

The Budget—Mr. Blais

for tobacco growers to get involved gradually in other areas of agriculture. We will seek various ways to keep these people in agriculture and to diversify our production without any negative effect on tobacco growers.

These are concrete and specific measures to show the Government is determined to help farm producers. I would even go so far as to say that the Government, in the past year and a half, has shown a particular concern for farm producers, because if we look at the Budget, the amount of money invested in the agricultural industry has been increased. We had to cut Government spending, and I think it is fortunate, and I imagine farm producers were very happy to see, that there were no substantial cuts in the agricultural sector in the Budget brought down by the Minister of Finance a few days ago. I imagine farm producers—I have more than 1,200 in my riding, and I met several on the weekend—realize this and are thankful, and I do not think the kind of twisted comments we have been hearing in the last few days in the House and across Canada from representatives of the official Opposition are going to change their attitude. People have told us: We are sensible enough to realize what can be done and what cannot. They understand about the legacy we were left by the previous Government, and they also understand that we as a Government have acted responsibly. That is what people want.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people will be the judge.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Questions or comments? The Hon. Member for Richmond-Wolfe (Mr. Tardif).

Mr. Tardif: Mr. Speaker, I have the following question for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture. He is no doubt aware, and if he is not, he should be, that the Farm Credit Corporation has a number of operations, and that proportionally, not many of them are in Quebec. In other words, the Farm Credit Corporation is more popular in the other provinces than in Quebec.

The Budget contains a number of interesting measure, and I think one of the few interesting ones was that additional funds will be injected into the Farm Credit Corporation, thus making it possible to offer preferential interest rates.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary give us some indication of how Quebec farmers can expect to obtain their fair share of these measures?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear the Hon. Member for Richmond-Wolfe (Mr. Tardif) ask me this question. When this Government came to power in 1984, the Farm Credit Corporation had only about 75 loans outstanding in the entire province of Quebec. I do not think this Government is responsible for the situation. It is all because you never acted responsibly. As soon as we came to power, we proceeded with a complete review of the mandate of the Farm Credit Corporation. The Minister and several Government members travelled

across Canada to meet with farm producers and with the people working in the Farm Credit sector in order to—

Mr. Tardif: In Western Canada.

Mr. Blais: You want the answer, or not? Then listen. This is something else you had forgotten during those 20 years: to open your ears, to listen when people are talking. To listen not just here in this House, but when you were in Government. You plugged your ears. You closed the doors and you stopped listening to Canadians. See where you are now. Maybe you should start listening again. That might help you.

Concerning the Farm Credit Corporation, I am not worried about the surveys. Do not worry. You can sleep on both your ears, I am not worried.

We have a constituency that is up for grabs in the Province of Quebec. We are going to get a candidate from our party elected in Saint-Maurice. We will try to recoup Saint-Maurice, and then we will be 59. And if you resign in Richmond-Wolfe, then we will be 60. This is the way we will go on. We have no reason for concern, I am not worried.

Mr. Rossi: In Rivière-des-Prairies, she will not be elected, find something else!

Mr. Blais: You see how the Opposition is reacting, Mr. Speaker? I am asked a question on the Farm Credit Corporation, and that does not even interest him. You know how many people in your constituency have loans with the Farm Credit Corporation? Do you know whether some of your constituents made applications that were either turned down or accepted? Do you know how many farm producers have difficulty becoming eligible under the existing program? Did you take the trouble to get out of the House of Commons and visit your constituency to see how this initiative could benefit your producers? Did you take the trouble to do so and to find out how many could benefit from the 6 per cent interest rate which farmers have been requesting for years? Did you take the trouble to find out? You should. It is your duty as Members of Parliament. You should start by doing your duty.

Mr. Tardif: Do not worry. I have come through the wave.

Mr. Blais: You are going to see what a wave is. It is your responsibility to go and see your farmers, listen to them and take the trouble to read the press release which gives an outline of the program. I am not going to read it because I think that the time of the House is too precious for that. However, you will see what this program involves and whether people in your constituency will benefit from it. The 5,000 people who will be able to obtain these loans are farm producers, and they will benefit from the progressive policy our Government, and more specifically the Minister of Finance, announced a week ago. This is progress. You are not aware of