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the total cost of protection efforts to this point in time cannot be ascertained, but I assume that they will be very high.

As well as congratulating the people who have spoken in the debate, it would be remiss of me if I did not refer to the personnel who fought the fires, including provincial service fire fighting ground personnel and the hundreds of volunteers who gave of their time and risked their lives to try to suppress the fires against high winds and extremely warm conditions.

To set some people a little at ease, let me say that cool temperatures and scattered showers overnight have eased somewhat the fire situation in Newfoundland. I am sure all of us are encouraged by present weather conditions, but are somewhat concerned about an approaching high pressure system which will influence Newfoundland weather later this week. We hope that with the wet spell we are now experiencing in Newfoundland that those who are fighting the fires will be able to put them out, that the ground will remain moist so we will not have a recurrence of what has happened in the past few days.

● (2150)

I want to reiterate what other Members have already said. This is a special case. The provinces will need, and I am sure they will be seeking, federal assistance. To give you an idea, Mr. Speaker, for the past few years the Department of Forestry, Resources and Lands, has budgeted \$1.5 million each year for forest fires. In 1985-86, \$2.5 million was spent and there were only three large fires with which to contend. That is nothing compared to what has happened this year. We did not have nearly as many fires during the whole of last year as we have had to date this year. You can see how this will affect the provincial budget.

Approximately 20,000 people derive a portion of their income from the forestry sector in Newfoundland. I would think those who are familiar with the Newfoundland employment scene would agree with me when I say that approximately 50,000 Newfoundlanders depend on the forestry sector, either as wage earners or dependants.

You can see how serious a situation it is when large amounts of money that would be put into new seedlings and so on will now have to go into efforts to fight forest fires. No one wants to lay the blame on anyone until all of the fires have been investigated. As the previous speaker said, some of them started through natural causes and perhaps some might have been prevented if a little more care had been taken by those utilizing the beauties of our forests. Regardless of the cause, these fires have occurred and the damages have to be taken care of in the best way we can. Considerable amounts of money will be needed for proper reforestation in the countryside that has been burned.

I can only appeal to the federal Government, as have previous speakers, to try to alleviate some of the financial burden which the provinces in Atlantic Canada are experiencing because of damages to our forests as a result of fires.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, it is with some pleasure I have the opportunity to speak in this debate, not that the topic itself is pleasurable but the opportunity to speak in Parliament on any topic of importance is a pleasure for Members of this House.

I suspect that anyone who might be watching or listening to this debate rather than watching or listening to the hockey game will probably wonder why Parliament is talking about something over which Parliament has little ability to control or why we would be having an emergency debate on forest fires in Atlantic Canada when we have not had emergency debates on other matters. That is not a criticism of the Speaker's ruling, but it is somewhat ironic that we are in a situation when nature is dealing with the forest fires by heavy rain which is now falling in most of the region.

I would like to add my words of condolence to those affected by the forest fires. As someone who comes from a riding in northern Manitoba, two-thirds of the Province of Manitoba, the region I represent, has had many forest fires over the years. I know the hardship those fires create for people through loss of business, homes and, in some cases, loss of loved ones. My personal condolences go to those affected negatively by the forest fires.

In my introduction I said that we are debating something over which Parliament or Government does not really have any control. Forest fires for the most part are started by nature. It will require nature and people in Atlantic Canada to put out these fires. That is self-evident. However, there are things that can be done. We would like to see the Government and Parliament act. We should make sure that we have trained volunteers in place and that there is a quick exchange of equipment from one province to another, from one region to another, when there is a forest fire. Sometimes this has occurred, but on occasion there have been road-blocks, and I hope they can be eliminated.

It is very important that we have a full Ministry of Forestry. Previous speakers have alluded to the need for a Ministry of Forestry, which has been an election promise in the past. It is a promise that should be kept.

Let me point out to Members that we have a Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) and a Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Siddon), so we do have full ministries for other important sectors for our economy. It is ironic that forestry, which is so important to many regions, has only a Minister of State responsible for it. That is not to degrade the Minister, but by the structure of the Cabinet and the position which the Minister of State for Forestry (Mr. Merrithew) holds, he does not have the staff, the resources or the political clout to do the types of things that can be done by other Ministers with full Departments and support. It is obvious to anyone in this House that the Minister of Agriculture, because he has a full Department with a Deputy Minister, associates and assistants as well as full-time resource people, is able to do more for his sector than someone who, through no fault of his own is just strictly a Minister of State responsible.