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industry, and I believe there is no person in this House of Commons, or elsewhere, better able to judge the need to progress from there than the current Minister of State for Forestry (Mr. Merrithew). The important thing is that the first step has been taken. There have been a number of other initiatives in terms of program funding and federal-provincial programs which I am sure will be processed and enlarged upon in the future.

There is always a grave and great connection between our forests and the environment. I think that one of the important aspects of the Canadian forest industry is to protect the environment. The Third World countries which have been required to use forest products for heating and other purposes have virtually destroyed that resource and have created a great deal of environmental damage in terms of soil erosion and so on. We want to avoid that kind of problem in Canada. The point is that we proceed with all due haste but have particular concern about the environment and the effects of rapid expansion of forest production on the environment. I think all of this has to be taken in balance and I believe that is exactly what the Government is doing. It has proceeded in the right direction and I think we can look forward to continued progress.

The Province of Nova Scotia has taken a special interest in the forest industry as well, and I want to give public credit to the Hon. Kenneth Streach, Minister of Lands and Forests, who just recently published a new policy for Nova Scotia in relation to forestry. Part and parcel of that new policy is to double the forest production in Nova Scotia over the ensuing years and decades. I think this is an achievable goal which will result in relatively dramatic increases in employment and economic opportunity for Nova Scotians. The new policy which has been advanced by the Hon. Kenneth Streach contains general principles which involve scheduling of harvesting, allocation of stands, increased market activity and, most important, a continuing and vigorous silviculture program to replace the forest as it is being put into production and productive uses. So we have at both levels of Government, national and provincial, activities focused on forest development. I think we can look forward to an increase in employment and economic products as a result of these efforts by Governments at both levels. I know that what is taking place in Nova Scotia is reflected in the other Atlantic provinces, particularly in New Brunswick and Newfoundland.

Let me return to what I have said is the subject of this debate, namely, the national problem of forest fires. We have already indicated the importance of the forest industry to Canada. We know that attention has been given to the forest industry by the Government of Canada and by the provincial Governments. Let me review very briefly some aspects of this national problem of forest fires in the context of Atlantic Canada. I do not think it is necessary to outline again the devastation which has been wreaked in the Province of New Brunswick by the proliferation of forest fires. I understand the loss is equivalent to one year's production, and that is very

substantial when one considers the effect on the economy of the Province of New Brunswick where over 21,000 New Brunswickers are employed directly by the forest industry and many others are affected by it. In the Province of Nova Scotia the actual loss through forest fires has been limited to 200 acres at this point in time. However, as we know from the New Brunswick experience, as soon as we have dry weather in the spring, the risk of forest fires immediately arises. In fact, last week in the Province of Nova Scotia, the Minister of Lands and Forests had to declare a red alert. Fortunately for the forest industry and unfortunately for vacationing Nova Scotians, there was a substantial rain storm over the next few days and the alert was withdrawn. But there is always a risk of a forest fire hanging over the heads of all people in the forested parts of Canada.

When one reviews the national media coverage of the situation which existed in New Brunswick, one can see immediately the work done by the volunteers. Those volunteers are not only members of the volunteer fire departments from the communities across Atlantic Canada but are persons who allow themselves to be recruited for the specific purpose of fighting the fire. While I give great credit to those who are involved in volunteer fire departments not only in relation to forest fires but in relation to the community activities in which they are normally involved, I want to underline the credit I wish to give to those Canadians without the experience and training of a volunteer fire department member who become involved in fighting a forest fire. Their inexperience can sometimes lead to risk taking that could result in serious injury and even loss of life. The heroes of the day are those who volunteered, the good Samaritans who came to the aid of those in need.

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One also immediately sees the need for very substantial equipment both on the ground and in the air. Water bombers look almost puny compared to the massive fires that are burning on the ground. One can readily understand the need for more and better water bombing equipment. When one sees an ordinary fire hose being used to fight a blaze 18 miles in width, one realizes again the need for very substantial equipment.

I am pleased to note that the Associate Minister of National Defence has indicated the federal Government's involvement in equipping those who were involved in fire-fighting. The Minister referred to the work of the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre. I think this kind of interprovincial and federal-provincial co-operation is the only sensible way to deal with the equipment problem on the ground and in the air.

I would like to deal very specifically with the human element of forest fires. I think a great deal has been said about the concern for the forest industry and the concern for the economic aspects of forest fires in terms of loss of property, income and economic opportunity. However, the important element is the very specific human agony and loss that is