

## The forests (Continued from P. 2)

output by 12 per cent between the base year, 1972, and 1980. By the end of 1978 it had already achieved an 11.9 per cent reduction. In Ontario the amount of hog fuel burned increased by 129 per cent from 1976 to 1978, and oil consumption dropped 423,000 barrels (28 per cent) to 1 million barrels. The five MacMillan Bloedel mills in Port Alberni, British Columbia, some of many using waste wood as fuel, supply 65 per cent of their energy needs with 325,000 tons of hog fuel each year.

To encourage mills to burn hog fuel, sawdust or waste wood, the federal Forest Industry Renewable Energy (FIRE) program provides shared-cost financial assistance in the form of taxable payments of up to 20 per cent of approved capital costs. From April 1, 1979 to March 31, 1984, it expects to make \$150 million available through the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

### Biomass conversion

Hog fuel is already a viable energy source. Biomass conversion is still a resource of the future. In terms of the forest, biomass includes branches, tops, crooked boles, foliage and "unmerchantable" species left in the forest, as well as the mill wastes that go into hog fuel. It could also include cultivated short-rotation tree stands cut before they are mature enough for traditional uses.

Canadian forest biomass is being converted to gas and methanol on an experimental basis. Saskatchewan Forest Products, for example, is converting wood to flammable gas in Hudson Bay. And Lamb-Cargate Limited of Vancouver, with federal help, is building a pilot system to produce gas from waste wood to fuel a lumber-drying kiln.

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## News briefs

**The Progressive Conservative Party** of Ontario was returned to power with a majority in the provincial election held March 20. The Conservatives, under the leadership of Premier Bill Davis, had formed a minority government for the last six years. The Conservatives won 70 seats followed by the Liberals with 34 and the New Democrats with 21. It was Mr. Davis's fourth election campaign as premier.

**Employment and Immigration Minister** Lloyd Axworthy recently announced approval of a \$100,000 contribution to the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled (CRCDD). The money covers part of the cost of designing and developing a national publicity campaign to improve public attitudes towards handicapped persons. Total cost of the national awareness campaign is \$218,500.

**A new Winnipeg-based consortium**, Canadian Methanol Canadien, has announced long-range plans to build 20 plants across Canada to produce methanol as an automobile fuel. The six holding companies involved in the joint venture include individual investors and principals of Inter Group Consulting Economists. The consortium's mid-summer target is ten cars running on pure methanol and another 200 using gasohol made with methanol.

**The board of directors** of the Export Development Corporation (EDC) has approved loans of \$92.8 million (Cdn.) and export credits insurance of \$261.6 million to 26 countries: Algeria, Australia, Brazil, Britain, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, the German Federal Republic, Greece, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the United States and Venezuela.

**With easy winter rail haul conditions** this year, grain exports through the Port of Vancouver are heading for a record year, according to W.G. Hopkins, West Coast grain co-ordinator for the federal Department of Transport. The Port of Vancouver unloaded 64,566 grain cars as of February 15, for an increase of 6.6 per cent in the crop year started August 1. Mr. Hopkins said 13 or 14 grain ships are scheduled to come in to pick up grain at

the port. The possibilities extend to a record calendar-year total as well, surpassing last year's 7.9 million tons.

**Canada's population** on January 1, 1981 totalled an estimated 24,088,700 with figures for the provinces as follows: Newfoundland, 583,600; Prince Edward Island, 124,100; Nova Scotia, 856,100; New Brunswick, 709,100; Quebec, 6,325,200; Ontario, 8,600,500; Manitoba, 1,027,000; Saskatchewan, 957,700; Alberta, 2,135,900; British Columbia, 2,687,000; Yukon, 21,500; and Northwest Territories, 42,800.

**Dow Chemical of Canada Limited**, Sarnia, Ontario, plans an expansion of its petrochemical plant in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, which it says could add \$4.3 billion to the economy directly and indirectly over 20 years. Dow said it has applied to Alberta's Energy Resources Conservation Board for permission to expand production of four products. The total cost is estimated at \$135 million plus site preparation and infrastructure expense.

**Health and Welfare Canada** and the Canadian Pension Conference (a non-profit association concerned with income security and benefits programs) have begun a co-ordinated effort to help pension plan administrators locate former employees of companies and businesses across the country. The employees, aged 65 and over, are eligible for company pension benefits for which they have not yet applied.

**Northern Telecom Canada Limited**, a subsidiary of Northern Telecom Limited of Montreal, has announced a contract for the sale of \$60-million worth of telecommunications equipment to South Korea. The contract is for the provision of digital transmission equipment for the improvement and expansion of South Korea's telephone network.

**The Royal Victoria Hospital** in Montreal recently marked the ninety-first anniversary of the birth of Dr. Norman Bethune by dedicating a plaque in his honour in the hospital lobby. Dr. Bethune was a former staff member of the hospital. A painting by him, which was recently presented to the hospital, was also dedicated. Quebec Social Affairs Minister Dr. Denis Lazure and Lui Min, Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China took part in the ceremony.