

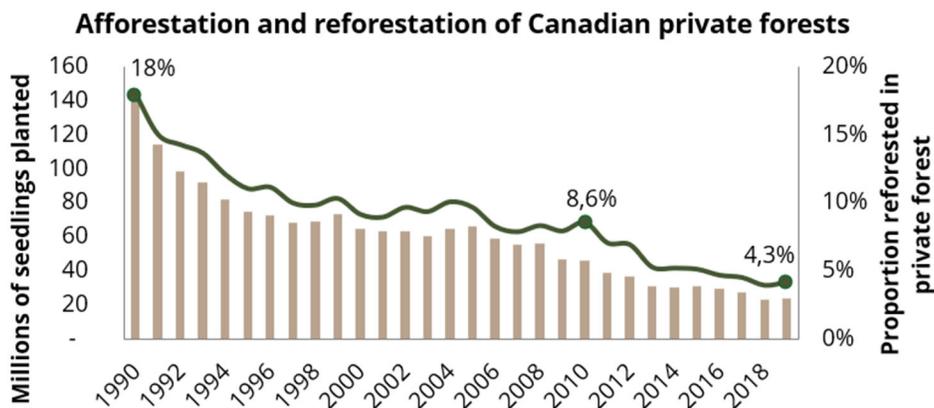


Forest Landowners Key to Success of Two Billion Tree Goals

Plantations in private forests

Private forests have always been a prime location for silviculture, particularly for the establishment of plantations. Private forests are generally located in the south, on fertile land with a warmer climate, close to wood processing plants, near the workforce and a well-serviced road network. Afforestation and reforestation of disturbed or harvested sites in private forests have always been part of the solutions advocated to increase and ensure the harmonious development of the forest cover while generating ecological services and socio-economic activity for many regions of Canada.

Over time, several billion forest seedlings have been established in private forests across the country. Between 1990 and 2019, no less than 1.8 billion trees were planted in private forests, representing 9.3% of all forest seedlings planted in the country during this period. Nevertheless, reforestation efforts have largely faded over time, among others, by a significant decrease in reforestation efforts in Quebec. In Canada, reforestation of private forests has declined from over 140 million seedlings in 1990 to less than 25 million 30 years later. Reforestation efforts have mainly decreased in private forests during this period while more and more seedlings have been destined for public forests. In 2019, just 4.3% of Canadian reforestation efforts were destined for private forest land, down from 18% in 1990.

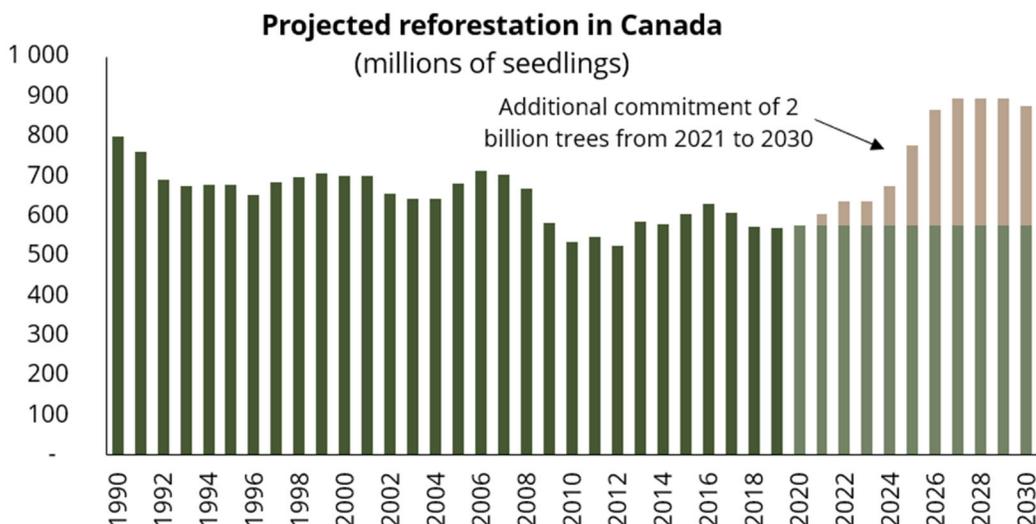


Source : National Forestry Database, Canadian Council of Forest Ministers

2 billion trees initiative

The federal government has decided to focus on forests to meet its ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets because growing trees absorb and sequester carbon. This program is the cornerstone of the federal Natural Smart Climate Solutions Fund.

