

Air Ontario Crash

One of those families was laid to rest in my home community of Steinbach, a friend, a colleague, someone I grew up with. So I say to them and to all of those affected by the air disaster that our prayers are with them and with their families and that the Government intends to find out and answer the reason as to why.

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Like my colleague, it is with sadness that I rise today.

On March 10, 1989, at approximately 12.10 p.m. twelve residents from the City of Thunder Bay, four residents from the district of Thunder Bay, two residents from other parts of Ontario, two residents from Alberta, one resident each from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, and one resident from the United States came to their tragic death as a result of the air crash one kilometre from the Dryden airport.

I refrain, Mr. Speaker, from mentioning their names in respect to the surviving relatives. I am certain that all Members of the House express their profound sympathy to the relatives and close friends of the victims and our hopes and prayers for a full and complete recovery of the survivors.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I too want to join with the Minister of Energy (Mr. Epp) and the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon (Mr. Comuzzi) in offering my condolences and those of my Party to the families, friends and neighbors of the victims of Air Ontario flight 1363.

Too often we think that events such as an air crash are something that happen in another country to somebody we do not know. As the word started to trickle through Thunder Bay on the Saturday morning, as the word got out as to who some of the people were on the plane who perished, who survived, one could feel the shock going through Thunder Bay. I know that the Minister of Energy spoke of a friend of his. Well, that friend and his family lived on my street. We were all affected by it.

Even those people who did not know anybody, and in a community of 120,000 people its possible that everybody knew somebody on the plane, came to the memorial services and felt the grief and wondered why. I think that as we all reflect on what has happened, our hearts go out to the victims' families, our heart goes out for the trauma that people have gone through in terms of the survivors.

Our thanks also go out to that wonderful little community up in the bush, Dryden, Ontario, whose people reacted so fantastically. To those who opened their stores to provide food and clothing, to those who looked after the people, to the fire crash rescue people who were on the spot in literally minutes, we say thanks for how you responded and how you opened your arms to your neighbors and friends.

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Kenora—Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to relate to you my feelings as the Member for Kenora—Rainy River. On that day, March 10, I was sitting in my office. I heard that this accident had taken place. I was a little numb as to what to do. As a Member of Parliament, one gets a lot of requests and a lot of areas of concern brought forward, but never something of this nature. So I did what I normally do and went by my gut reaction. I flew to Dryden. On March 11 I went to the site.

I would like to tell you, Mr. Speaker, and Members of the House that there are no words to explain how miraculous it really is for those individuals who survived the crash. To those people who did not survive the crash and to their families, I offer my personal condolences and the condolences of the Members of Parliament here.

I would also like to take this moment to ask everyone here to give thanks to those individuals who used their swift action and cool heads to save more lives. Those are the individuals who had the ability to keep a cool head, to get out of that plane to help other people who were trapped and to get into the bush before the plane caught fire. I would like to thank those people who reacted so swiftly in that situation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those volunteers who moved so quickly to try to save lives. It is something that I as a Member of Parliament will never forget. It is not something that I want to forget because as I do my job here for the people of Kenora—Rainy River, I will always remember that accident because I was there. When we talk about safety I think it will be something that I can easily visualize. I will have a better feeling for what it really means. I think we as parliamentarians should always remember what we are really doing here, that is, trying to protect the people we represent. We cannot do that if we lose site of what that really is.