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Organización
de las
Naciones
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para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

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A VISION FOR CANADA'S FORESTS: 2008 AND BEYOND

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

In Canada, the responsibility for forests is shared among federal, provincial and territorial governments. The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM) was established in 1985 as a forum in which the two levels of government work together to address areas of common interest and to exchange information.

The *Vision for Canada's Forests: 2008 and Beyond* is an example of such cooperative work, developed in a time of change and opportunity for Canada's forest sector. Structural changes and global climate change present unprecedented opportunities for innovation. The proposed *Vision for Canada's Forests* provides a roadmap to take advantage of those opportunities.

The *Vision* is intentionally high-level and non-prescriptive and aims to increase awareness of forest issues at home and abroad, encourage domestic and international engagement, and facilitate partnerships among traditional and non-traditional forest interests.

While the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM) is leading the development of the *Vision*, interested parties—including governments, national-level aboriginal organizations, industry, universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the public—have also contributed input and advice.

By engaging all who have an interest in the future of Canada's forests, this inclusive and transparent process is intended to result in a document that truly captures *Canada's Vision* for its forests. The *Vision* will be Canada's sixth forest strategy. It is intended to have a 10-year term (2008-2018); to be reviewed at regular intervals; and, updated as necessary to ensure continued relevance.

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Within the context of sustainable forest management, the *Vision* identifies two priorities that deserve particular focus: transforming the forest sector, and mitigating and adapting to climate change. The two priorities were selected as being the most significant issues confronting Canada's forests and forest sector now and in the coming years. The *Vision* recognizes that forest sector transformation and climate change are expected to be long-term issues that require long-term solutions. In addition, sector transformation and climate change mitigation and adaptation are national in scope and have the potential to affect every aspect of Canada's forests and forest sector.

Sustainable Forest Management

1. Sustainable forest management is the overarching basis for achieving the *Vision*. And, because Canada is already a leader in sustainable forest management, the *Vision* statement boldly represents Canada's highest level aspiration to "be the best in the world in sustainable forest management and a global leader in forest sector innovation".
2. For almost two decades, Canada has demonstrated unflinching commitment to the sustainable management of its forests. Only by following the principles of sustainability will the forest sector be in a position to overcome current challenges and take advantage of emerging opportunities. Success will lie in the sector's resolve to abide by the principles of stewardship, innovation, partnership, transparency and accessibility.
3. The sector also recognizes that to demonstrate true leadership in sustainable forest management, it will need to acknowledge the evolving nature of the ecological, economic, and social objectives which define sustainability. On this basis, it will be able to continuously improve its environmental record; give due consideration to social implications of collective actions; and, maintain and expand the contribution of forest resources to wealth and prosperity.
4. More specifically, Canada is committed to promoting well-established and new environmental objectives. Maintaining the variety, quality, and extent of forest types; conserving biodiversity, soil and water resources; and enhancing the resilience of forests by managing carbon balances and adopting innovative forest protection strategies are all objectives that will continue to be pursued.
5. Economic objectives are equally important. For example, forest industries provide almost 5% of all Canadian jobs. In order to maintain and expand the significant contribution of forest resources to the country's economy, it will be essential to encourage innovation and investment in the ideas and processes that transform them into products. It is expected that considerable innovation will occur, including a new emphasis on renewable energy resources, the development of a biomass economy, and new market mechanisms for environmental goods and services. Traditional forest industries will also continue to play an important role in the country's economy.
6. Some of the most notable changes in forest management practices in Canada, over the past decades, include greater emphasis on public participation and consideration of an increasing array of social values. Moreover, since most Canadians live in urban and suburban settings, urban forests contribute significantly to our collective well-being by reducing the negative effects of air pollution, conserving energy, reducing soil erosion, and providing wildlife habitat and a place for recreation and spiritual renewal. For all these reasons, healthy urban forests are an essential component of sustainable forest management in Canada. Outside of urban areas, there are also many rural communities that depend on forest resources for their livelihood, and about 80% of

Aboriginal communities are located in forested areas. All of these communities have a say in how forest resources are managed in Canada.

