

Mr. Speaker: There may be other occasions to challenge in debate. If the hon. member insists on debating, I will have to go to another question.

Mr. Mazankowski: A sort of supplementary, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate your consideration. We have in Canada a country elevator system that is literally plugged. Our terminal stocks are down to one half. The railways have indicated that the utilization is less than a full 100 per cent in terms of their grain carrying capacity on an annualized basis. CP have indicated that during the months of September, October and November they were only called upon to utilize one half of their grain carrying capacity.

I ask the minister specifically if he is looking into this problem to ensure that the interface with regard to our grain sales and grain movement is better co-ordinated and better planned.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, in addition to doing the things I indicated in my earlier answer and appointing co-ordinators at the terminals in Vancouver and Thunder Bay, the very purpose of having consultants in place is to look after this interface. The hon. member was apparently critical when we put these consultants in place, yet it is obviously important. Let me say, however, whenever we are moving an absolute record at the limit of our capacity, obviously there will be strains within the system. One of our objectives is to test those strains and to keep strain on the system. When the ships do not arrive on time, as they did not in August and September, that is a difficulty which piles up for later and that we all understand.

I would also like to point out to the hon. member, so that it is understood across this country as it is understood by the prairie farmer, that we have just had three all-time record crops. If only one of those had been average instead of record, it would be a problem of grain supplies rather than a problem of movement. Obviously, we want to be able to build toward moving a billion bushels of grain because we know we can develop even further productive capacity by doing so. But do not be too excited about difficulties when we are pushing the system to its maximum.

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[Translation]

FLOODS

FLOOD PREVENTION PROGRAM IN NORTH MONTREAL— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Marcel Roy (Laval): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment.

Considering the extent of the work being done to control the water level and reduce the risks of spring floods in the area north of Montreal, particularly in Laval along the Prairies river and the Mille-Isles river, and contrary to the press release issued by the local Parti Québécois members, does the minister intend to go on with this work until March 31, 1980, as was

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stated in the Canada-Quebec agreement signed in August, 1977, in order that the victims of these floods will rest assured that we will continue to improve this situation which has already lasted for too long?

[English]

Hon. Len Marchand (Minister of State (Environment)): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise the hon. member that although we have had some cuts in our diking program both in the Montreal area and in British Columbia, we will be able to honour all of the commitments that we made under the 1975 agreement for diking in the Montreal area which was signed by my colleague, now the Minister of Communications. My office notified the hon. Yves Bérubé minister of natural resources, of this on October 18, 1978.

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TRANSPORT

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON MOVEMENT OF GRAIN TO EXPORT POSITIONS

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to that asked by the hon. member for Vegreville: it is addressed to the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board.

In view of the fact that recent statements by officials of the Canadian Wheat Board, grain companies and the railways indicate that because of strikes, underutilization of the railways and other factors in the grain handling and transportation system, grain sales have been deferred, delayed or cancelled, in view of the fact that deferral of deliveries this year to date has been 1½ million tonnes out of Vancouver and half a million tonnes out of Thunder Bay—in this crop year—and in view of the importance of the grain trade not only to western Canada but to the whole of our economy, will the minister take the first opportunity to make a statement on motions giving details to this House of the grain deferrals, lost sales and cancellations, in order that the producers of western Canada and the members of this House may be aware of the facts?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport and Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, the Wheat Board has been making these reports to producers and will be the appropriate body to continue making them. I would like to add that we are taking all the steps we can take to try and minimize any problem in loss of sales and in moving more grain.

We are looking at the question of whether there is any possible way, for example, of getting any extra time on the functioning of the Seaway or other ways of moving more grain to market. That continues to be our pressing concern. When we were in a situation of trying to move the absolute maximum amount of grain, the fact of a strike on the Great Lakes was a clear minus in terms of how it would interfere with the movement to some extent. We do not know at this stage how