

country through the purchase of up to 20 CL-215 fire bombers from Canadair.

Mr. McDermid: Bail that company out one way or the other.

Mr. Roberts: I am sorry that the Hon. Member opposite does not seem to understand the importance of this step and the importance of the forest industry in Canada. I would like to stress that this important step takes place within the context of the general forest strategy which the Government brought forward and implemented. It is an example of how the Special Recovery Capital Projects Program can help strengthen some of these industries in Canada which are the foundation industries of this country. We can help strengthen the resource sector, help it through some of its current difficulties and respond to the long-term opportunities it provides to our country.

● (1140)

Approximately 18 months ago the federal Government brought forward its forest sector strategy paper. It outlined the key areas where there is a need for action on the part of the provincial Governments, the private sector and the federal Government. We isolated those areas in the forest industry structure where there is a special need for Government assistance, a need to upgrade human resources in the forest sector and a need to strengthen the marketing systems for it.

There is an essential need to focus on the problem of reforestation and provide programs which will lead Canadian industry to transform itself from an industry that is simply exploiting a given resource to one which treats the forest as it properly should be treated, as a renewable resource. We need policies to put into place the reforestation which the forest industry so badly needs. The fourth key area of action which we saw that had to be met was the need to fight disease and fires throughout Canada.

The federal Government has acted in each of those specific, crucial areas of the industry. On the human resources side it brought forward an initiative of over \$15 million for the next three years to assist through block grants to forest faculties across the country, and through a human resources program that is awarding 20 Canadian forestry scholarships this year and up to 50 by 1985-86. We brought forward a program under the federal internship program to employ 300 forestry students over the summer. We increased contract research to universities. Overall, there is a \$15 million program to strengthen the human resources side and meet the human resources needs of the industry.

We have entered into arrangements with the provincial Governments in relation to reforestation. The federal Government has committed \$130 million in expenditure by the year 1985-86. We are now in the process of signing with each of the provincial Governments a reforestation accord. One has been signed with the Province of Nova Scotia, we are ready to sign one with the Province of Prince Edward Island and I expect that in the next two years we will sign agreements with each of the provincial Governments, agreements which attach criteria

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designed to ensure that, through federal-provincial co-operation, we tackle the needs of reforestation in this country. We have signed research agreements with over half of the Provinces and expect to sign such an agreement with each of the ten Provinces by the end of this year. In this fiscal year we expanded our commitment to research by over \$5 million.

One of the important areas where action still needs to be taken is in relation to the control of disease and in relation to the control of fire. The Special Recovery Capital Projects Program and the purchase of fire bombers which I have announced today will be supplemented by further announcements in the next few weeks. We will be using the over-all Special Recovery Projects Program to support the forest strategy. It will be used to bring federal forest research facilities up to the standards needed to carry out the federal share of responsibility in the forestry sector. We are going to ensure that the facilities are adequate to develop the skills required in the modern forest industry. It will be used to protect our Canadian forestry resource. We have acted in the past through our support for the establishment of the Canadian Inter-Agency Fire Centre in Winnipeg, a very much needed step to improve co-operation and co-ordination between the Provinces and the federal Government.

I want to give Members some idea of the importance of combatting fire in Canada each year and the reason why this purchase of water bombers is such an essential step for us to take at this time. The forest area lost to fire in Canada each year regularly exceeds the area harvested. Over the last five years there have been some extreme fire seasons. During that period, forest fires have burned on the average of three and a half times more forest land than was harvested. Clearly, losses of that magnitude cannot be borne.

To put it every more graphically, in a record fire season like 1980 forest fires burned an area in Canada equivalent to a six-kilometre-wide strip from coast to coast, a six-kilometre strip right across the country. That is the size of forest area that we lost in one year to fire alone. It is a bit difficult to determine the exact economic impact of that. Obviously it is substantial. Estimates place the loss of such dimensions as something in the order of \$350 million. Average annual fire losses are in the order of \$53 million per year.

Action is required, action which involves both the federal and provincial Government, to improve our capacity both to suppress and to combat fires. That is why I announced today that we are prepared to spend \$147 million over the next four years to purchase up to 20 CL-215 water bombers from Canadair in Montreal to combat the menace of forest fires.

Four of these aircraft will be for use in the Yukon and Northwest Territories and 16 will be available for a national fleet of water bombers to be operated by the Provinces. These aircraft are to be obtained under the terms of a federal-provincial co-operative supply agreement which the Government is considering as a request from the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers on behalf of the Provinces.