

CANADA'S FORESTS — A VAST AND COMPLEX RESOURCE

Throughout Canada's history, forests have played a significant role in its evolution and have shaped its identity. Forests enrich the lives of all Canadians. They moderate climate, filter air and water, and offer a place of sanctuary and recreation. In addition, forests support an economic sector that contributes substantially to the wealth of every province and territory, providing jobs for more than 1 in 16 Canadians and sustaining almost 340 communities.

Forests are a dominant feature of Canada's landscape, covering almost half the country. Canada's forest land base is not only immense, it is also extremely varied. There are eight forest regions in Canada, ranging from the towering coastal rainforests in British Columbia to the sparse and slow-growing forests at the Arctic tree line. An array of forest ecosystems provides diverse habitats for an estimated 140 000 species of plants (180 species of trees), animals, and micro-organisms.

Of the 417.6 million hectares of forests in Canada, 235 million hectares are considered "commercial forests" — capable of producing commercial species of trees as well as other nontimber benefits. Currently, 119 million hectares of these commercial forests are managed primarily for timber production, while the remaining area has not been accessed or allocated for timber. The noncommercial forest land is made up of open forests comprising natural areas of small trees, shrubs, and muskegs.

Forest Industries in Canada (1998)

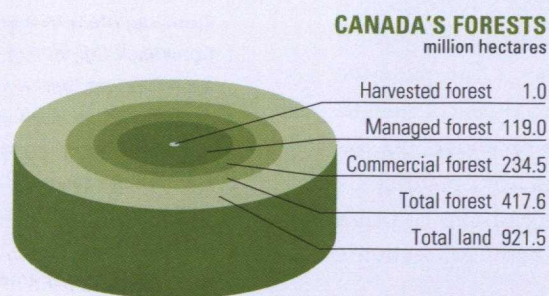
Value of exports: \$39.7 billion

Balance of trade: \$31.7 billion

Contribution to GDP: \$18.2 billion

Employment: 384 000 direct jobs
493 000 indirect jobs

Wages and salaries: \$11.2 billion



Roughly 0.4 percent of Canada's commercial forests are harvested each year. More than half of the area harvested is left to regenerate naturally, usually after some form of preparatory site treatment. Areas affected by fire, insects, and disease are also left to regenerate naturally.