7. In sum, the synergies required to advance the sustainability of Canada's forests are complex. Each component—healthy forests, vibrant communities and profitable forest-based businesses—depends upon the others. Advancing sustainable forest management will require the participation of all the players in Canada's diverse forest sector.

Priorities of National Importance: Forest Sector Transformation and Climate Change

8. Within the context of sustainable forest management, there is an emerging consensus that two issues require immediate attention. The forest sector needs to further transform, and the impacts of a changing climate have to be considered in every aspect of the management of Canada's forests.

9. Climate change and transformation are closely intertwined. While climate change is a driver of transformation, transformation can also help Canada better mitigate and adapt to climate change. Given their mutual linkages, these issues cannot be addressed in isolation.

10. Both issues will likely change the composition of the forest sector, as well as the way it interacts with the forests. In so doing, they will provide abundant opportunities for action. They will require the use of multidisciplinary approaches to overcome the insulated policy silos of forestry, education, labour, and energy. This will be essential to solve complex challenges that cut across our economy, cultures and ecosystems.

11. In order for Canada to take advantage of the unprecedented opportunities presented by these changes, promoting innovation will be essential in creating new ideas, products, markets and processes. In addition, it will be critical to strengthen the relationships amongst the various groups that make up the forest sector, and to engage new partners.

Forest Sector Transformation

12. Among the many opportunities that lie ahead, the creation of a renewable biomass economy—including bio-energy, bio-plastics and bio-chemicals—presents potential benefits in terms of both transformation and climate change.

13. For many centuries, timber from Canada's forests has been used to produce wood and paper products. However, Canada's forests hold the potential to be a source of numerous non-timber forest products and services – such as resins, oils, mushrooms, berries, fisheries, hunting and tourism – and bio-products such as antibiotics, plastics, glues, bio-insecticides, plant-derived pharmaceuticals, bio-chemicals, and industrial enzymes. In addition, the use of residues from wood processing activities also presents great opportunities for the sector. For example, sawdust, liquid waste from paper production, and harvesting and processing residues can be converted into renewable fuels and value-added products, including ethanol, artificial flavors, and fertilizers.

14. For this to happen, creative changes in public policies and institutions that manage resource allocation, including access to timber resources and to other forest resources, will need to take place. For example, new markets can be developed to capture the value of environmental goods and services like wildlife habitats, biodiversity, air quality, and water purification. While it will be critical that the forest sector as a whole embraces and captures this potential, Canada's

forest commodity producers will continue to contribute significantly to the country's economy, wealth, prosperity and well-being.

15. Another critical component of a successful transition will be improving access to education and technical training to ensure adequate recruitment and retention of workers with the appropriate skills, and assisting communities faced with recent changes in the forest industry.

16. By taking advantage of all these opportunities, Canada will maintain a prosperous and sustainable future for its entire forest sector.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

17. The use of forest resources can also assist Canada in better mitigating and adapting to a changing climate. For example, trees can be used to produce energy and to capture and trap carbon from the atmosphere. The use of wood to generate energy can also have positive impacts by reducing the dependency of Canadians on fossil fuels and helping to reduce Canada's net emissions of greenhouse gases. Without it, the needs of society would have to be met through other, typically more energy and fossil fuel intensive products such as steel, aluminum, plastics and concrete.

18. Canada has the highest per capita forest area in the world. These forests can contribute to a climate change mitigation strategy by providing opportunities to: reduce deforestation, expand carbon sinks by planting trees on previously non-forested lands, and changing forest management practices and policies. According to United Nations experts – i.e. the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – sustainable forest management strategies that maintain or increase carbon stocks while providing society with a sustainable supply of timber, fibre and energy hold the largest sustained mitigation potential.

