

3. TOWARDS A CANADIAN PRISTINE AREAS STRATEGY

12% OF CANADA TARGETED FOR PROTECTION BY 2000 AD.

In response to the rapid loss of intact lands, the Federal Government has formally acknowledged the need to comprehensively and promptly complete Canada's protected area system. To this end, Motion M-330, unanimously passed by the Canadian House of Commons on June 17, 1991 says:

"That in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of preserving and protecting in its natural state at least 12% of Canada by working cooperatively with the provincial and territorial governments and assisting them to complete the pristine areas network by the year 2000."

Similarly, the need to achieve 12% preservation of the Canadian land base is formally addressed in the Federal Government's Green Plan which states:

"Canada's long term goal is to set aside as protected space, 12% of the country." ⁹

The Green Plan notes that currently:

"about 6.9% of Canada's land and freshwater area has been protected through the efforts of the country's different jurisdictions and conservation agencies. Today, 21 of Canada's 39 terrestrial regions are represented in the National Parks system but only two of Canada's 29 marine regions are adequately represented in the National Marine Parks system. In total about 1.8% of Canada's non-marine territory is protected in National Parks."

The timing of 2000 AD suggested in Motion M-330 is critical since - particularly in southern Canada - development pressures are intensifying, thereby further reducing the extent of intact natural landscapes. Meeting the preservation target by the year 2000 is an ambitious one: the amount of protected lands must be almost doubled from the current level. Put another way, while it has taken 100 years to build the Canadian pristine areas system to almost 7% of the national land base, the remaining 5% must be protected in just 8 years.