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ADMINISTRATION OF CROWN FORESTS IN CANADA

Significance of the Forests

Canada is often referred to as a forest nation. Of its 1,714,000 square miles of forest acreage, more than 960,000 are productive forest land. Canadian forest industries employ more people and pay out more in salaries and wages than any other group of industries dependent on a single natural resource. Forest products consistently account for some 30 per cent of the value of all Canada's exports.

Constitutional Division of Authority

Under the provisions of the British North America Act, the administration and management of the forests were closely defined as provincial responsibilities. This situation has continued up to the present, with the Federal Government's responsibilities in forest administration being limited to the Yukon and Northwest Territories and such other federal lands as national parks, Indian reserves, certain military areas, and forest experiment stations.

There is also a strong tradition in Canada favouring public, or Crown, ownership of forests. Thus, of the total productive forest area, 82 per cent is provincial Crown land, nine per cent is held by the Federal Crown, and another nine per cent is privately owned. However, whether or not the bulk of the forest land is disposed of to private owners is a decision for each province to make. In fact, the ownership patterns vary greatly between the older parts of Canada and the newer. For example, in Prince Edward Island almost all of the productive forest land is privately owned; in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, 77 and 53 per cent respectively are privately held. In Alberta and British Columbia, private forest land amounts to three per cent and five per cent respectively. In Ontario and Quebec, where some 63 per cent of Canada's population is concentrated, private forest ownership runs at ten per cent and nine per cent respectively.

Throughout Canada, in varying degrees, there is a movement by the provinces toward the establishment of sustained-yield forest-management systems. The mechanics of these systems are designed to meet the needs of specific provinces, and in this sense they differ widely. The common goal, however, is to manage the forests in such a way as to ensure their continuous productivity in perpetuity -- in short, to manage for the common good.