

*Statements by Ministers*

After a preliminary assessment, DRIE plans to assist in several ways: First, free business counselling will be provided through the sector and financial expertise of the Ontario regional office or the CASE service of the Federal Business Development Bank.

Second, DRIE has posted officers to work out of the Barrie branch of FBDB with responsibility for the immediate assessment of damage to business. They will assist business with reconstruction efforts, through the whole range of the Department's activities and, if shortages of essential building materials develop, DRIE's network will be used to locate supplies throughout Canada.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mr. Stevens) will establish a \$3 million central Ontario tornado damage business development program to encourage modernization and expansion in the affected area. The fund is designed to go beyond insurance and other aid as an inducement for businesses to seize the opportunity to expand and to upgrade their operations beyond simple replacement of storm damage. The fund will help generate additional long-term jobs and will contribute positively to the strengthening and future prosperity of the affected communities. Assistance will be available up to a maximum 35 per cent of eligible capital costs for firms which can demonstrate viability and significant economic benefits. The Department will discuss future prospects with affected firms, which should make their business plans known by September 30, 1985. In addition, the Minister has asked the FBDB to consider temporary payment deferral or reamortization for affected customers' loans in the same manner as does the Farm Credit Corporation.

Several dozen units of temporary housing have been made available through Canadian Forces Base, Borden. Additionally, 700 soldiers from the base have done a superb job in assisting, and over \$25,000 in goods and services have been provided.

My Ministry, the Department of National Revenue, will treat donations to recognized disaster relief agencies or to municipalities as tax deductible. We believe that this measure will give added incentive for Canadians to contribute to rebuilding the damaged area. As well, recognizing that many financial records have been lost, I have instructed my officials to assist any person or business unable to provide supporting documents for tax purposes.

Both Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Department of Public Works have arranged to have inspectors in the area. CMHC will assist with identifying restorable buildings and help local officials with the issuing of building permits. The Department of Public Works will assess damage to public infrastructure.

Through these measures, Mr. Speaker, we hope to restore essential services and assist individuals, farmers and small businesses to begin reconstruction.

If I may be permitted a personal comment, I would like to state on behalf of my colleagues from the affected area that we deeply appreciate the compassion and generosity of the thou-

sands of people who have offered assistance to the people who are most in need who have suffered from this disaster. Their kindness has enormously assisted as these families begin the long job of rebuilding their lives.

Finally, I know that every Member of this House would want me to express our sorrow for the victims of the disaster. No one can adequately describe the sense of loss of many of those families. But their courage and their determination to rebuild inspires us all.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Miss Aileen Nicholson (Trinity):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the Minister in expressing very deep sympathy particularly to those people who have lost relatives or friends. Our hearts go out to them. There are no words to express the distress that they must feel.

For those who are left and who have to rebuild their homes, their businesses and so on, this aid on the part of the federal Government is, of course, a very correct step which we in this Party approve and support.

Canadian disaster relief has generally been efficient and well co-ordinated, and we commend the Minister for ensuring that it be so in this case again. We have all been very impressed by the courage and resourcefulness shown by those people who have lost everything and who are having to start to build again, and it is obviously very right and proper that everything possible be done to help them take up their lives again, as they will. The voluntary groups are already there. Indeed, I was pleased to hear the Minister say that favourable tax treatment will be given to those assisting in this way. There are also volunteer groups there that are assisting with their physical labour and with their presence and comfort. We certainly expect that the situation will be monitored so as to ensure that the existing help is adequate and will be added to as time goes on.

**Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I also rise to express some appreciation to the Minister for the statement he has made today to say, on behalf of my colleagues as the Minister did, that we have a deep sense of sympathy for those who lost fiends or relatives in this unfortunate disaster that occurred.

**Ms. Jewett:** Some disasters are fortunate?

**Mr. Deans:** My colleague says some disasters are fortunate. I did not mean to give that impression. I hope that she understood that.

For those who watched the events unfold, it was an incredible situation, almost beyond belief. I want to say that we are pleased that the Government has moved to make a statement today to clarify the involvement of the Government of Canada—and I hope that it does in fact—where there are new initiatives involved, establish a clear pattern in the event that other similar occurrences, undesirable as they may be, should ever face us in the future.