

and were satisfied that the conditions were such that our performance would be effective.

Lifeline of the force

We do have the capacity, albeit limited, and while there are risks, as there always will be in exercises of this kind, I am convinced that the mandate and operations of the force are such that we are needed. In fact, as I was told yesterday in New York, the signallers are "the lifeline" of the force.

Canada supported the resolution adopted by the Security Council which established UNIFIL. The force consists of contingents from France and Norway, with temporary support from Iran, Sweden and Canada. I was informed yesterday that further contingents from Senegal, Nepal and Nigeria are expected to arrive soon. We have agreed to send approximately 80 signallers to establish a communications network. Recognizing the extent of our existing logistics operation in the Middle East, the Secretary-General has asked us to provide this service only until October 1, 1978. We have agreed to do so.

I am hopeful that all parties in the Middle East will adhere to the resolution adopted by the Security Council and will

co-operate fully with UNIFIL so that the UN force can fulfil the essential elements of its mandate: "to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces, restore international peace and security and assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area".

Canadians pioneer peacekeepers

I am sure Canadians recognize the importance of the contribution we are already making to peacekeeping. It is a field in which Canadian Forces have a proud tradition. We have been pioneers and have seen peacekeeping as one of the most effective operations of the United Nations. I know that Canadians as a whole share my pride in the roles we have already undertaken. I know too that Canadians recognize and support our willingness to respond to an urgent request from the Secretary-General in the manner we have. We attach the highest importance to the success of UN peacekeeping activities. With this decision to participate temporarily in UNIFIL the Canadian Government is determined to do its part in ensuring the success of one of the most difficult peacekeeping ventures the UN has undertaken. It is a challenge we can and should accept.

Altogether, CMHC made grants amounting to \$55 million under the National Housing Act for a variety of renovation and rehabilitation programs throughout Quebec last year.

Mr. Ouellet said that the broadened rural home-improvement program would be continued over the next five years to satisfy the expected strong demand for such assistance. Priority will be given to the improvement of houses in urgent need of repair and to those occupied by low-income or large families and elderly persons. Municipal representatives will work closely with CMHC officials in identifying homes requiring priority assistance in each locality.

Under the program, owners may borrow up to \$10,000 for various purposes to bring their homes to a satisfactory standard for health and safety. The loans are available at a preferred interest rate and are repayable over a period of up to 20 years.

Depending on family income and the amount borrowed, repayment of as much as \$3,750 of the loan may be forgiven.

EDC guarantees Bell contract in Saudi Arabia

The largest amount of insurance coverage ever issued by the Export Development Corporation in support of a single export agreement will cover a Bell Canada contract for the expansion and modernization of the Saudi Arabian telephone system.

EDC announced on April 5 that policies would cover export credits insurance with a limit of \$180 million and surety coverage for guarantees provided by Bell to the buyer — the Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to a maximum of \$250 million. The EDC surety insurance program was introduced last November to meet Canadian exporters' need for the protection of financial guarantees.

The Bell contract — in excess of \$1 billion — was awarded for complete management responsibility in the administration of the Saudi telephone system as well as responsibility for a procurement program over five years.

Canadian jobs

EDC Senior Vice-President T. Chase-Casgrain said the service side of the Bell Canada contract would generate about 2,000 man-years of employment for Canadian management and technical personnel. He added that the contract had been won against competition from virtually all the major telecommunications companies in the world.

Under the management portion of the contract Bell Canada will be responsible for consolidating existing telephone systems in Saudi Arabia under a crown corporation to be established by the buyer. Other responsibilities include the provision of training and support services, establishment of operations, finance and engineering departments, and the implementation of a management control system.

EDC is the federally-owned commercial enterprise providing export credits and surety insurance, loans and foreign investment guarantees to assist Canada's export trade. In 1977, EDC long-term loans, export credits insurance and foreign investment guarantees amounting to about \$2.6 billion supported sales of Canadian goods and services and generated more than 200,000 man-years of employment for Canadians.

Federal home-improvement program extended in Quebec

Residents of Quebec's rural areas, including all communities with a population not exceeding 2,500, are now eligible for federal grants and loans under the Rural Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, Urban Affairs Minister André Ouellet announced recently.

The Minister said \$20 million would be made available through Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation to fund activities under the program in the province of Quebec during 1978. He noted that "the general designation of Quebec's rural areas will extend the program's benefits to approximately 1,500 small communities representing about a quarter of the province's population".

During 1977, a total of \$7.7 million in federal loans was provided for improvements to 1,442 dwellings in 62 rural municipalities throughout Quebec. Under the terms of the program, repayment of \$4.7 million of the total amount borrowed will be forgiven.