

Oral Questions

bankruptcies. That reached a low point of 12 in Ontario in 1989. It is up to 19 this year.

The point that I am making is that we are trying hard to make progress. We have put out additional funds, additional support for the farm community through interest-free advances. We are fighting the battles at the GATT to make sure that we have the international problems as well looked after as we can as one single country. We are introducing the goods and services tax that for the farm community will result in a savings in aggregate across the country of \$250 million. That is a major assist for the farm community and it will help keep the Paul Cazabons of this country from going over the edge into bankruptcy.

That is an indication of the commitment that we have as a government to dealing with the problems in the farm community today.

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ENERGY

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the minister of energy. The minister is fresh from a meeting with representatives from Canadian oil companies and consumer groups. Given the continued high price of gasoline and the fact that oil companies want to raise prices even higher, with the minister's blessing, adding to their soaring profits, did the minister express to the oil companies his desire to see an immediate decrease in the price of gasoline to bring it in line with the lower oil prices on the world market?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, yes, I did meet with the oil companies, as well as consumer groups. I point out to the hon. member what has been said here many times. That is in the Canadian system of accounting for the price of oil at the gas pumps, there is a 60 to 90 day lag. I have said also to the oil companies that I do not expect them to take any advantage of the situation. We discussed that with the consumer groups as well.

In fact, if the hon. member takes a look at the profit pictures, for example, today, I think it is fair to say that one has to look at more than one quarter, if he looks at the downstream side. The figures are different, for example, on the upstream side, depending on the price

of crude that went into the system and the price of crude that went into the refining process.

[Translation]

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Yesterday, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources gave this House the assurance, and with him his colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, that he was watching energy costs very closely. The minister is of course aware that his department has already received a number of complaints from Canadian consumers. I would like to ask the Minister whether there is any evidence of fraud. If so, could the minister inform this House of the facts in this respect?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, the Bureau of Competition Policy is responsible for examining each case brought to its attention. It has a monitoring role and receives information similar to that just given by the hon. member. In fact, all members of this House have a joint responsibility, if they have the slightest impression or if they have any evidence that might lead one to believe that something is wrong or that there is a failure to comply with the Competition Act, to get in touch with the Director of the Bureau of Competition Policy and give him those facts, to avoid any public perception that there could be abuse in this area. If you have any facts, it is up to you to meet the Director of the Bureau of Competition Policy and give him the facts, and he will investigate the matter. That is his responsibility, Mr. Speaker, and I can assure you that he will do what is necessary.

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[English]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for seniors. The minister is surely aware of the number of Canadian senior citizens who live at or below the poverty line. Indeed almost 40 per cent of single seniors live below the poverty line. How can the minister justify the imposition of the goods and services tax on simple things like