

*Oral Questions*

moved in and acquired shares in a new company which acquired Quebecair.

**Mr. Broadbent:** What is wrong with that?

**Mr. Pepin:** There is nothing wrong with that. As a matter of fact, this was approved by the CTC, and the present law is not retroactive, so this acquisition can be considered to be acceptable. Should something develop in terms of a regional carrier that would involve the Province of Quebec and the Province of Ontario, either alone or with private sector entities, there is a possibility under this law to make an exception and pass an order in council to approve that. As the Minister said, I do not think my friends on the other side should get overly nervous about this matter.

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**WELFARE****FINANCIAL BURDEN OF MUNICIPALITIES**

**Mr. Norman Kelly (Scarborough Centre):** Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. With the increase in the number of people seeking social assistance, municipalities such as Metropolitan Toronto may have difficulty coping with the added financial burden. Can the Minister indicate to the House any efforts she has under way to deal with the problem of individuals having to turn to welfare?

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** I am sorry, Madam Speaker, the microphone did not seem to be working well. I understood the beginning of the question to deal with the welfare burden on the municipalities. I would like to reiterate that each time a province puts money into welfare through the municipalities, we automatically reimburse the province by a like amount. If it puts more into the municipalities to ease their burden, we will reimburse the province immediately by exactly the same amount of money. This, of course, increased both last year and this year.

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● (1430)

**FARM CREDIT CORPORATION****PROVISION OF LOANS AT REASONABLE INTEREST RATES**

**Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey):** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture and, I suppose, he will have the same feelings as we do on this side of the House regarding the most recent budget. It is clear that the influence of the Minister of Agriculture on the new Minister of Finance is the same as the influence he had on the former Minister of Finance, which is absolutely zero.

The Minister of Agriculture announced on October 1 that the Farm Credit Corporation interest rates for the next six months would be 15¾ per cent. The Bank of Canada rate is

now 11½ per cent. I would like to ask the Minister if he has done anything specific to keep his promise to consider implementing the Conservative Party's AgriBond concept, or to provide low interest outside capital to the Farm Credit Corporation so that farmers can have interest at reasonable rates for long-term financing?

**Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture):** Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member said something about "zero". The calculations he has done, I am sure, have amounted to zero because, if he had looked at the figures, he would have found out how much money we have loaned at subsidized interest rates. The former Minister of Finance allowed us to subsidize interest rates to the tune of 5 per cent, which will cost \$5.4 million in interest rates. This will mean that we are going to be loaning farmers—and you will hear more about it later today—about \$700 million. We will be recouping our position in long-term mortgages from some 20 per cent to 40 per cent of all mortgages just in one year. So, when he says we have no influence on the Minister of Finance, either the previous one or the present one, he is not stating the real facts to this House. The Hon. Member's question was so long I have forgotten what it was.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Gurbin:** We are used to that kind of response from the Minister of Agriculture. For the Minister's information, if he will look at the figures that the Canadian Federation of Agriculture has produced, he will find that interest rate subsidy program he is talking about, which is not long-term financing at reasonable rates for agriculture, stands to help approximately 500 farmers when, really, 10 per cent of the agricultural population, or 20,000 farmers, are in serious financial difficulty.

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**AGRICULTURE****RED MEAT STRATEGY**

**Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey):** My supplementary question is as follows. The Minister of Agriculture has, every three weeks now for the last year, promised to produce a red meat strategy. Today, in Regina, Ministers of Agriculture from nine provinces, national farm organizations, and national producer organizations, are meeting to co-operate in coming up with some programs that will assist agriculture. They understand the need to co-operate.

**Madam Speaker:** That is not reasonable. The Hon. Member announces his question and then goes to another preamble. Question, please.

**Mr. Gurbin:** In the absence of an answer to this first question, Madam Speaker, I will now put my supplementary. Where is the Minister's red meat strategy, and will he co-operate with the provincial ministers?