19. Reports from the IPCC and the Canadian research community have also clearly documented the potential effects of a warming climate on Canada's forests and forest-reliant and Aboriginal communities. Broadly speaking, large-scale fires in western and northern forests are likely to increase. Earlier snowmelt in western catchments areas may also affect late-season stream flows, and forest insect populations that were limited in their distribution by cold winter temperatures now seem more likely to spread.

20. Many Aboriginal and forest-reliant communities are already adapting to the impacts of climate change. These communities, in conjunction with governments and industry, are adapting their cultures and economies and are taking steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in an attempt to improve environmental quality. While these mitigation and adaptation efforts are being implemented, additional action will be required, including the development and implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies that reduce the vulnerability of communities and take advantage of new opportunities. To be successful, access to information and opportunities to share best practices will be critical and will contribute to strengthening cooperation and coordination amongst local and regional groups.

21. The time has come to include consideration of climate change in all aspects of sustainable forest management. Increased cooperation and collaboration will be instrumental in making Canada a world leader in innovative policies and actions to respond effectively to the impacts of climate change on its forests and forest sector.

Achieving the *Vision*

22. Achieving the *Vision* requires the synergies of collective, voluntary action. No single entity can require the others to act, but all who care for Canada's forests must act if we are to sustain our forest ecosystems, forest industries and forest communities. We recognize commitment to a shared vision and voluntary, collective action as essential precursors to achieving our goals.

23. For its part, the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers will champion the *Vision* by developing greater public awareness of the document and by communicating progress on advancing sustainable forest management in Canada. It will also continue to pursue multi-jurisdictional solutions to issues that are national in scope (e.g., the National Forest Pest Strategy, the Canadian Wildland Fire Strategy, and the Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management). Furthermore, the Council is planning to sponsor or co-sponsor meetings of key forest sector players every three years to coincide with the review of the *Vision*. The purpose of the meeting will be to showcase initiatives undertaken by the forest sector, to build partnerships among interested parties, and to inform the review process.

24. As the primary landowners, provinces must take the lead in implementing the *Vision*. Working closely with stakeholders, governments are responsible for the stewardship of Crown land on behalf of all Canadians. Individual provinces will act within the context of their own circumstances to promote sustainable forest management by developing and implementing innovative policies, programs, and practices to encourage forest sector transformation and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

25. The Council will also actively promote the engagement of interested parties, without whose participation the *Vision* will not be achieved. Jurisdictions across Canada offer many opportunities for the public to participate in sustainable forest management. Examples include advisory committees on forest practices and individual Crown licenses, land-use planning processes, and provincial and territorial task forces on special issues.

26. In addition to government-sponsored opportunities to participate, organizations and citizens can become involved in sustainable forest management-related meetings and other initiatives sponsored by community groups, the business community, environmental organizations, Model Forests, Aboriginal organizations, professional associations, and recreational interest groups. Indeed, this *Vision* relies upon Canada's diversity of voices and venues to accomplish its goals.

27. Achieving our *Vision* and goals requires communicating progress continuously to the national forest sector and the international community. The Council will use existing mechanisms such as the national report on Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management, and State of Forest Reports to communicate progress to both national and international audiences.

Conclusion

28. This is a time of change and opportunity for Canada's forests and forest sector. The Council firmly believes that the challenges ahead and the changes required, hold unprecedented opportunities for innovation. Canada's forests have never been more important than they are today. They hold potential solutions to the challenges of securing renewable energy resources, mitigating and adapting to climate change, sustaining our forest enterprises and maintaining vibrant rural communities.

29. Achieving the proposed *Vision* will depend on the collaborative actions of all the people and organizations that create value and seek wealth and well-being from Canada's forests. The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers is leading the development of this proposed *Vision* and championing its goals, but it relies upon the ideas, values, and actions of all concerned Canadians to achieve the opportunities that lie within our grasp.