

*Biodiversity,
Our Priority*

Forests

Newsletter from Québec

Québec recently took another step in the forest system review process, as members of the National Assembly embarked several weeks ago upon their examination of the proposed review in a parliamentary committee.

The committee was created as part of an extensive general consultation process to give all stakeholders in Québec's forests, including representatives of the general public, an opportunity to modify the current forest system before the government introduces improvements in early 2001, in the form of amendments to its legislation and regulations.



Jacques Brassard, Minister of Natural Resources, explains the bill tabled in Québec's National Assembly, which will lead to a renewal of the forest system.

QUÉBEC'S ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES STUDY THE FOREST SYSTEM

The current forest system came into being in the mid-1980s, and has since been amended by the government on several occasions to reflect changes in the situation of the forests and the evolving needs of Québec's society. However, four years ago the ministère des Ressources naturelles undertook a major review of the system, to bring it into line with the needs of Québécois for sustainable forest development.

The ministère des Ressources naturelles launched extensive public consultations throughout Québec in order to understand the nature and scope of these needs. At the public hearings, the government received more than 500 briefs containing hundreds of recommendations from Québécois in every sphere of society and every sector of forest-related activity.

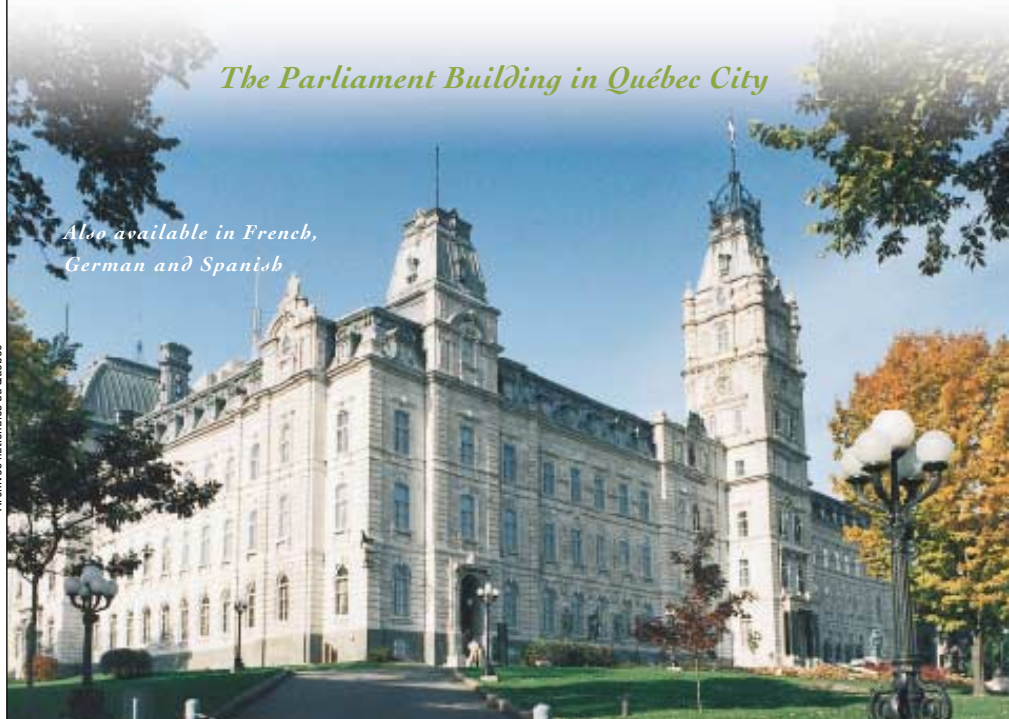
Many of these recommendations were retained by Jacques Brassard, Minister of Natural Resources, and now form an integral part of the means he is proposing to renew the forest system. Last spring, Minister Brassard tabled a bill in the National Assembly containing a number of new measures designed to improve the system, and these are the measures currently being studied in the National Assembly committee's general consultations. At the end of this process, the Minister will adjust the bill based on the comments made at the hearings. Members of the National Assembly will then debate the bill before approving amendments to the current forestry legislation and regulations.

In the end, the renewal of Québec's forest system will have taken nearly four years and will have mobilized the democratic processes of Québec's institutions at every level.

The Parliament Building in Québec City

*Also available in French,
German and Spanish*

Archives nationales du Québec



A FOREST SYSTEM FOCUSED MORE DIRECTLY ON THE NEEDS OF THE POPULATION

Although Québec's forest system is already considered to be one of the most democratic and avant-gardist in Canada, the Québec government has nevertheless decided to renew it so that it will better reflect the needs of Québécois for sustainable forest development. It was with a view to improving the current system that Jacques Brassard, Minister of Natural Resources, tabled a bill in the National Assembly last spring. What, then, are the goals of this bill, and what are the aims of Québec's next forest system?

