

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)):** Mr. Speaker, this kind of debate does not help farmers. It is a problem that all of us have to do our very best to address. That includes municipalities, provincial governments and the federal government.

The hon. member should know that the province of Alberta just recently kicked in an extra \$110 million and he should know that the province he comes from, when the new government formed office, cancelled its harmonization with the GST. I understand that cost it over \$200 million.

If it was really serious about supporting farmers, it should have kept harmonization and it would have had an additional \$200 million to spend on its farms.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Agriculture.

After four years of working with various participants on GATT article XI, the Canadian government claimed it could count on the support of several countries. Nevertheless, the Dunkel report reveals an alignment with the American position, with the consent of European governments, which will put an end to all quota systems in Canada's farm programs.

What does the government intend to do about this threat to our agricultural system?

**Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)):** Mr. Speaker, just a few minutes ago, I was talking to my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture. Earlier today, the minister and the Minister for International Trade had a meeting with Mr. Dunkel.

There was also a meeting with the Cairns Group and the Quad group, to which Canada belongs, to discuss certain issues in the presence and with the co-operation of Canadian farm leaders now in Geneva.

In fact, Canadian farm leaders still fully support the Canadian position and have not challenged it in any way. Mr. Speaker, we prepared this position—the Canadian position—with our farm producers. We prepared it together, during extensive consultations, before going to GATT. We are still defending this position with all the energy we can muster. We built this position with them,

and we will continue to involve them in these negotiations.

**Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's remarks are surprising, to say the least, when we consider that the constitutional proposals tabled last September suggested that getting rid of marketing boards would remove a barrier to the mobility of goods.

On many occasions, the government was obliged to call negotiators in Geneva to order for statements that more or less said the same thing.

Mr. Minister, how can you expect farmers to have any confidence when they see such flagrant contradictions in our agricultural system? In other words, what is your agricultural position for Canada?

**Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)):** Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised to see the hon. member take the same position the Bloc Québécois critic took yesterday in the House of Commons. Provincial ministers Picotte and Ciaccia said once again yesterday that they still supported the Canadian position, Mr. Speaker.

As part of that position, we still support maintaining a reinforced and clarified article XI, Mr. Speaker.

This was again stated very clearly to the Director General of GATT today and to all our agricultural partners in Europe, Mr. Speaker.

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[*English*]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Today Statistics Canada figures are grim. Bankruptcies are up 45 per cent. So far this year 63,000 individuals and businesses have been forced into bankruptcy because of this government's economic incompetence.

Last week the Minister of Finance admitted that his claims of economic recovery were grossly exaggerated. So I want to ask the Prime Minister: Is he prepared today to do the same thing? Will he finally admit that there is no recovery, that the recession continues, and that it is his own government's economic policies that are causing such devastation in the Canadian economy?