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Managing the forests: The Canadian experience

Canada's forests provide 14 per cent of the total value of shipments by Canadian manufacturing industries, 20 per cent of Canada's exports by value, and jobs for 11 per cent of the labour force.

In the next two decades, these forests will be the source of energy and chemicals as well as traditional lumber, pulp and paper products. To ensure adequate timber stands for future needs, forestry research concentrates on: management, regeneration and cultivation; protection from diseases, pests and fires; product research; and direct and biomass conversion to energy.

Canada's forests are about 80 per cent softwood. The federal and provincial governments own 94 per cent of the 3.4 million square kilometres of forested area. Of this, 1.4 million square kilometres are either unsuitable for industrial wood production or are in "single-purpose" reserves such as parks. The provinces own 90 per cent of productive forest lands. However, because of their location in areas with the most favourable climates and soils, Canada's 250,000 private woodlot owners supply 16 per cent of the wood harvested

each year. Although the federal government owns little forest land, its monetary, regional development, industrial efficiency, research and development, tariff and trade, and transportation programs affect forest management.

Co-ordinating research and planning among two levels of government and the private sector is a major challenge. In June 1979 the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers (from the federal and provincial governments) recommended a set of general principles for a national forest policy. The principles recognize the sole responsibility of the provinces for managing provincial lands and promote common goals and compatible policies. The interprovincial group hopes eventually to develop concrete measures that the various governments will adopt.

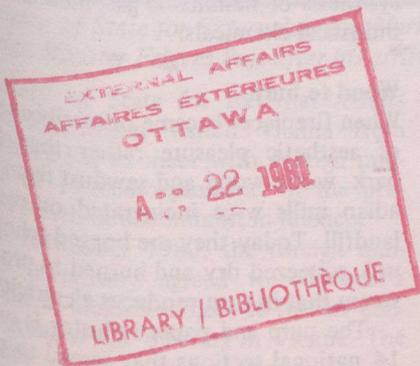
Management, regeneration and cultivation

In the early 1800s, when Canada began harvesting its wood to provide squared timbers and tall masts for the British navy, the forests were regarded as a self-replenishing resource. But by the end of that century, Canadians had realized that they would have to cut carefully and replant the forest. While seed trees have been left after cutting and the size of cuts has been limited throughout most of this century, the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers estimates that 12 per cent of Canada's productive forest land is inadequately stocked and that 100,000 hectares are being added to this backlog each year. Whenever a new forest area is harvested, 10 to 15 per cent of its land becomes unavailable for regeneration because of road construction.

While the productive forest area declines, the world demand for industrial wood in 1990 is expected to be 900 million cubic metres more than that of 1970 (540 million cubic metres for pulp and paper and 360 million cubic metres for wood products).



A British Columbia logger fells a tree.



One-hundred-and-thirty years ago this week... Britain transferred control of Canadian post offices to Canada, April 6, 1851. At the same time a uniform rate of postage was introduced across Canada.

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