in developing bio-industries.

³⁵ *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Environment*, Issue No. 47, 23 November 1992, p. 12.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.