Plan of Action to Fully Utilize and Perpetuate Canada's Forests

An Open Letter to All Canadians
INTRODUCTION

All is not well with Canada’s forests. The pioneering age of the past hundred years must give way to an era of planning. The better administration, utilization, and development of the forests and forest lands confront us as a national problem, which is a challenge to governments, industries, and citizens alike.

Forest growth covers 58 per cent of the land area of the nine provinces, and most of this enormous mileage is suited only to the growing of trees. Agricultural land represents only 14 per cent. The remaining 28 per cent, largely in the north and in mountain regions, offers little prospect of productive growth.

These facts fix the forest domain as Canada’s most extensive natural resource. In addition to wood and its products, the forest is essential to the stability of rivers, the development of hydro-electric power, the protection of agricultural lands and water tables, the sheltering of wild life, the encouragement of recreation, and extension of tourist trade.
In the past the very vastness of the forest area has postponed attention to proper protection and management. The war demand has re-established the inherent value of wood as raw material for industry. Scientific advances and new uses in over four thousand forms are bringing a realization of the outstanding importance of the forest in Canada's future economy. It is becoming clearer that an unfailing supply of our Northern wood species will be vital to the needs of the British Commonwealth, of the United Nations, and of the world as a whole in the years to come. The United States and Canada consume more wood in manufactured forms than all other countries combined, and are called upon to produce a surplus for export.

Fortunately, Canada has retained two great advantages in the handling of this national problem. Ownership to the extent of about 90 per cent of all forest-bearing lands remains in the name of the public. Decentralized administration of the widespread areas is ensured by reason of control resting in provincial hands.

Public ownership sets the stage for state support of long-term planning, which would be difficult under private ownership. Tree growth on the Eastern slopes of the Rockies, governing the flow of rivers right across the Prairies to Manitoba, is an example of the inter-provincial aspect of our forests, which stresses the need for partnership with the Dominion Government acting on behalf of the people as a whole.

STATISTICS

Extending virtually to every region of the Dominion, forest industry with a capital investment exceeding a billion dollars employs a greater number of men than any other manufacturing activity.

Essentially an export industry, our foreign trade in forest products nets Canada 300 million dollars annually, which converts an otherwise unfavourable balance from commodity trade into a favourable balance.

The net value of wood and its products is approximately 20 per cent of the national income derived from all primary products of our natural resources.

Expenditures of government money on protection and perpetuation of the forest domain are about 2.5 per cent of this annual national income from primary products of the forest — 2.3 per cent being spent by the provinces and 0.2 per cent by federal authorities.

It seems clear that the time has arrived for the Dominion Government to assume a greater share of responsibility in the common cause.
POLICY

Unlike mineral resources, forests are reproducible and are subject to the inroads of fire, the blight of insect attacks, and the losses resulting from mismanagement.

From the national standpoint, it is economically feasible to grow as many trees as we need, and as fast as we need them. This will require conscious planning. Of all our material resources, the forest is peculiarly the concern of the public at large, for whom the provincial and federal governments act as trustees.

A “Statement of Forest Policy” was formulated three years ago by the Canadian Forestry Association. The Canadian Society of Forest Engineers also has prepared a statement of policy. The basic principles are endorsed by all concerned with the protection and the improvement of our forests.

DOMINION GOVERNMENT

It is generally agreed that the federal authorities have a larger part to play in promoting the welfare of Canada’s forest assets. Quite rightly, the first move should come from the nine provinces as a united request for financial co-operation. The federal functions in a combined effort of this kind are already well-understood, and might be summarized briefly as follows:

1. Advancement of national forest policy, after formulation in harmony with provincial governments.

2. Approval of general working plans, prepared by the provincial authorities and financed in part by federal funds.

3. Research of national scope along the lines of protection, silviculture, and forest products.

4. Clearing house for scientific information on forest problems and products, coupled with first-hand investigation of current progress in other countries.

5. Promotion of energetic marketing on a world-wide scale, in conjunction with industry.

6. Sustained flow of educational material to keep a co-operative public well informed.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

Protection from fire still remains one of the prime duties of the authorities administering our great forest areas. Every Canadian must have the conviction that forest protection is vital.

Regional planning for the systematic development of each forest area is the method recognized as most suitable for Canada. This involves land classification, schemes for increasing the yield and quality of raw
material, and legislation to stabilize long-term plans. The farm woodlot already is a major factor and deserves every encouragement. Continuous improvement of all woodlands for their many varied uses should be the outstanding aim.

Equally important is the co-ordination of all resources in a district, and it is especially emphasized that forests and water-powers should be considered as a closely-related partnership. Industries should be selected, proportioned and planned for long life. Concentration of workers in large centres no longer should be encouraged.

**INDUSTRIES**

The forest industries, large and small, will continue to harvest and market the crop.

Individuals and staffs can contribute much to regional planning. Many of the local problems are best solved by those familiar with conditions in small forest areas.

The rapid extension of knowledge in relation to forest management and more complete utilization of the raw material will enable the forest industries of Canada to create national wealth on an ever-widening scale.

Improved forest practice will come with the easing of the burden now borne by these companies in carrying the full cost of developing each area to be operated. The progressive spirit of industry will respond constructively to each and every government measure aiming to perpetuate the resources of the forest.

**FOREST ENGINEERS**

Skilled men must be selected to carry out every type of forest program. The management of the nation’s woodlands should be entrusted to forest engineers specifically trained for the purpose.

Adequate staffs of forest rangers must also be developed, warranting ranger schools in every forest district across Canada.

**PUBLIC**

The people must take a greater interest in the welfare of the forest. Under our democratic system it is the privilege of every citizen to participate actively in this program.

Furthermore, the indications are that post-war expenditures in connection with forests and employment will be huge, and it is the duty of those familiar with forest values to express public opinion for the guidance of governments.
ORGANIZATION

It is urged that a Forest Congress be called as soon as possible after the close of hostilities, and periodically thereafter. The Congress should be open to all Canadians, and should aim to crystallize public opinion regarding ways and means of carrying Canada's forest policy into effect on a scale indicated by the needs of the time.

In order to prepare for such a Congress, the Canadian Forestry Association offers its services in setting up a National Forest Congress Organization Committee. Representatives from all bodies interested in national forest welfare should be invited to act on the committee, which would serve in the public interest until the date of the Congress.

CANADIAN FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1900. A voluntary association of 10,000 Canadian citizens.

G. Percy Burchill — President

February, 1943.