

**MOTION TO ADJOURN UNDER S.O. 29**

[English]

**FORESTRY****FOREST FIRES IN ATLANTIC CANADA**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Leave has been granted to the Hon. Member for Fundy—Royal (Mr. Corbett) to move the adjournment of the House pursuant to Standing Order 29 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely, the forest fire situation in Atlantic Canada.

**Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy—Royal)** moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to raise in the House, under Standing Order 29, the provision which allows for an emergency debate, a situation of very critical importance to the Atlantic regions of Canada. The matter I am raising is in reference to the tremendous blazes which have enveloped Atlantic Canada, particularly the provinces of New Brunswick and Newfoundland, over the past five or six days. As you are well aware, Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 29, the subject matter of an emergency debate must be within the administrative competence of the Government and, in my considered opinion, it is within the administrative competence of the Government to deal with the issue directly forthwith, and if not that, to at least consider the matter with due haste.

The subject matter of the debate centres on the disastrous situation which has developed in Atlantic Canada during the past week as a result of major forest fires. The fires have been particularly devastating in New Brunswick and in Newfoundland, provinces which are extremely dependent upon the forest industry for their well being, the employment of their people and the maintenance of their economy. Because of my direct knowledge of the situation in New Brunswick, I ask that you give me your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, if I tend to deal with the situation in New Brunswick in greater detail than the situations in other parts of the region. This does not diminish the importance of the forest industry to all of Atlantic Canada.

To date it is estimated that some 130,000 acres of prime woodland have been burned over and destroyed in New Brunswick alone. This is prime woodland and, although all fires at this moment, to the best of our knowledge, are under control, there are still a number of fires which continue to rage. I would like to take you back a little in history, Mr. Speaker, and inform you that the last great fire New Brunswick experienced was in 1944 at which time approximately 170,000 acres burned. In 1934, ten years previous to that, a major fire destroyed something in the vicinity of 184,000 acres. As a result of those fires, great economic difficulties were imposed on the economy of New Brunswick. Although both of those fires created economic difficulty which had an effect nationally, they did happen in times when the region was

economically much less dependent on the national economy than it is today.

I think it is important that I put the matter in perspective. The annual harvest in New Brunswick is approximately 170,000 acres. It is now likely that more than 170,000 acres will be destroyed in the fires which have already consumed a substantial portion of prime forest land in the province. This will drastically affect the economy of the province. The fires which have been burning in the rest of Atlantic Canada, particularly those fires in Newfoundland—Newfoundland as we are aware, depends to a substantial degree upon the forest industry for its economy—as well as the fires in Prince Edward Island and to a lesser degree in Nova Scotia, will have a direct impact not only on Atlantic Canada but on the entire country as a whole. The forest industry is one of the country's most significant economic bases.

I think it is important at this time to point out that the Government has created a new Ministry of State for Forestry, recognizing the contribution of the forest industry to this nation's economy. I am sure you are aware, Mr. Speaker, that it is the largest employer of people in the country. One out of every seven jobs in the Province of New Brunswick, for instance, is directly attributable to the forest industry. One out of every 10 jobs in the nation as a whole is attributed to the forest industry. Our national export of forest products earned more in foreign exchange earnings than oil, minerals, fish and agricultural exports combined. This is a tremendously valuable asset. It is a renewable resource which has significant impact on all regions of the country, particularly on Atlantic Canada.

The creation of the new Ministry of State for Forestry by the present Government has been a breath of fresh air to an area which is strongly dependent on the forest sector economically and has provided Atlantic Canadians with a new hope of recognition for this particular sector. Atlantic Canadians feel that the establishment of the new Department of Forestry will provide them with a renewed status in Confederation. The tragedy of the situation is that this is now very seriously threatened.

The impact of the forestry sector in this nation is felt in every Canadian home. I want to re-emphasize that the forest industry is our greatest foreign exchange earner and is one of the largest purchasers of manufactured goods in Canada. I can assure Hon. Members that with the current very critical situation economically in Atlantic Canada, and with the plight of the unemployed youth in that region, this tragedy is something which is going to be widely felt in the area.

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The hope of a new attitude on the part of the people of the area toward this most valued industry is the hope of thousands of young people in Atlantic Canada. I think it is necessary to point out that there are few job-creation programs that are as valuable or as cost efficient as those that hire young people to plant and manage this nation's forests.