

*Government Orders*

Canada is becoming increasingly urbanized. It is therefore urgent for Canadians to understand the economic, environmental, ecological and even social importance of the forests for every one of us, whether we live in a large city or one of the 350 communities in Canada for which forestry is the main livelihood.

At a time when other countries are losing their forest heritage and Canadians are expressing new concerns about theirs, we can expect vigorous debates over the next decade. In this context, it will be important for Canadians to reach conclusions supported by logical arguments after weighing all the known facts. Only in that way will passion and concern result in practical and productive policies and programs.

I see a federal Department of Forestry which will be a leader in deepening this national awareness, a leader in informing everyone of the necessary facts in order to reach consensus nationally and regionally.

Canadians insist more and more that their forest heritage be used for a variety of purposes. This is very positive and it is most encouraging.

Our country, Mr. Speaker, stands out because of its concern for the environment. And in Canada, this concern applies especially to the forests. Many businesses and governments and even forestry professionals took time to recognize this reality.

Increasingly, Canadians are stressing the need for recognition of the many ways in which our forests can be put to good use, and not just logging. Our new department of forestry will help us give this factor serious consideration as part of the forestry equation.

Perceptions are also important outside politics, Mr. Speaker. I hope that creating a department of forestry will also help get rid of two erroneous ideas that are prevalent among Canadians. In fact, these preconceptions are related and persist, despite a heightened awareness of the importance of our forests.

The first erroneous perception is that our forests are in decline and represent an interesting aspect of Canada's past, a past we are leaving behind us as quickly as progress permits. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth.

Competent management of our forests is not only essential to our future as Canadians. It is also consistent with our responsibility to other nations and to mankind.

The second perception is prevalent among Canadians who would like Canada to have a high tech image. These people see our forests as a sector overrun by poorly-trained loggers whose saw and ax are the embarrassing relics of a distant past.

The proposed department of forestry will be in a position to change that perception. It can show the public and even politicians that they have a unique opportunity to combine advanced technology and modern science in meeting the challenge of managing our rich forests.

We are doing so already, Mr. Speaker. However, very few Canadians are aware of the tremendous progress we have made in applying biotechnology, communications techniques, computer programming and lasers to the forestry sector.

Mr. Speaker, the most important task of the new department will be to play a leading role at the national level, in order to heighten our awareness of the forestry sector and make us more knowledgeable on the subject.

The second task of the new department of forestry, Mr. Speaker, will consist in forging links between the various partners, organizing concerted action and co-ordinating resources.

To meet the challenge facing the forestry sector requires a range of resources that are beyond the capabilities of the individual entrepreneur.

It is only by combining the know-how and resources of the Federal and Provincial Governments with those of the private sector, that we may achieve that goal. This is the necessary condition which we must meet if we are to remain in front or even part of the pack.

The Federal and Provincial Governments are well aware that we must all act together and that if we want to take up this challenge, we will have to seize every available opportunity.

Through the Canadian Forestry Council, Governments have made their relation official. They have created a framework which will make it possible for universities, the private sector, trade unions and vested interests to co-operate towards a common goal.

The Federal Government should be able to communicate efficiently with the other industries. It should give Canada the impetus it alone can provide. To achieve this purpose, we need a full-fledged department with a full time Minister.