POSITION ON ILLEGAL LOGGING

What is Illegal Logging?
Illegal logging takes place when timber is harvested in violation of the relevant laws of the country of harvest. The term illegal logging is often used to describe forest activities that result from corruption and criminal activity.

Why is it an Issue?
Illegal logging represents a serious global problem that undermines good governance and legal forest activities. It can have significant economic, environmental and social consequences such as the loss of wildlife habitat and public revenues, or threaten the livelihoods of forest workers. In many developing countries illegal logging causes deforestation and forest degradation, which in turn contributes to global greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, lower prices for forest products made from illegally harvested timber undermine fair competition and distort global markets. In 2002, the World Bank estimated that illegal activities may account for one-tenth of the global timber trade. In addition to helping attain environmental and other goals, Canada can protect its trade interests by promoting the principle of legality world-wide, as well as supporting sustainable forest management (SFM) and good forest governance.

The domestic context:
Over 93 per cent of Canada’s forest lands are publically owned. Canada has world-class forest practices and skilled resource professionals, and is recognized internationally as a leader in SFM. Forest activities are planned and monitored in an open and transparent manner. Canada’s governance structure for SFM includes well-developed public policies, legislation and regulations, enforcement, regular monitoring, and public reporting. When forest-related laws are broken, legal penalties are applied through the justice system. Logging operations that do not meet legislated standards are also subject to a variety of penalties and fines.

The international context:
A significant portion of illegal logging occurs in developing countries. Illegal logging has direct and underlying causes. The direct causes are often associated with a country’s inability to apply its existing forest legislation. The underlying causes arise from broader problems such as poverty, corruption and lack of established and adequate capacity, combined with consumers who are uninformed about, or indifferent to, the source of their wood purchases.

Commitment to Combating Illegal Logging
Canada supports a multifaceted approach to address the direct and underlying causes of illegal logging. Specific actions are as follows:

1. Support third-party forest certification as a tool to promote legal and sustainable forest management, both in Canada and internationally.

2. Participate in international discussions related to SFM and illegal logging, including discussions under the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

3. Explore a range of policy options which Canada could take to halt the importation and trade of illegal forest products, taking into...
consideration the initiatives and experiences of other countries.

4. Support the international Criteria and Indicators (C&I) processes which are designed to monitor, assess and report on progress toward SFM. Continue to participate in the Working Group on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests, also known as the Montreal Process (www.rinya.maff.go.jp/mpci/).

5. Encourage the international community to use internationally accepted criteria and indicators for SFM in their processes for the procurement of forest products.

6. Collaborate with the World Customs Organization, the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), and national customs and wildlife enforcement agencies around the world to explore ways to tighten border controls to combat illegal logging and the illegal trade of timber. For instance, Canada has taken a lead role in promoting the idea of a digital coding system that international customs authorities could use to standardise, organize and capture data on plants and animals in trade. This would enhance the ability to intercept illegal wood and wood products from protected tree species. Canada will also continue to work to ensure the efficient and effective application of existing domestic legislation\(^1\) controlling the import and export of timber species and products of concern under CITES and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNCTOC). In 2002, Environment Canada introduced a guide to identify tropical woods controlled under CITES.

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\(^1\) Canada meets its CITES obligations through the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act (WAPPRITA). The Act forbids the import, export and interprovincial transportation of listed species unless the specimens are accompanied by the appropriate documents (licences, permits).