A national forestry consultation policy

First, the bill is designed to speed up the democratization of forest management by involving more Québécois in the process. To do this, it proposes the implementation of a national forestry consultation policy, together with public access to the forest management plans and reports prepared every year by timber supply and forest management agreement holders for the ministère des Ressources naturelles. The bill also requires agreement holders to involve certain sections of the population (Native communities, outfitters and regional county municipalities) in the preparation of their general forest management plans.

Better protection for the forests

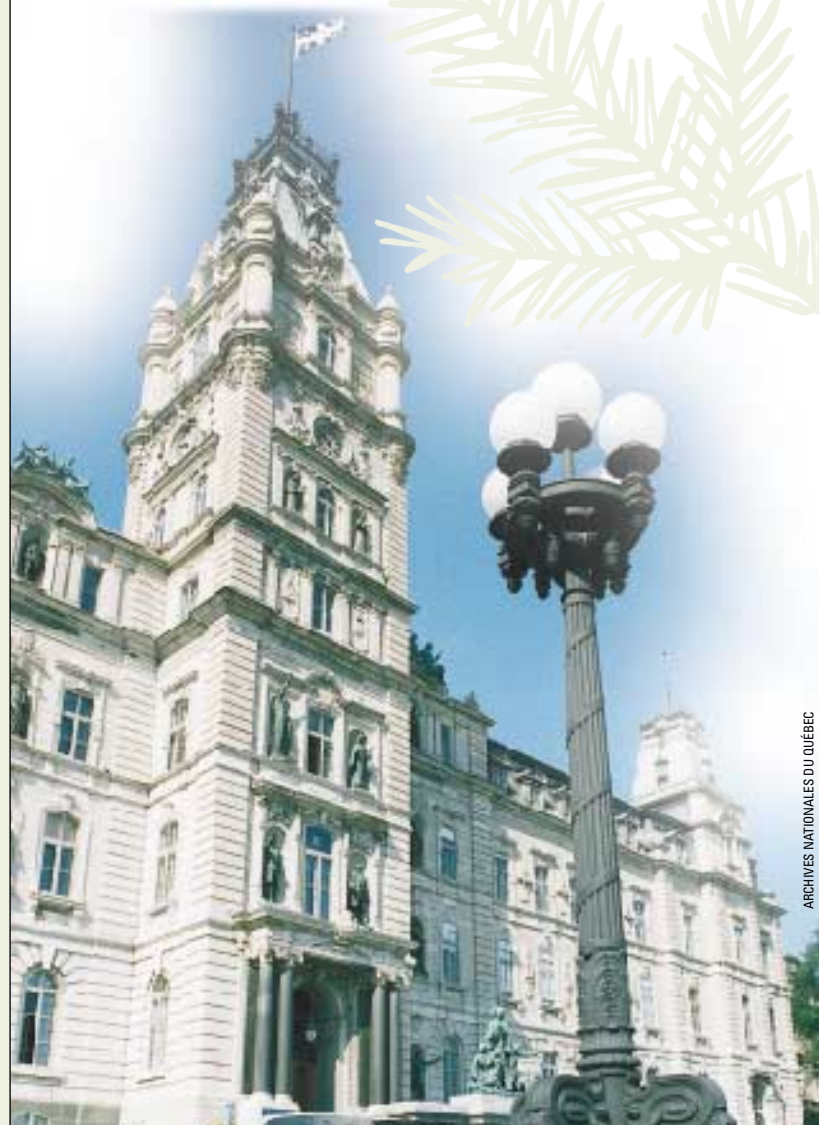
In addition to making the process more democratic, the Minister of Natural Resources wants to provide better protection for Québec's forests. Accordingly, the bill recommends the introduction of a permanent "northern limit" by the year 2002, beyond which logging will no longer be allowed. Additionally, forest companies will be subject to new requirements limiting the impacts of logging on landscapes, wildlife habitats and biodiversity, and a number of specific objectives for the protection of exceptional forest ecosystems will be set.

Other protective measures in the bill include more stringent controls and monitoring of forest operations carried out by agreement holders, bigger fines for offenders, and publication in the newspapers of the names of non-compliant companies.

Better forest management

The bill is also designed to improve forest management and operations planning. To achieve this dual objective, the Minister of Natural Resources wants to make all agreement holders in a given area jointly responsible for their forest management strategy. They will also be required to evaluate the work done and submit a review to the Minister. In addition, the bill proposes a new way of dividing the forests and a new increased yield policy for certain areas of Québec, to be introduced by the year 2002.

Lastly, the Minister advocates maximum use of the timber harvested in Québec's public forests. To achieve this, the bill proposes that organizations not holding wood processing plant permits (e.g. cooperatives, Native communities) should be allowed to carry out forest management work. It also contains provisions authorizing one-time harvesting of timber allocated but not harvested, facilitating the salvage of wood going to waste and authorizing the use of the public forests for purposes other than mill supplies (maple syrup production, fruit growing, etc.).



