Wrap-up Comments

Jean-Claude Mercier, Associate Deputy Minister, Canadian Forestry Service. I shall do a little bit of what Mike Apsey did this morning, using some notes taken during the question period but mainly relying on the texts that were prepared in advance. Mr. Chairman, in your count of forester/economists, if you want one of each weighing one hundred and twenty pounds, I can account for both. In my case conflicts between economists and foresters are sometimes resolved internally at great mental pain. We have heard four excellent presentations and maybe it's a sign of the subject — three by academics and one by industry. It must tell us something about the complexity of the subject. I would do some injustice to those people that presented papers in summarizing their conclusions, although the first panelist, Peter Pearse, almost stole my thunder and summarized their presentation in ten lines and two minutes.

The physical supply of wood is adequate in the foreseeable future in Canada. To some people it may mean getting rid of planting machines because we don't have any problem. However, as Gordon Baskerville put it, national supply meeting national demand does not solve the problems in those regions where there is a supply problem and the trees planted now and in the future are essential in meeting future needs.

We will have to remain very attentive to what we do in the future. We had one person who dared compare the annual allowable cut for Canada with the actual cut. The ballpark figure is probably around 143 million m³ of harvest in 1983 compared with an AAC of 167 million m³ in Canada. Both curves — and you've seen the trend — are just about to coincide with each other and although there is no over-all supply deficiency, there certainly are some problems developing in many regions in Canada. Les Reed suggests, rightly I think, that there is still sufficient lead time to expand the AAC and maintain the flow through the allowable cut effect. The current information base was mentioned as inadequate to carefully delineate the benefits and costs of alternative silviculture prescriptions. Les correctly points out that short-to-medium-term wood supply is largely dependent upon enhanced protection and close utilization while the longer-term situation is largely what we care to make it. In addition, the benefits and costs of current environmental and logging guidelines are such that we do not know whether a balance between timber and non-timber value is really being achieved.

Gordon Baskerville's paper is a very good summary of forest dynamics and the role of silvicultural intervention in affecting the temporal and spatial scheduling of timber and non-timber benefits. He also notes that the critical supply

problem is an emerging shortage of reasonable quality raw material at reasonable costs. Four tools of forest management are identified: scheduling the harvest, determining the product mix, silvicultural intervention and protection which is the key tool of forest management. He also notes that problems forecast for the coming decades are not immediate.

Gord Weetman's paper recognizes that the tenure system may have mitigated against good forest management by the lack of clear delineation of the obligations and rights of both landlord and tenant. He also notes that the real shortcoming on the part of all participants in the forest sector is the almost total lack of strategic planning. The critical aspect of our silvicultural practices and yield are all speculative and unproven and this is the essential theme of his paper. He notes that the Canadian public wants better forest management, while our information base is inadequate to estimate current and future timber inventories. His paper raises a number of questions on forest management that clearly suggest that strategic analyses are required.

Mr. Bowersock's paper also picks up the question of tenure by reviewing forest management agreements in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Alberta. He holds that a triangle of co-operative government and industry operating through forest scientists and managers must be built on a basis of faith and truth and trust. The failure or inertia of past forest management is the result of a lack of corporate commitment and of co-operative and flexible government policies. He points out that the ingredients for success are threefold: corporate responsibility for forest renewal, a variety of stumpage pricing and silvicultural cost-sharing arrangements, and evergreen features of area-based tenures that reflect the corporations' proprietary interests in forest management.

The four papers presented at this session have clearly identified the problems in forest management and raised a variety of questions that call for sound answers in charting a cost-effective strategy for the future. They should not be interpreted as further inertia from additional investigation. We shall only move up the learning curve of forest management by doing, and documenting what we have done wrong and right in order to lower the future cost of industrial wood supplies in Canada.

I feel I have to conclude my wrap-up remarks by attempting to coin a valuable statement. Maybe it will be useful at the next national forest congress in 2056 or 2066. The forests we have now were given to us, we have to make the best of them for now and our future. We shall get the forests we deserve. If we truly, we and our children, think we deserve the best, we better get our act together soon.