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the Government will respond in a fair way. I am certain that is the kind of response these people will receive.

The economy of the Atlantic region is delicate at best. A catastrophe of this proportion drastically affects our economic wellbeing. I call upon the federal Government and upon provincial Governments to initiate joint action to put forth programs which help Atlantic Canadians adjust to the very difficult situation they have now experienced and are still experiencing in some parts of Atlantic Canada.

• (2020)

The Government should address the fact that Atlantic Canadians are now faced with additional economic difficulties which they do not need in an area of the country where unemployment is unacceptable at best. I assure the Government that we in Atlantic Canada are not looking for hand-outs. However, we require policies which will help sustain the Atlantic forestry sector and subsequently the national forestry sector while we have an opportunity to recover from the difficult situation in which we find ourselves. Without Governments at all levels addressing this issue, we will not be able to deal with it on our own accord.

I appreciate the opportunity to bring this matter before the House, and I look forward to the comments of my colleagues from Atlantic Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Westmorland—Kent): Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to take part in this important emergency debate on the forest fires that have ravaged the Atlantic provinces.

First of all, I want to congratulate the Hon. Member for Fundy—Royal (Mr. Corbett) for asking the House to consider his motion to have an emergency debate on the situation in the Atlantic provinces.

I fully support his motion, and I hope that the other Members from New Brunswick and the Atlantic region, and all the Members of this House, will give their support as well.

Mr. Speaker, we obviously have here a very urgent situation that has required and still requires constant co-operation among the various groups involved, to keep the situation from getting worse. Even if the fires have now lost their intensity and the situation seems to be under control, nevertheless, the situation that prevailed during the past week can still be labelled as disastrous.

Mr. Speaker, it is a disaster. In the province of New Brunswick alone, 140,000 acres were destroyed by over 65 forest fires. One hundred and forty thousand acres is 25 times as many fires we had last year. One hundred and forty thousand acres represents almost a year's harvest, the harvest of an entire year. So we can say we have lost the equivalent of all the wood that can be cut in a year, which represents millions and millions of dollars for the economy of the province

of New Brunswick, and of course thousands of jobs. I am sure that the fires that raged in Newfoundland were similar in their impact to those in New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, this debate is of primary importance for the province of New Brunswick, because the forestry industry is one of the most important, if not the most important industry in that part of the country.

I would like to give a few statistics, as did my hon. friend from Fundy—Royal, to show how important this sector is to us. First of all, 33 out of 67 industrial communities depend on the forestry sector. New Brunswick has the highest percentage of land in forest production of any Canadian province. In fact, the province has 6 million hectares of forest, which represents 58 per cent of the province's total land area. Forty-nine per cent of that are Crown-owned lands, including 2 per cent belonging to the federal Government. Eighteen per cent of forest lands belong to major companies, while private individuals own 33 per cent of the lands, which is quite a lot by any standards. With so much forest lands, Mr. Speaker, you can appreciate that this sector is vital to New Brunswick.

From an economic viewpoint, the total output of the forest industry is 515 million cubic metres: 55 per cent softwood and 35 per cent hardwood. There is no denying that the forest industry ranks first in New Brunswick.

The over-all production gross value is over \$1 billion, which is close to 25 per cent of goods produced in the Province of New Brunswick.

In terms of exports, the forest sector accounts for 39 per cent of the province's total export trade. These enlightening statistics give a clearer picture of the devastating impact of these many fires which have damaged a significant part of this natural wealth which is so essential to the economy of my province, an economy that is faltering at times, like that of the three other Atlantic provinces.

As you would know, Mr. Speaker, regional development is not a new problem in Atlantic Canada. Our economy depends heavily on Government assistance. This year, unfortunately, we have had a streak of bad luck, as if we could afford it.

Our unemployment rate is still 15 per cent, and no progress has been made in that respect over the past year. Youth unemployment is even higher than the 15 per cent adult population unemployment. According to the latest figures, about 30 per cent are unemployed. It is totally unacceptable. It is not only forests which have been lost in New Brunswick because of the many forest fires, but also jobs and houses. Families have also been dispersed.

Since the forest industry is so important in New Brunswick, many jobs are directly or indirectly related to it. We can just look at the figures. Forestry alone represents 16,000 jobs. Another 20,000 jobs are indirectly related to this industry. In other words, in New Brunswick, one out of every seven jobs is related to the forest industry. That means that one out of every