

It is a good opportunity to do that today. The minister of forests is encouraging me to mention forestry in a few comments which of course I will be pleased to do. I would do that in encouragement to the minister. I know he is going to hang on my every word today about the importance of forestry to our area.

There are a couple of areas I would like to mention. I am pleased that the minister is here because a couple of the issues affect the community for which we share representation. I know he will be taking notes. I hope he will follow up on these as I have already done to the minister in writing.

In particular on forestry, just a bit of a nudge to the minister. He knows there have been discussions in Prince George regarding the Forestry of Canada Research Centre located in Prince George currently on the federal government experimental farm which unfortunately, from the federal government's point of view, through attrition and cuts and transfers really is being slowly chopped away to the point where most unfortunately we may lose a real presence by the federal government in terms of a role in agricultural policy and research. There have been many transfers of officials to Kamloops.

I am afraid we are going to reach a point in this operation where to some degree the government is going to say there is nothing left. It will then be in a position where it will have to close the whole shop down. That would be most unfortunate.

I know the minister is aware of that. He is aware of it from a departmental point of view as well, given the location on the experimental farm site near the airport in Prince George and the discussions I have had, and I know he has had, about attempting to relocate that facility to the new campus of the University of B.C. where I was pleased to attend the sod-turning with Premier Harcourt and of course the first convocation of the newest university in Canada. The minister of forests was present as well.

That is really great news for Prince George and the whole region of northern British Columbia. It is important because of what the minister's department can do in making a contribution to the operation of that university. I am talking specifically about the transfer of the Forestry Canada operations now on the experimental farm to the university site. There is a close co-operation

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that can be held with the collection of research capability and learning at the campus and also of course with the project locating right nearby which the minister has been to as well, Forests for the World, which is a display of the different tree species we have in the area. It gives the public an opportunity really to come and see just what having a forest operation is. It is located near the campus. I would urge the government and the minister to move as quickly as possible in making an announcement that we can have that Forestry Canada operation, small as it is, moved to the campus site.

The minister had appointed a committee and had promised to report some months ago. I have written to the minister to ask for more details on that and as to when we might get a decision. It is very important. It goes to the heart of what we are talking about here today. It is not grand schemes of a constitution. We are really talking about the nitty-gritty of government, some of the very basic spending plans that government can have in our ridings. I mention that as one of them.

As well, the minister should be tabling soon I hope a state of the forest report flowing from the legislation to create his department. Also, Mr. Speaker, you know as well as I do that we have expressed our concerns in this House before about the government's cuts to forestry programs across the country. I think of the FRDA program in British Columbia, which is a concern to all of us. We do not see Forestry Canada removing itself as a player in terms of co-operation that it can play with the provinces in forest renewal, in forest management. In particular following the world summit in Rio on the environment, it is all the more important that we maintain a presence, I argue, in terms of Forestry Canada. I know that is a subject of some debate and discussion on the Constitution.

I hope that in the final analysis when a discussion is held about whether we are going to have a forest department that the premiers, the Prime Minister and this House do not just throw out the work of many of us in our first days here as parliamentarians to bring forward legislation in this House to create that department. I would argue that there is probably a need today more than ever, given our demands on our forests from an international environmental perspective, for a federal forest department.