

Biodiversity,
Our Priority

Forests

Newsletter from Québec

NEWSLETTER FROM QUÉBEC

I am pleased to present the first issue of **FORESTS**, a newsletter published by the ministère des Ressources naturelles du Québec. In **FORESTS**, Québec will provide, in a simple format, a few news briefs about its forestry sector, for although it is an industrial country, Québec is also known for its forests. In the coming months, **FORESTS** will show you some of the many facets of the province's forest resources. I hope you enjoy your newsletter from Québec.



MFRN

Jacques Robitaille,
Associate Deputy Minister for
Forests, ministère des Ressources
naturelles du Québec

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QUÉBEC AT A GLANCE

The land mass of Québec, the largest of the ten Canadian provinces, covers nearly 1.5 million square kilometres, 758 000 square kilometres of which are covered with forest. Dotted with a million lakes, these forests account for 2% of the world's timber reserves.

Diversified and growing naturally over vast spaces, the forest plays a prominent role in the lives of Quebecers, who, in fact, own virtually all (90%) of the province's forested territory.



Louis Rioux

Canadian cabin at the end
of winter

A paradise for outdoor activities, especially fishing, camping and hiking, the Québec forest, the large public forest in particular, attracts thousands of nature enthusiasts every year.

The Québec forest is also the focal point of one of the main industrial sectors. In Québec, the harvesting and processing of timber are the mainstays of the economies of more than 250 municipalities, providing jobs for over 200 000 people.

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FORESTRY POLICY UPDATED

In force for a decade, Québec's forestry policy is being reviewed and re-engineered. The basic goal of the exercise, spearheaded by the government, is to better respond to the changing needs of society from the environmental, social and economic standpoints. In reviewing forestry policy, the government also hopes to incorporate into it the management of both wood material and other resources of the forest environment, while stimulating the interest of regional populations in forest development.

Assessment of the forestry policy is a vast operation that requires the collaboration of all forestry partners : the government, regional county municipalities, rural Québec, users of the forest, the forest industry and so on.

FORESTRY POLICY UPDATED (continued)

As part of the process, the government will even organize a **public consultation**, to be launched soon throughout the province. This will supplement a similar public consultation in Québec on the **inhabited forest**, which should result in a draft policy soon.

INHABITED FOREST POLICY BEING DRAFTED

The **inhabited forest** policy—now the subject of a public consultation—will be drafted by the summer. It will be in keeping with a government approach centred on the decentralization of public authority and on regional development. The strategic objectives of Québec’s inhabited forest policy are greater economic activity in the regions, sustainable forest development, the emergence of a new forestry partnership, broader participation by the public in forest management and the development of forest resources as a whole.

To date, some 15 pilot projects have been set up as part of the Québec inhabited forest concept. Funded by the government and supervised by a group of departments, including the ministère des Ressources naturelles, the projects are subject to integrated management, based on various experimental partnership models, in association with enterprises concerned with forest resources.

CRITERIA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In the wake of the *Earth Summit* in Rio de Janeiro, the Québec government amended its *Forest Act* to incorporate six criteria for sustainable forest development.

Among these criteria, which were approved by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, four have an ecological impact : the conservation of biological diversity, maintenance and improvement of the state and productivity of forest ecosystems, the conservation of pedological and hydric resources and the contribution of forest ecosystems to the Earth’s ecological cycles. The last two criteria are of social and economic import, since society derives myriad

benefits from sustainable development and must accept responsibility for it.

The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers has also developed more than 80 productivity indicators for evaluating sustainable forest management on the basis of the criteria. In Québec, the ministère des Ressources naturelles can now measure scientifically the relation between certain indicators and forest practices.

FOREST DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATION

To better ensure sustainable forest development, the Canadian forest industry has just established a certification process. The process was developed with the assistance of the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). Its adoption by forest enterprises and the owners of woodlands is voluntary.

Based on the six sustainable forest development criteria adopted by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, the CSA certification process is designed to harmonize with the new international ISO 14000 standards, particularly those concerning environmental management.

