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holding the portfolio, the Minister of State for Forestry (Mr. Merrithew) from New Brunswick, but he simply does not have the support to do the job. He does not have a full Deputy Minister. He is forced to work out of Agriculture Canada in a dark room in the basement. He has very few staff and almost no budget. It is really only a ministry in name.

Although the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) attended this debate earlier, it is the kind of thing he should be actively considering, which is making a Minister for Forestry responsible for this industry to all of Canada, a full Minister, as he promised during his campaign. This is the largest industry in Canada. It employs 300,000 Canadians directly and 600,000 indirectly. The losses we have sustained in these recent fires are only part of the over-all losses that affect us every year right from the West to the East.

One of the other matters that was not touched on by the two Government speakers this evening is the necessity for some special reforestation efforts. I was hoping, in having forced an emergency debate, there would have been somewhat more thought and examination put into what should really be done, rather than perhaps using this evening as a public relations exercise, as we learned with the previous speaker. We should look at reforestation, how to deal more effectively with the issue of chemical and water bombers, how to more effectively make use of the Department of National Defence and our Canadian Forest Service. One would hope these kinds of issues would have been the subject of the Government side in terms of making those proposals.

To give an example, the amount of money proposed by the Minister of State for Forestry to advertise that there is a federal Minister of Forests, \$4 million between now and this fall, is enough money to plant 9.5 million seedlings, something which clearly is now required in the Provinces of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

● (2110)

It is that kind of announcement that I and, I know, viewers from the Maritimes would have hoped would be coming, rather than this type of public relations exercise in which the Government indicates there will be a board of inquiry and there will be compensation. Maritimers are told that the first \$750,000 will come from their province, the next \$1.5 million will be split 50/50, the next \$1.5 million will be split 75/25 and 90 per cent of the balance will be paid by the federal Government.

That does not address the serious concerns of people like Ken Banks, who lost a century-old family home and all of his farm buildings. He was preparing for retirement and he fully expected, as did many Maritimers, to know how the federal Government will respond. They want to know if funds will be put forward for reforestation.

What about those who have lost their homes and have no insurance? Will they have to go through the courts to determine who will cover the cost of lost and damaged equipment?

It was my hope that these questions would have been more thoughtfully examined by the Government because it has literally hundreds of thousands of public servants at its beck and call to assist it in preparing information for a debate such as the one taking place this evening. I am sure that those who have lost their cottages or homes have many questions they want answered.

In conclusion, I want to deal with the issue of wildlife. One of the Departments that was most savagely sliced and hacked in the Budgets of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) last year was the Canadian Wildlife Service. The fact that an incident such as this, that kills and maims enormous amounts of wildlife and displaces wildlife to other areas that are not their traditional habitat, raises the concern of Canadians from coast to coast about what kind of specialized efforts can be made by the Canadian Wildlife Service. That service no longer has the only wildlife pathologist it had because that person was dismissed last fall.

What are the terms of reference of the Canadian Wildlife Service? There are many people, such as bird-watchers, who are interested in the environment and would have liked to hear the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) address this issue.

I am pleased to have had an opportunity to express some views in this debate, but I must say that I am somewhat saddened that government Members, including the Minister who spoke, chose this as an opportunity for a public relations exercise so that the headlines in the Maritime newspapers might read: "Emergency debate forced: Prime Minister was present". I suggest it would have been more appropriate to have taken some time to find real answers for people like Ken Banks who lost everything he owned.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Albert Girard (Restigouche):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to join my hon. colleagues in the House in deploring the substantial losses caused by forest fires in my province.

I was listening earlier to my hon. colleague from Westmorland—Kent (Mr. Robichaud), when he said that we had no political priorities. I think the presence here this evening of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and five members of his Cabinet shows that our party has a political priority and that the forests in the Atlantic provinces are very important, and at this point I wonder where the two Opposition party leaders are.

However, I would also like to comment on the action taken by the federal Government, with the provinces, to help develop and protect our forests.

The federal Government has spared no efforts to provide assistance to the province of New Brunswick throughout this very difficult period. I need hardly recall the primary importance of the forestry industry to the economic well-being of the entire Atlantic region. In New Brunswick, the industry is responsible for 23 per cent of the province's total production of raw materials and for two-thirds of its exports. Furthermore,