

Statements by Ministers

I do not want to protract this discussion, but let me cite one other example. When the work crews came to the area, one of the organizers said that they needed 75 pies to help feed the crews in West Luther Township and the surrounding area. The church members from Mount Forest sent some 200 pies and soup for 500 people. That sort of generosity is something which will remain with people for the rest of their lives.

One cannot help but be struck by the tremendous courage and dedication of the people who were affected. There was no sense of self-pity evident; there was simply a sense of courage and determination to rebuild. I think that is an inspiration to all of us.

Mr. Foster: Mr. Speaker, I would like to put one question to the Minister. I must say that I have been very impressed with the way the Minister has handled the disaster, and I know that not only he but the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) visited the area in person.

I would like to ask the Minister whether or not the area designated by the Province of Ontario has been expanded to include the some \$40-million worth of damage which occurred the evening before in Leamington where a large number of greenhouses were destroyed. I wonder if the Province of Ontario has designated only Barrie and surrounding areas as disaster areas or whether it has asked for assistance out of the fund to include that area of southwestern Ontario that was affected the evening before. I understand that there was considerable damage in the Niagara Peninsula as well. Perhaps the Minister could clarify whether or not the province has designated those additional areas.

As well, I would like to comment on the generosity of the response to the disaster. I do not recall a disaster occurring in Ontario in recent years for which a whole network of radio stations including at least two in my constituency took part in a telethon last Monday which raised many hundreds of thousands of dollars. I think that the spirit of generosity and charity is alive and well in Ontario, as has been demonstrated by this disaster.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, the federal Government is currently having discussions with the Government of Ontario as to the parameters of the disaster areas. Initially the area that was looked at by the province of Ontario was the area from Arthur or Alma in the east.

● (1530)

It touched some areas on the far side of Barrie and the east side of Barrie, into central eastern Ontario. That area is certainly covered under that. In addition, other damage which was done as part of the same weather system will be included under the program. The difficulty is in terms of determining whether damage that was done, for example, the day before, was done as part of the same weather system or whether it constitutes a second disaster.

No one minimizes the amount of damage done there. The problem is that under current federal-provincial cost-sharing arrangements, there is some difficulty in terms of lumping two

disasters together. Each one would have to be considered separately unless they were part of a common weather disturbance.

The other point I might make is that my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise), has already visited the Leamington area. I can indicate, I believe, on his behalf, that some of the measures which I announced today relating to agriculture would apply in the Leamington area. Most of the damage which was done there was done to the rural area, to the farmers, and we hope that the relief which has been offered by my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, will provide some assistance there.

* * *

PETITIONS**CHANGES TO THE OLD AGE SECURITY ACT**

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition containing the names of hundreds of people from Winnipeg who protest the government's proposals to partially deindex the old age pension. Through this petition they join with thousands of other Canadians,—and thousands more to come over the next few weeks—who want to indicate their opposition to this unjust measure by the Government and they call upon the Government to change its mind, go back to the commitment it made in January, and even before that to what the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) said before the election, and fully ensure the indexation of Old Age Security payments.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by several dozen citizens and constituents in the Algoma and Sault Ste. Marie area who call upon the Government to reinstate full indexation of the old age pensions. They note, for instance, that the average pensioner will lose \$100 next year; more than \$200 the following year; and over \$600 by 1990. They simply call upon the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Government to keep their campaign promise and restore full indexation of the old age pension. When the Prime Minister receives a petition like this, I know—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I too have the honour to present a petition signed by over 800 residents of the lower mainland of British Columbia, New Westminster, Coquitlam, Burnaby, Surrey, Vancouver East, Langley and Delta, British Columbia, who once again protest the partial deindexation of the Old Age Security. They ask the Government to fulfil its promise to fully index the old age pension.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by more than 600 residents of Manitoba, who call upon the Government to restore the indexing of pensions. They point out that the losers