

Government Orders

If intensive forest management is to be practised in Canada, the Department of Forestry must exercise a much stronger role in co-ordinating, managing, controlling and implementing the forest resource development agreements.

At present, intensive forest management is not being strongly encouraged. Only one of the six forestry agreements which expired in March has been renewed. This has caused numerous headaches for the provincial reforestation programs which have had to cut back and eliminate replanting programs. Some provinces have even had to destroy or have come very close to destroying their seedlings because of flaccid commitment by the federal government.

[Translation]

The Liberal Party supports the renewal of federal-provincial forestry agreements. We urge the federal Government to transfer control over these agreements to the Minister of State (Forestry) (Mr. Oberle). Quite frankly, the forestry sector needs strong representation within Cabinet, not just cosmetic representation. Furthermore, if the Government takes the trouble to create a department of forestry, it should be given the necessary resources instead of having its budget cut.

• (1610)

[English]

The government claims that it is providing the forestry sector with the leadership it needs, but its words and actions do not necessarily correspond. Last May, the forestry minister indicated during a meeting of the Standing Committee on Forestry and Fisheries that his government will be reducing its share of the federal-provincial forest resource development agreements.

Canada's forestry sector is at the crossroads. It can continue with present harvesting techniques and witness the depletion of its timber supply, or it can ask its government to take the lead by providing it with a strong department complete with the manpower, financial resources and the resolve to repair the damage already inflicted upon the environment. This needs courage, it needs commitment and determination on the part of the federal government.

However, the budget papers tabled by the Minister of Finance show a drop from \$1.4 billion for regional

development spending during the current fiscal year to about \$1 billion annually for the next four years. That is hardly the courage, the commitment and the determination needed to ensure Canada's future.

Everybody agrees that the forestry sector needs to be improved if it is to remain competitive with the rest of the world. According to the Auditor General's report, three considerations directly affect decisions involving investment in reforestation. First, the vastness and great dispersal of the forest demand necessitates large expenditures for forest management. Second, federal investment in forestry usually also involves the provinces. Third, the growing cycle for mature forests involves a time span of between 40 to 80 years. If the government claims that it wants to take the lead in the forestry sector, then its decision to manage and invest in forestry must reflect a commitment to a long term view of the resource.

Not only is the government's commitment to forestry agreements somewhat shaky, current program planning and delivery procedures do not ensure that funds are being spent according to the guidelines in the agreement. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, each agreement contains guidelines which describe methods for carrying out various types of forest development work.

The Auditor General's report of 1988 reviewed five agreements and determined that these guidelines are not consistently followed. For example, between 1985 and 1987 the Canadian Forestry Service found that \$10.5 million of the \$15 million in plantation expenditures under one agreement was spent on sites not in compliance with distance guidelines.

Moreover, the Auditor General noticed that only two of the five agreements surveyed contained local and regional plans needed to outline the work to be done under the agreements and how this work related to over-all forest development strategies. In short, implementation guidelines do not provide an adequate mechanism for national control purposes; and this is more proof that the forestry department has to be given the responsibility for the forestry development agreements.

Moreover, forest resource development agreements do not contain clear standards for collecting data on reforested areas or for the follow-up work. If proper care is not provided as a result there is a high risk that seedlings planted during the agreements will not survive.