A POWERFUL ECONOMIC LEVER

The most recent forestry statistics¹ published by the ministère des Ressources naturelles paint an interesting picture of the role of the forests in Québec's economy.

For example, they show that the annual value of forestry sector shipments is \$19.6 billion, or 15.3% of Québec's total manufacturing sector



MRN

activity. The forests also make an important contribution to employment, with 83,000 jobs, or nearly 15% of the 500,000 jobs available in Québec's manufacturing sector as a whole.

The pulp and paper and related products industry is one of the most dynamic elements of the forest sector, with an annual shipment value of some \$10 billion, mostly in exports. In 1999, for example, more than 7.7 million tonnes of the 10 million tonnes produced by Québec's pulp and paper industry went for export, including 5.9 million tonnes to the United States. Québec is one of the largest pulp, paper and board producers in Canada, and its 64 mills are responsible for more than 40% of Canada's total production in this sector.

However, the timber industry is not the only one supported by the forests. Forest-based leisure activities and tourism are also major players in Québec's economy. The forest wildlife sector alone generates spin-offs of more than \$2.5 billion every year, and the forests support a host of small regional industries, including wild fruit picking, trapping and maple syrup production, a significant leisure activity but also an industry generating annual spin-offs of more than \$135 million.

¹ Data taken from *Ressources et industries forestières – Portrait statistique 2000* available on the Web site of the ministère des Ressources naturelles du Québec: <http://www.mrn.gouv.qc.ca>

PREPARATIONS FOR THE WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

Preparations for the 12th World Forestry Congress are now well underway in Québec City. Québec's national capital will be hosting this major event in 2003, and is expecting more than 5,000 participants from 175 countries.

The 2003 12th World Forestry Congress is being organized jointly by Forestry Canada, which is part of Natural Resources Canada, and Québec's ministère des Ressources naturelles.

The World Forestry Congress is held once every six years, and is considered to be one of the most important world forums for forest-related issues.

The 2003 World Forestry Congress Web site can be consulted at:

www.cfm2003.org or www.wfc2003.org

Québec City, one of the most picturesque cities in North America.

In the background is the famous Château Frontenac hotel.



COMMUNAUTÉ URBAINE DE QUÉBEC



SIFORT: LARGE-SCALE FORESTRY INFORMATION

Québec has recently taken a leap forward in knowledge acquisition and large-scale analysis of its forests (more than 750,000 km²) thanks to a group of forest engineers, geographers and cartographers who have developed SIFORT, an information tool that provides rapid geographical and spatial representations of Québec's forest lands.

The SIFORT geographical database consists in a mosaic of mathematically-constituted stable rectangular polygons. Each polygon, also known as a "tessera", corresponds to an average area of 14 ha, or the map equivalent of 15 seconds X 15 seconds. Some 5.5 million tesseras are needed to map all Québec's forests.

The basic principle of SIFORT (the French acronym for Tessera-Based Forestry Information System) is simple: by obtaining forestry data from the ten-year forest inventories carried out by the ministère des Ressources naturelles, allocating them to the appropriate tesseras and then superimposing the tesseras, it is possible to obtain all kinds of information on forest development over a given time frame.

SIFORT was originally designed to observe and anticipate the development of forest stands, both spatially and temporally, following forest fires and insect epidemics. However, it soon became a highly versatile tool, and can now analyze an infinite range of data used for general forest management activities in Québec.



For Georges Pelletier of SOPFEU (left) and Yves Dumont of Québec's ministère des Ressources naturelles, it is both easy and inexpensive to manage forest data using SIFORT.

PREVENTION OF FOREST DIEBACK: A PLAN OF ACTION

The New England states and Eastern Canadian provinces have launched a joint plan of action to reduce the impacts of acid rain on the environment. The plan is designed, in the medium term, to counter the effects of acid rain in the north-east American states and Eastern Canadian provinces, including Québec. It is based on a number of joint programs involving both countries, and touches upon scientific research, knowledge acquisition, control measures and public information and education, to raise awareness of the consequences of pollution.



Québec, involved in the plan of action through the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers, has experienced the impacts of acid rain since the early 1920s. Observations suggest that its maple stands have been particularly affected. Despite improvements to their health in the last decade, they continue to show signs of dieback, and researchers from the ministère des Ressources naturelles have found that the acid deposits received by many such stands are well in excess of the amounts they are able to tolerate.

FORESTS is published quarterly by the Québec government in English, French, German and Spanish.

PREPARED BY:

Ministère des Ressources naturelles
5700, 4^e Avenue Ouest
Charlesbourg (Québec)
G1H 6R1
Canada
Tel. (418) 627-8609
Fax (418) 643-0720

Internet: <http://www.mrn.gouv.qc.ca>

Coordinator: Jean Dumas

legal deposit
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec
ISSN 1206-6729
RN2000-3023

