

Forests are subject to a large number of aggressors. Some are natural, such as insects, disease and fire. The spruce budworm alone has laid waste over 25 million ha in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick, and in the west another insect, the mountain pine beetle, infests some 200 000 ha every year.

The number of trees cut down each year has increased 50 per cent since the 1950s. Industry has overcut the forests, particularly the conifers in the Maritimes and British Columbia. A number of provincial governments, aware of the situation, have worked together with industry to introduce large reforestation programs and have regulated methods of timber cutting.

Air pollution also affects the forest. Acid rain is suspected of being a significant factor in the deterioration of broadleaf trees, especially maples. The presence of too much ozone can also lead to damaged trees and stunted growth.

Canada certainly remains rich in trees, but quality forests are becoming harder to find. Industry is forced further and further away in order to find quality trees or it must make use of less desirable species. There is also competition with countries where trees reach maturity two to four times faster than in Canada. Sensible forest planning and management, fighting pollution and protecting vulnerable forests can ensure a balance in the world's forest ecosystems. With this aim, the Canadian Council of Forestry Ministers developed the first national forestry strategy, derived from the World Conservation Strategy, which advocates integrating conservation and development. Canada is now seeking to use timber resources wisely, ensuring a lasting yield through improved techniques and conservation.

Flora and fauna

Canada is home to 200 species of mammals (5 per cent of the earth's total) and nearly 400 species of birds. There are also 82 species of reptiles and amphibians, over 100 000 species of insects and other invertebrates, and 3 300 plant species.

For thousands of years the aboriginal peoples of Canada depended on this flora and fauna. The hunting, trapping and farming activities of the European settlers soon began to interfere with this way of life. Huge buffalo herds were almost exterminated in the Prairies, and the wild turkey disappeared from eastern Canadian forests well before the end of the nineteenth century. Fortunately, the first animal conservation efforts began at this time, efforts that led to measures that are in effect today.