Unveiled during the 2019 election campaign, this program aims to plant an additional 2 billion trees across Canada by 2030. As an indication, 572 million seedlings were planted in 2019 across the country as part of regular reforestation activities. Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), which manages this program, has \$3.16 billion to ensure these afforestation, reforestation and forest habitat restoration goals are met over the decade.



Sources : National Forestry Database, Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, 2 Billion Trees Commitment, Natural Resources Canada

To achieve its goal NRCan will be required to partner with provinces, territories, non-governmental organizations, Aboriginal communities, municipalities and other stakeholders. This initiative will require the production of seedlings, site preparation, afforestation, reforestation and forest habitat restoration, as well as monitoring to ensure survival of the plantations. The



costs will be significant and as such, the federal government is seeking partnerships with credible organizations to share the costs and increase the potential for success.

The need to adjust program parameters to realize the potential of private forests

Beyond afforestation, which is primarily intended to encourage the development of new forest cover, it turns out that reforestation will be allowed for the regeneration of forests that have temporarily lost their tree cover due to a natural disturbance. This is good news considering the forest fires and pine beetle epidemic in the West and the spruce budworm epidemic in eastern Canada. The need to increase production and planting of seedlings is critical to meet these challenges.

The government is also considering funding afforestation and reforestation projects that will ultimately increase carbon sequestration or promote biodiversity in managed environments. This will be an opportunity for forest owners and producers interested in multi-species plantations, which are less conducive to normal forestry activities.

Nevertheless, other opportunities will have to be considered, as current reforestation needs in private forests are not being met. An average of 26 million additional seedlings per year will have to be made available to forest owners if additional seedlings distributed are equitably shared, according to the proportion of productive forest area by land type.

Under the current parameters, this initiative does not include funding for the reforestation of seedlings that regenerate private forests harvested through normal commercial forestry operations. This means that the government's first priority is to increase the amount of forest area in Canada in urban, peri-urban, agricultural and forest areas.

The federal government has every interest in relaxing its conditions in order to rely on forest producers who have demonstrated over time their ability to reforest while sharing the costs with the government. Moreover, reforestation and afforestation in private forests or marginal agricultural areas are probably less expensive than in public forests because of their proximity. In addition, afforestation initiatives in urban or peri-urban areas generally require very large trees that are expensive to produce and plant.

The contribution of the forestry sector to the fight against climate change

Yet the forestry sector can make a significant contribution to improving the country's carbon balance through forest management and wood products. Planting and silviculture reduce the vulnerability of forests to insect outbreaks as well as fires, and increase the amount of carbon sequestered in managed forest stands (including plantations). Indeed, 1 m³ of wood alone contains 0.9 tonne of CO₂. In addition, harvesting and processing wood into forest products (such as lumber) with a low carbon footprint stores carbon over the long term. Best of all, these wood products can replace building materials with a higher carbon footprint, such as concrete, aluminum, steel or plastic. Indeed, 1 m³ of wood, used in substitution of other building materials, on average reduces the emission of 1,1 tonne of CO₂. Cumulatively, 1 m³ of wood produced and transformed into building materials reduces CO₂ emissions by about 2 tonnesⁱ.

Thus, reforestation of private forests as part of traditional forestry activities and afforestation of marginal agricultural lands should also be favoured if the Canadian government wishes to meet its climate change objectives. A preferred avenue might be to allow multi-species reforestation of harvested areas to ensure the restoration of forest habitat, where otherwise monoculture would be favoured.

These are considerations that should at least be explored given the reforestation potential of private forests.

Canadian forest owners' expectations

The expectations of Canadian forest producers for this program are matched only by their ability to contribute to it. If the federal government wants to make this program a success, it will have to find ways to adjust its parameters in order to exploit the full potential of private forests.

The Canadian Federation of Forest Owners (CFFO), wishes to:

1. Brief the ministries on the opportunity offered by relaxing the parameters of application of the program in order to ensure the reforestation of private forests targeted by usual forestry activities;
2. Encourage Federal and provincial governments to establish partnerships, where possible, to leverage existing channels to funnel available funds and distribute seedlings. In the meantime, for-profit and non-profit organizations, municipalities, Aboriginal communities and even individuals can apply directly to the program ([see eligibility requirements](#));
3. Initiate discussions with farmers' organizations to promote afforestation of marginal and abandoned lands and develop new production capacity in nurseries to meet new needs;
4. Ask governments to invest now in nurseries to increase the production capacity of seedlings for the reforestation of private forests, and urge them to invest in the whole silviculture supply chain from the initiation of youth tree planting programs to growth management.

ⁱ [Interdisciplinary research center for operationalization of sustainable development](#). Accessed February 15, 2022.