

Oral Questions

the RCMP so that it may investigate adequately. But as long we have allegations only—

An Hon. Member: They have already been made!

Mr. Blais: These are allegations. What you should do is go directly to the RCMP, and out of respect for—

An Hon. Member: Answer the question!

Mr. Blais: May I have an opportunity to answer, Mr. Speaker?

An Hon. Member: You are not answering!

Mr. Blais: Out of respect for basic freedoms in Canada, this is the proper way to act. The information must be made available to the RCMP so that it may investigate. If you have any information, go to the RCMP.

[*English*]

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, it is not up to me to run the RCMP. This minister is responsible to Canadian citizens for that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Robinson: That is his job.

Mr. Andre: Instead of throwing mud, throw some facts.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robinson: This is the former Conservative member who is making those charges. Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. In view of the fact that Mr. Gravel pleaded guilty after a lengthy court battle, neither did the court nor the public have an opportunity to hear the evidence that would have been adduced had there been a trial. Mr. Speaker, we heard very serious allegations of telephone conversations between the Prime Minister's office and the engineer involved. I am now asking the Deputy Prime Minister: Does he now believe that the time has come finally to launch an urgent investigation into political interference in the administration of justice in Canada? When are they going to act?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member once more asks for a public inquiry, he blames me for not stepping in and directing the RCMP to take this or that course of action. I am wondering what the Hon. Member wants, Mr. Speaker? One should indeed let the RCMP have the facts. One should make them available to the RCMP and ask it to review them. But it is not for the Solicitor

General nor any government member to tell the RCMP what it should do. This government's view is that the RCMP should be independent, it should be free to investigate as it seems fit, and we will respect its independence.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi): My question is directed to the Minister of State for Agriculture (Mr. Blais), Mr. Speaker. Faced with the changes now going on in the economy of Canada and the world, farmers from Abitibi—Témiscamingue and Quebec will come to Ottawa tomorrow afternoon to make the Canadian government aware of their concerns.

Mr. Speaker, my question is this: Can the Minister tell me today whether he could receive the principal leaders of the UPA (Quebec farmers' union) tomorrow before the demonstration to discuss some issues of concern to them, especially on the Quebec provincial scene?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Solicitor General of Canada and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Yes, we have already taken action. With the Prime Minister at the head, a group of us, including the Minister for International Trade, the Minister of Agriculture and myself, met the leaders of Quebec's farmers just a few weeks ago and we discussed the problems these farmers are going through. We will meet them whenever the need arises. I believe that we have always been available, unlike the previous Government, whose Prime Minister did not see fit to meet them once during his 16 years in power. In our case, the Prime Minister has met the leaders of Quebec's farmers at least eight or nine times, Mr. Speaker. This shows our Government's interest in farmers. We will continue to defend their interests, Mr. Speaker, have no fear!

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[*English*]

MEMBERS OF THE SENATE

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Federal Business Development Bank. It concerns