

9. A PROPOSED NATIONAL PRISTINE AREAS STRATEGY

THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL PRISTINE AREAS STRATEGY

Whether it be the United Nations Brundtland Commission, the Federal Green Plan, or the initiatives of the various senior governments, there seems to be a solid consensus developing as to the need to complete Canada's pristine areas system. As well there is strong recognition that the loss of intact areas is occurring at such a rapid rate that unless prompt action is undertaken, even the 12% minimum target level may prove unattainable. Hence the willingness of governments to adopt the 2000 AD time line.

As a result, virtually all senior governments in Canada have committed themselves to protected areas systems completion. Currently the process of developing natural regions mapping and identification of candidate sites has been initiated by most jurisdictions. However if the range of preservation values associated with Canada's intact natural areas are to be comprehensively and adequately encompassed within the protected areas system, the various issues raised in Section 8 must be addressed.

To do this, it is proposed that a comprehensive National Pristine areas Strategy is required to ensure that systems completion occurs while the opportunity to do so remains. Development of such a National Pristine areas Strategy is a natural outgrowth of House Motion M-330 and Canada's commitment to the world in its signing of the Biodiversity Treaty.

It is the lack of such a pristine areas strategy which has resulted in the piecemeal and under-supported approach that has too often characterized efforts to protect Canada's ecological heritage. Lacking a national pristine areas strategy has meant that we now find ourselves in a situation where the chance to preserve extensive self-sustaining blocks of wilderness may have been lost in up to a third of Canada's 340 natural regions. As a society, we have been so single-mindedly focused on development that in the southern portion of Canada 80% of the landbase is already altered or committed to resource extraction. Only now are we beginning to consider what the long term ecological implications of this might be. The lack of a national pristine areas policy also is reflected in the extremely low level of funding we have provided to ensure the preservation of Nature: $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1% of the federal budget.

Given this situation, surely the question no longer is whether preservation activities will impede development but rather whether unrestrained development threatens long term ecological integrity and societal survival. Clearly, a reassessment of relative priorities with respect to pristine areas is