

Government Orders

Hon. Jean Charest (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House): Mr. Speaker, I should be delighted to answer the question put by the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier. Tomorrow, we expect to consider the report stage of Bill C-10, Bill S-2, and second reading of Bill C-23. On Tuesday, October 10, since Monday is a holiday, we intend to consider the report stage of Bill C-20 and possibly second reading of Bill C-28. And finally on Wednesday, we intend to continue second reading of Bill C-28, followed, if time permits, by the debate on second reading of Bill C-33.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ADVANCE PAYMENTS FOR CROPS ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Mazankowski that Bill C-36, an Act to amend the Advance Payments for Crops Act and the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee; and the amendment of Mr. Foster (p. 4275).

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure I stand here today to speak with respect to Bill C-36, a bill that is going to affect the Advance Payments for Crops Act and the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act.

Initially I would like to respond to some of the comments of the minister of grains and oil seeds this morning when he indicated that it was the opposition which was holding up this bill; and that was the reason farmers and producers were not receiving advance payments. With all due respect, the minister knows that that is utter nonsense. That is simply more dialogue coming from the Tories in order to mislead Canadians.

As the minister well knows, this intention to remove the interest free provision on advance payments to farmers was introduced last spring, on April 27. It took the government some 152 days to introduce this bill. Now, if it had any sincerity with respect to farmers across this country and really had the interest of farmers at heart, it would have introduced this bill a long time ago. The government knows that many producers, many producer

groups and many associations throughout this country have a lot of concern with respect to this bill. They are concerned that it is going to adversely affect agriculture in this country and they want to be heard. It is unfair for the government to simply bring in the bill at a time when farmers need advance payments and then say it is the opposition's fault for not passing the bill.

It is clear that when the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act, and the Advance Payments for Crops Act were introduced some time ago, they had dual purpose. First of all, they were introduced at a time when the grain handling system throughout western Canada was in difficulty.

The purpose of the bill is to allow the Canadian Wheat Board to more orderly market its grain. It encourages producers to maintain grain in their own bins until the Wheat Board calls for it. As we know, the farmer only gets paid when he delivers his grain to the market. By allowing some advance loans, it allows the farmer to pay off his debts and still store the grain, which is an advantage to both the Canadian Wheat Board and to the producer.

As well, by keeping the product off the market, it avoids the situation where there are large amounts of grain entering the market, thereby adversely affecting the price of grain, particularly grain that is not part of the Canadian Wheat Board.

The Advance Payments for Crops Act was a benefit not only to producers, but to small businesses as well. As we all know, the farmer lives on credit for a good portion of the year and advance payments allow him to pay his bills to small business people, who themselves are suffering

With this change in the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act, it is quite clear that farmers will not be utilizing the programs as they have before. A recent study by the UPA in Quebec indicated that approximately 10 per cent of the producers now utilizing the Advance Payments for Crops Act will utilize it when the interest amendments are added to these acts.

• (1510)

This is going to cause a lot of difficulty in a number of areas. First of all, it is going to mean that small business people will be unable to pay their own creditors because they will be carrying a credit from farmers. Small business people throughout Canada are under a tremendous amount of pressure today. If they are not receiving the credit that is owed them, it makes it difficult for them