A forest enterprise that wishes to earn forest certification must demonstrate (to an independent agency) that its forest development system is truly sustainable. The system must (1) have rigorous development objectives, (2) provide for measures that guarantee the preparation, planning, execution and follow-up of development work, (3) aim for continuous improvement at all stages of the development process, (4) provide for procedures for informing the public of the development process, and (5) include mechanisms for seeking public consensus, particularly among Native peoples involved in forest activities.

ISO 14000 EAGERLY AWAITED

Canada's forest enterprises hope that all the ISO 14000 international standards will be adopted before the turn of the century and that the international certification process will be stepped up in 1997. The ISO 14000 standards constitute an international benchmark of primary importance in the effort to harmonize environmental management, since they approach sustainable development from a voluntary standpoint, targeting the life cycle of forest products and the integrated management of manufactured products.

The implementation of the ISO 14000 standards will ultimately serve the interests of consumers, who will then have the assurance that any enterprise that has met the standards is committed resolutely to protecting the environment, not just to taking corrective steps.

WHAT ABOUT AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION?

Québec is among the forest producers that believe an **international forest convention** would promote sustainable forest management because it would lay down obligations in terms of both forest management and forest products.

However, during the last meeting of the United Nations Intergovernmental Committee on Forests, the international convention concept did not win unanimous approval. The United States and a number of countries in the Southern hemisphere opposed it. Discussions resumed however in April, as part of the work of the Commission on the Sustainable Development of Forests. They will continue next June at the special session of the United Nations General Assembly to mark the fifth anniversary of the *Earth Summit* in Rio de Janeiro.

BIODIVERSITY : A PROTECTIVE STRATEGY

Québec has announced its **Biological Diversity Protection Strategy**. The implementation of the strategy comes on the heels of the commitment by Canada at the *Earth Summit* in Rio de Janeiro, where 150 countries signed a framework convention on biodiversity. Québec's strategy consists of nearly 200 measures,

many of which deal directly with the forest environment.

A number of the measures have been in force since 1994, the year that Québec introduced its **Forest Protection Strategy**.



The snowy owl, Québec's avian emblem

Public photo / MEF

QUÉBEC'S FOREST BIODIVERSITY ASSESSED

The ministère des Ressources naturelles has just completed an assessment of the biological diversity of Québec's forest environment. The assessment has helped to accurately identify the many facets of the forest environment and to establish the commitments to be made by the department to protect it. These commitments include enriching our knowledge of the forest, improving prevention in regard to the fragile or exceptional components of the forest environment, applying the **Forest Protection Strategy** in a sustained manner and developing ways to maintain biodiversity throughout the forest environment.



OVER 400 "EXCEPTIONAL" FORESTS

As part of its **Biological Diversity Protection Strategy**, Québec has so far inventoried more than 440 forest ecosystems that qualify as exceptional. The ecosystems cover a total of more than 30 000 hectares and are located for the most part in the Montréal, Ottawa Valley and Québec regions.

Exceptional forests include rare and old-growth forests and forests that serve as refuges for threatened species. They have a high ecological value and form an important part of Québec's forest and tourism heritage. Owing to the interest shown by the public and the scientific community in these forests, the government decided to introduce a conservation strategy to maintain these jewels in the forest landscape crown.



Jean-François Bergeron

A white pine and hemlock stand in Chelsoa, in the Ottawa Valley, where some species are more than 200 years old.

NATURAL VIRUS TO FIGHT INSECT PEST

Researchers have found, isolated and reproduced a natural virus to fight the **spruce budworm**, an insect pest that has caused major damage in coniferous forests. Since only biological means may be used in Québec to fight insect infestations, the ministère des Ressources naturelles initiated research with a view to using a natural agent present in the forest environment. Its work has led to the discovery of a natural insect virus, the Bonaventure strain of the granulosis virus. The virus has shown promising potential as an insecticide, and it does not damage the environment. In the last infestation, the **spruce budworm** destroyed the equivalent of ten years of Québec's timber harvest.



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