



The Forests of Québec

Vast and Fascinating

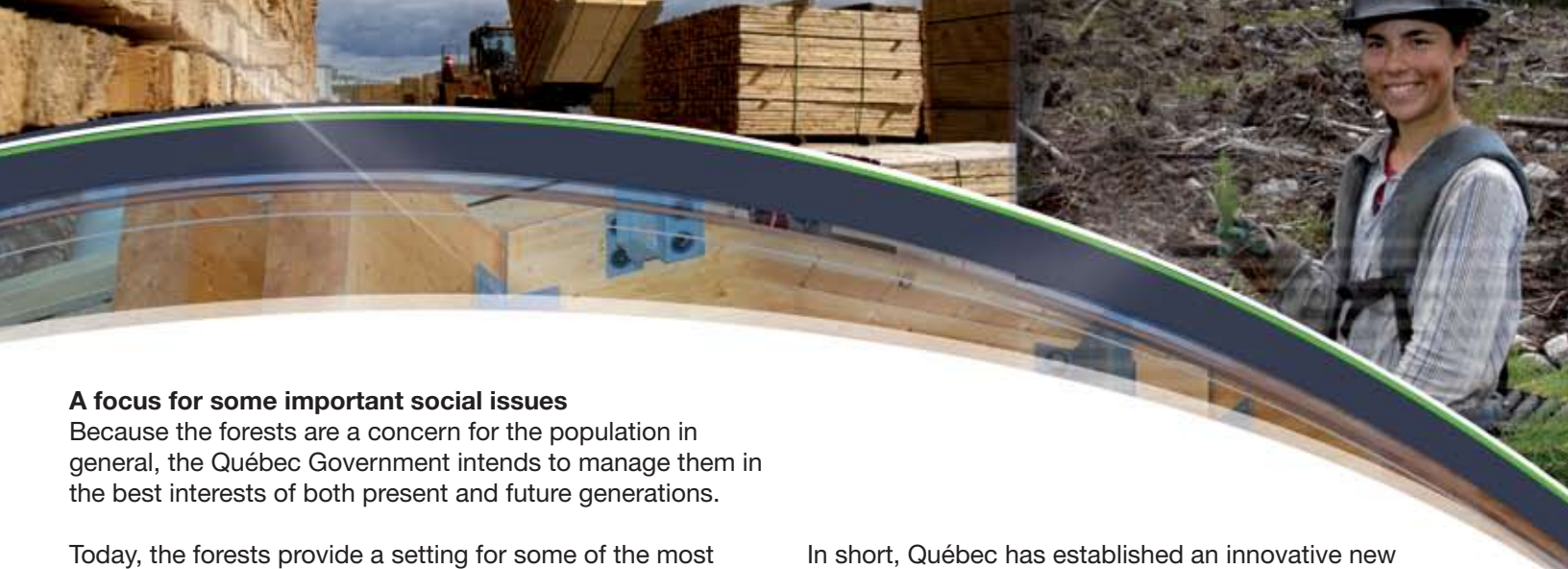
Forests are everywhere in Québec. Vast, majestic, intersected by thousands of lakes and watercourses, they play a major economic, social and environmental role.

Québec's forests account for 20% of the total Canadian forest and 2% of the world's forests. In Québec, dense forests cover an area of 761,100 km², equivalent in size to the territories of Norway and Sweden combined. This area is subdivided into three different forest types from south to north: the hardwood forest, the mixed forest and the continuous boreal forest. Some 70% of the total area is productive (commercial) forest.

In addition, the forests are one of the main economic motors for Québec's regions. The forestry sector, which includes forest management, timber products and pulp and paper production, is a pillar of the Québec economy, with over 400 primary processing plants found throughout the regions and approximately 80,000 direct jobs in the forestry and wood processing sectors. The forest generates one out of every six jobs in outlying regions, and another 1.6 indirect jobs in the rest of Québec's economy. Over 250 Québec municipalities depend directly on forest-related activities.

Québec's forests also provide habitats for more than 200 bird species and 60 mammal species, while the lakes and watercourses are home to approximately 100 fish species.

In Québec, 135,765 km² of land, or 8.14% of the total territory, is classified as protected areas. Québec's network of protected areas is based on an ambitious target to include high-quality, representative samples of overall biodiversity.



A focus for some important social issues

Because the forests are a concern for the population in general, the Québec Government intends to manage them in the best interests of both present and future generations.

Today, the forests provide a setting for some of the most important issues of the modern era. Sustainable development, regional development, international competition, climate change, the cohabitation of local communities and Aboriginal nations, and workforce availability and training are all significant concerns for the workers and communities that depend on the forest for their livelihood and their pride.

A vision for the future

The Québec Government has decided to review the foundations of its forest regime to reflect new knowledge, new integrated management, conservation and regionalization trends, and the difficulties currently facing the wood processing sector.

Public consultations have been held at the provincial and regional levels, and with Aboriginal communities, on a Green Paper setting out the vision proposed by the Government to give new impetus to the entire forest sector. In March 2010, after three years' work, the National Assembly unanimously passed the *Sustainable Forest Development Act*.

The new Act strengthens the ability of the State to manage Québec's public forests and protect the public interest. It gives the Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune (MRNF) responsibility for preparing and implementing integrated forest development plans, and for carrying out checks in the forest. It emphasizes the role played by regional institutions and gives the MRNF broad latitude to take local aspirations and needs into account. The Act provides for auctions of timber from public forests, ecosystem-based development, and the designation of locally-managed forests.

In short, Québec has established an innovative new forest regime designed to meet the main challenges of sustainable development and the ongoing viability of the forest heritage while promoting the economic and social development of Québec and its regions.

Québec's boreal forest

Québec's boreal forest covers an area of roughly 1 068 400 km², of which about 30% has been set aside for forest production.

In Québec, the largest woodland tracts are located in the boreal forest, which is a pillar of economic and social activity in the regions. Among other things, the boreal forest contains wetlands that filter millions of litres of water.

A significant percentage of this forest is not available for productive forestry, partly for environmental protection reasons, but also as a result of the Québec Government's decision to introduce a northern limit for timber allocations in 2003. In 2006, a multidisciplinary scientific committee drew up a program to gather data on the northern environment in order to specify, in 2012, the parameters for a northern limit for timber allocations based on the best possible knowledge about the criteria for sustainable forest management.

All logged areas in the public forest are restored to production, and priority is given to forms of management that protect established regeneration. Where regeneration is insufficient, reforestation is carried out as needed.

Every year, harvesting affects less than 1% of Québec's entire managed public forest.

