

FORESTS OF CANADA : THE FEDERAL ROLE

FOREWORD

We feel that important new ground has been broken for forestry in Canada with this Report. It poses real and practical directions by which *sustainable development* can be translated *from concept to reality* in Canada's forests.

The first ever full-fledged federal Department of Forestry was established with unanimous support from the House of Commons in 1960. Little more than five years later, for a variety of causes and excuses, that department was gone. Today, the reasons for having such a federal department are far more compelling because of the new imperatives of sustainable development.

We share the persuasive logic of this Report for a new and expanded federal role in forestry. Our conviction has been fostered by its thrust, which describes *the mission, the mandate and the means* by which federal leadership can become effective in the pursuit of sustainable forestry development in this country.

One fact seems abundantly clear, the Canadian public is insisting, and none too soon, upon a binding commitment from its governments to take effective action for the practical application of the concepts of sustainable development. Because our forests hold such a commanding position in both Canada's economic and environmental perspectives, *the obvious place to start with sustainable development is in those forests.*

The forest resources of Canada have served as the backdrop for much of our history. Although that initial record was painted largely in economic terms, there has been a rising consciousness in recent years of the environmental values associated with forest land. Fish and wildlife, fresh water, recreational access and wilderness areas have become new priorities, in parallel with timber. Additional demands have been made to consider the implications of whole forest ecosystems, biological diversity, and such contentious issues as the process of clear-cutting and the harvesting of old-growth forests.