

Forestry

general public is well aware, and often the first to be aware of these problems.

What does it mean for our forests? I want to refer to a statement from the Canadian Institute of Forestry, a most recent report from the Library of Parliament, and a recent report that was commissioned by the federal Government under the Canadian Forestry Service.

The statement by the Canadian Institute of Forestry sums it up best, as perhaps it would, being directly involved in the industry. They state that in eastern Canada, particularly in the sugar maple industry, the trees are suffering particularly from acid rain. I will make reference to a federal report on that matter in a few moments. The Canadian Institute of Forestry cite the year 1995 as when our forests will be facing some very severe problems as a result of acid rain. However, I believe the mounting evidence suggests that we undoubtedly have a problem now with acid rain in our forests.

Perhaps the most important problem we face in dealing with acid rain is the fact that the ecosystems of our forests are so complex. There are many different organisms, different plants, different kinds of trees, so that solving the problem of acid rain on some trees could cause severe problems elsewhere, undoubtedly many of which we are unaware.

The statement goes on to say that many authorities believe the primary effect of acid rain on forest vegetation is the disruption of tree nutrition. It is recognized that some positive effects have resulted because of acid rain. Since different chemicals react in different ways, there might very well be, in some sense, a positive reaction. However, the major problem with which we are faced is the result of a negative reaction. In fact, they go on to say in their statement that most of the effects are expected to be negative and include damage to the structure of the foliage, and accelerated removal of nutrients or moisture from the trees.

Some of the indirect negative effects include increased soil acidity, interference with the nitrogen cycle, accelerated leeching of nutrients from the soil and the release of toxic elements such as aluminium, which are normally

chemically bound in the soil but when released can reduce nutrient uptake by tree roots.

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One of the most tragic side effects of that is that it in fact weakens the trees. A weakened tree means that pests have a greater opportunity to invade and to make homes and continue the destruction of the forest as a result of the acid rain.

The federal Government report which I mentioned, which was produced for the Canadian Forestry Service in March of 1986, actually did some sampling and tests in the eastern Quebec area, and there is a map included with this report. It in fact cited that: "Growth rates of sugar maple, white spruce and red spruce have declined sharply since 1950". They are learning that that is directly the result of acid rain and the many problems that we have there.

I would just like to refer to a more recent report, a Library of Parliament report that was released earlier this year. It states the very important damage that is happening to our forests across the country, and in particular the sugar maples in eastern Canada. The report from the Library states that some 40 million hectares of forests in eastern Canada and another seven million in western Canada are seriously affected by airborne pollution.

That is an incredible statement in terms of the impact that acid rain is having on the forests. In fact, some people have called acid rain the AIDS of the trees. That is not to make light of a very serious situation but it points out the gravity of the problem and how immense it is.

A review of the report, which appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* cites in fact some indications of problems showing up in western Canada.

The report is quoted as saying that: "Half of the sugar maples are affected and 15 per cent of them are already dead," because of acid rain. It further states that: "If the decline continues at the current rate, only a handful of maple stands will remain in Quebec by the end of the next decade."

I know my colleagues on the Forestry and Fisheries Committee are certainly talking about the importance of forestry, not just the impact of acid rain on the forests, but the importance of forests in general to all Canadians. I know that in our discussions in the committee we have