

Oral Questions

[English]

AGRICULTURE

SUICIDE RATE AMONG FARMERS

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, a recent task force report from Ontario highlighted a growing concern in rural Canada—the increase in the suicide rate. Suicide is now the fastest growing cause of death in farm families. Farming has always been a dangerous occupation and ranks up there with forestry workers and miners for accident rates, but now the suicide rate among farmers has surpassed even the accident rate.

The impact is most profound on farm families, from the youngest child with failing grades and emotional problems, to wives who fret in isolation at the prospect of a splintered family, to husbands who take to the bottle. The absence of unemployment insurance benefits, and severely restricted access to welfare for farmers trapped in the long downward spiral to failure, have not helped much. The much vaunted social net barely exists for Canada's farmers. The Government promised much more to Canada's farmers. Surely our farmers rate more than despair and economic ruin.

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● (1415)

HOUSE OF COMMONSPRESENCE IN GALLERY OF SASKATCHEWAN MINISTER OF
PARKS AND RENEWABLE RESOURCES

Mr. Speaker: May I draw to the attention of Members the presence today in our gallery of the Hon. Colin Maxwell, Minister of Parks and Renewable Resources for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EXPO 86

EVICTIONS CARRIED OUT BY VANCOUVER RESIDENTIAL HOTELS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I gave an undertaking to the downtown eastside residents of Vancouver that I would put this question to the Prime Minister on his return to the House.

Later this month the Prime Minister is going to Vancouver to participate in the opening of Expo 86, which will be a triumph for Canada and a great credit to the Province of British Columbia and to our country. As the Prime Minister knows, I am sure, there has been a black eye recently with the

eviction of hundreds of elderly citizens who have been thrown out by residential hotels so that they can take advantage of the short-term profit from Expo.

Would the Prime Minister telephone the Premier of British Columbia and suggest to him, as has the Vancouver City Council, that a moratorium be imposed during Expo to prevent any further evictions, or any excessive rent increases, so that we can forestall this continued injury to our weaker and older citizens?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, while agreeing with the Right Hon. gentleman's observations about Expo 86 and the fact that it will be a success, I certainly agree that it has been somewhat tarnished by the reference to the issue to which the Right Hon. gentleman has referred.

I have spoken to the Premier personally about this matter and I have written to the Ministers responsible, indicating our concern in the hope that they will take corresponding reciprocal action.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport was in Vancouver during Centennial Weekend in his capacity as Minister responsible for Expo. He knows the seriousness of the problem but, I believe, with the greatest respect to him, only the Prime Minister can impress the gravity of the situation upon the Premier of British Columbia.

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HOUSING

PRIORITY REQUESTED FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): My supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, is directed to the Minister of Labour who is responsible for housing. He knows that in Vancouver we have a crisis in social housing. He knows that all funds have been frozen this year, except for a release yesterday on co-operative housing.

Would the Minister, when he travels to Vancouver on April 24 to meet his provincial counterpart, insist in any agreement with the Province of British Columbia that priority be given to co-operative, non-profit, social housing, and that a presence remain in federal hands in the signing of that particular agreement?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the interest which the Hon. Member has in co-operative housing. I should draw to his attention, however, that co-operative housing is the only housing the federal Government will be putting forward that will not be fully targeted.

The Right Hon. Member has expressed concern about low-income earners in Canada. Every dollar, with the exception of the co-op housing program, will be 100 per cent targeted to those Canadian families who are in need.