

# The state of public forests and sustainable forest management in Québec

## 2008-2013 Summary



### Sustainable management for a healthy forest

The public forest is part of the heritage of the Québec population, which is anxious to develop it while ensuring its ongoing viability. For the last twenty years, Québec has been applying sustainable forest management (SFM) methods, based on the standards of the Montréal Process, which are internationally recognized as being some of the most stringent.

The 2008-2013 Summary is intended to inform the general public and decision-makers about the state of the public forest and the results obtained in terms of SFM. Québec's department of forests, wildlife and parks (the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs) is required to report publicly, using the powers and resources at its disposal, on whether the objectives targeted by the forest regime have been achieved, and on the tools used for that purpose. The Chief Forester is responsible for producing an independent, transparent report, and this Summary was filed in November 2015.

The elements that had the most influence over the state of the public forest and sustainable forest management during the period 2008-2013 were mainly connected with the weakness of export markets for timber products, the measures taken to preserve biodiversity, the revision of the forest regime and the support measures provided for the forest sector.

The ten key messages below summarize the main observations made by the Chief Forester.

### Ten key messages from the Chief Forester

1. Overall, I note that **the public forest is in a good state and that Québec has made progress in sustainable forest management over the period 2008-2013**. However, specific issues remain a challenge in some areas, along with the need to maintain a focus on the objectives of the forest regime during the implementation phase.
2. Still from a general point of view, **I am optimistic about biodiversity conservation and the ongoing viability of the ecosystemic functions of the forest environment**. The land remains forested, human pressure is relatively low, natural and human disturbance is less

extensive than in the past, and protection measures have been put in place to reduce any remaining discrepancies.

3. I note that, under the management strategies currently applied, **the quantity of forest capital is stable**. However, **I am concerned by the priority given to harvesting the best timber and stands**. This leads to a gradual deterioration in the quality of the timber stock and a reduction in the volume economically available for harvesting in the future. It also explains in part why the amounts harvested are below the allowable cut, a result that is accentuated in a period of market weakness.
4. I note that **the forest sector has been greatly weakened by the economic crisis of recent years**. The situation has not been conducive to the creation of markets for species and grades of timber that are in less demand. The same applies to value-added products. **Better conditions would have promoted the use of timber**, since supplies from the forest and demand from processing plants would have been in balance.
5. I also see that **more intensive cultivation of the forest remains a marginal approach and that economic analysis is not widely applied**. This limits the ability to create value from the forest while meeting sustainable development objectives in areas other than timber production.
6. I am concerned by the fact that **post-harvest monitoring and the measurement of the actual effects of silvicultural treatments are only partially carried out**, limiting the validation of the hypotheses used to support a high-quality allowable cut calculation and ongoing improvements from one planning cycle to the next.
7. Despite measures to support the forest sector during this period, I see that the weak market has led to a significant number of plant closures and job losses, the devitalisation of forest-dependent communities, and a drop in enrolment for vocational, college and university programs in forestry. **The future workforce and the attractiveness of forest-related jobs remain major challenges for the forest sector**.
8. I note that, over the last few years, **several actions have been introduced to increase the involvement of the population and First Nations in sustainable forest management**. In addition to information, awareness-raising and delegated management, implementation remains a challenge and abilities must be developed for both promoters and participants.
9. The forest is a complex adaptive system that must be managed as such in order to ensure its sustainability in a context of uncertainty and rapid climatic, social, economic and environmental change. **Research and the development and application of knowledge are key elements in this process**.
10. Sustainable development is a journey rather than a destination. To assess if the progress to date has met expectations, there should have been **a coherent and comparative set of tools including: a management framework, criteria, indicators, targets, monitoring, result assessments and feedback for ongoing improvement, all of which are still lacking**.

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