

Act establishing the fund, will the Minister take his responsibilities seriously and provide the House with a detailed report explaining how these abuses could have occurred?

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources decides on the basis of the Act already passed by the Parliament of Canada and reports every year on the use of this fund. This Act recognizes the province's responsibility in these matters and we in this Government, unlike the previous Government, take account of the reality of the provinces of Canada and we develop the territory with them. It is in this spirit that we make our decisions, Mr. Speaker, and the Canadian people have twice expressed their agreement with this interpretation of federal-provincial relations.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE

DROUGHT AID PROGRAM

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Farmers in the three western prairie provinces as well as B.C. and Ontario suffered the worst drought in living memory recently. On November 9 the Deputy Prime Minister promised some \$850 million in compensation for those farmers, based on \$45 per acre. There are still no criteria, no guidelines, and no application forms have been made available.

To top that off, the Prime Minister's good friend, the Premier of Saskatchewan, Mr. Devine, as well as other prairie Tory Premiers, said they have no money for the program. Can the Minister give a commitment today that the \$850 million, or more depending on the amount of damage, is going to be provided to these hard-pressed farmers?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I answered a question similar to that in the House of Commons yesterday. The same answer applies. I know the Hon. Member and others were disappointed that we announced a drought program to meet the needs of farmers who were very seriously affected by this drought.

Oral questions

As in the past, when the need has arisen for support from this Government for farmers, we have been there. We have been there in the past, we are there today, and we will be there in the future. I can assure the Hon. Member of that.

DISTRIBUTION OF APPLICATION FORMS AND CHEQUES

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the Tory Premiers are not going to pay for the Prime Minister's election promises.

In any event, the drought occurred last spring and summer. Thousands of farmers had no crop this fall. The program was announced on November 10. When are application forms going to be made available, and can the Deputy Prime Minister make a commitment today that the cheques will start to flow by January 1 so these farmers will have the funds available this winter?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member knows this is the fourth chapter of the drought program announced for the year 1988. The first was a \$12 million water related program; the second was a \$153 million livestock drought program; the third was the \$900 million crop insurance pay-out; the \$850 million is supplementary to that.

That totals close to \$2 billion. That is the kind of support this Government has given in the past and that is the kind of support it is going to give in the future.

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AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

FOREST INDUSTRY FINDINGS

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for forestry. The Auditor General states that unemployment is increasing in the forest industry, that the backlog of unreforested land is increasing, and that forest resource development agreements with the provinces have few clear guidelines and little or no evaluation, citing five examples from coast to coast. What immediate action is the Minister prepared to take to address these very serious issues?

● (1500)

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of State (Science and Technology) and Acting Minister of State (Forestry)):