

Supply

still important in this country, after having been neglected for so long.

[*English*]

The Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) suggests that this Government has not used federal corporations to the benefit of the agri-food industry, but again the facts tell a different story.

[*Translation*]

What about the Canadian Farm Credit Corporation? Despite the tremendous financial difficulties faced by this Government, we have made money available to Canadian farmers through the Farm Credit Corporation.

[*English*]

Since the FCC clients are generally the low equity, high risk farmers most in need of assistance, we recognize that this Crown corporation is ideally placed to ensure credit availability and agricultural development across the country. Here are some specifics.

[*Translation*]

In November, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) announced temporary relief, the withholding by the Farm Credit Corporation of legal actions taken against farmers, until at least the Government could develop new solutions to farm credit problems. Part of those solutions were announced the following month, when the authority of the FCC appeal offices was extended—

[*English*]

—to allow for input from the Board before foreclosure action is undertaken.

[*Translation*]

In January, the Minister of Agriculture announced—

[*English*]

—an interest write-down program for FCC clients who borrowed money in 1981-1982 when interest rates were 14 per cent and higher. Those loans could be written down to 12.75 per cent, which represents a saving of \$80 million for affected farmers over a five-year period. In March the Minister announced another FCC program to help farmers cope with volatile interest rates, the Shared Risk Mortgage Program. Farmers who wish to use this program will generally get a lower interest rate than normally offered five-year mortgages, but the interest rates will fluctuate from year to year.

[*Translation*]

Those are our achievements, and I am pleased to see that the Hon. Member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) is in the House to hear this, because as I am pleased to emphasize, that is money that has been invested in agriculture, those are initiatives that were taken, rather than having 20 years of smoke-screening. Concrete steps that have been taken in 8 months, making up for 20 years of neglect of Canadian farmers.

[*English*]

In addition to those measures, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) is continuing to explore innovative new approaches to farm financing, with the FCC again playing a central role in policy formulation and implementation.

Just to mention one other Crown corporation reporting to the Minister of Agriculture, there is the Canadian Dairy Commission which continues to be the Government's instrument for administering the dairy program, valued at about \$300 million per year, for co-ordinating industrial milk production and surplus removal, and even for special functions such as the donation of skim milk powder for African hunger relief programs.

I would now like to address another aspect of the Hon. Member's motion that the federal Government has not adequately consulted with provincial Governments. There are a great many examples of close co-operation, including the following. On October 1, Ministers of Agriculture for Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Canada, announced a \$60 million federal-provincial prairie drought assistance program for livestock producers who had been hard hit by last summer's drought. This program has greatly helped to maintain the prairie livestock industry, and its success is in large part due to the teamwork between federal and provincial officials in administering the program.

[*Translation*]

Last November, the federal Government and Minister of Agriculture and the Ontario Minister of Agriculture announced a joint fund of \$15 million to purchase and process Ontario grape surpluses to be sold later on when the market conditions would allow it. We all know, Mr. Speaker, that agriculture is a major industry throughout Canada. The needs are great and so are the interests. This industry seems to me, perhaps because I am Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, the most important one in Canada and it deserves all our support.

Mr. Speaker, Canada finally needed a Government which would support farmers and agricultural producers throughout Canada and which would be able especially to have producers from the Maritimes, British Columbia, Ontario, the Western Provinces and Quebec sit down around the same table. This was important, not to urge the provinces and the farmers and agricultural producers of all the provinces to confront each other, but to try to find true solutions to our problems, and I emphasize the word "try" because, unfortunately, we do not have the answer to all problems. However, we did solve many of them and we shall try to do the same in the coming weeks and months. Indeed, we have already started.

Last December, Mr. Speaker, the federal Government and Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) and the Quebec Minister of Agriculture announced a compensation program for crop losses in the province of Quebec for the year 1983.