

Alberta declares pine beetle emergency

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[CBC News](#)

The Alberta government has declared a pine beetle emergency, saying the infestation is moving into the province at a rapid pace from British Columbia.

Sustainable Resource Development Minister Ted Morton said Wednesday that by calling the situation an emergency, his department can tap into money from Alberta's Sustainability Fund, from which funds can only be withdrawn under certain criteria, such as emergencies like fires or droughts.

Morton hopes that the emergency declaration may also help the province get more money from the federal government.

The cash would be used to conduct aerial surveys and to hire ground crews to cut and burn infected stands of trees. But Morton won't give an estimate as to how much might be needed.

Mountain pine beetles began invading parts of Alberta four years ago.

The Grande Prairie area in northern Alberta could have as many as three million infected trees, Morton said. Pine beetles are also a growing concern in the south

"If you look where it is in British Columbia, you can see where it threatens to come across," he said. "In fact, we're already finding infected trees in the Spray Lakes areas and Crowsnest Pass, so we're going to have a busy summer."

The beetles are less than one centimetre long, but they are one of nature's most efficient predators.

Several thousand beetles burrow under the bark, laying eggs and destroying a valuable, 80-year-old tree within days. When the tens of thousands of eggs hatch, they decimate the next stand.