

Oral Questions

Let me quote a constituent from the hon. member's province and riding. This is a small businessman who says: "I run a small company employing 12 people and sales of around \$1 million per year. The GST has improved our ability to compete and export to the U.S. market. We spend a trivial amount of time administering the GST. In fact the only problem with the tax is that it does not apply to everything".

That is the feeling of many businesses across the country.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the minister on finding the one small business person in Manitoba who supports the GST.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Does he not realize that the country, in combination with the FTA and the GST, is bleeding to death? What is needed now is a tourniquet. Scrap the tax. Don't slash our throats by adding a North American free trade agreement on top of what is already devastating the country.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I will give the hon. member another example. I have a letter here from the Consumers Distributing corporation, which is a fairly large organization in Canada. After taking off the manufacturers' sales tax and adding the GST to its pricing, in its catalogue this year prices were reduced across the board by 2 per cent. If we add inflation to that, that is a reduction of 5 per cent. That is why some people support the GST.

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GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

Mr. Bill Vankoughnet (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington): Mr. Speaker, my question through you is for the Minister of Agriculture.

As we all know, the GATT negotiations have entered a very crucial stage. Will the minister reconfirm to this House, as well as to the agriculture community in Canada, its balanced negotiating position? Do the Government of Canada and its negotiators continue to support a clarified and therefore strengthened article XI?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks an important question. We are in delicate stages of negotiations within GATT. A text has been put out by the director general of GATT, Mr. Dunkel, which ignored the position put forward by Canada and five other countries.

We have said that we were both dismayed and disappointed. Along with the supply management groups and with the provinces which have supported the position that Canada is putting forward—after all, the provinces and the supply management groups helped Canada develop the position—we will continue to put that position forward.

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COMMUNITY FUTURES PROGRAM

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester): Mr. Speaker my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. It refers to Community Futures.

Colchester county in Nova Scotia is completely surrounded by very successful Community Futures areas and finds it cannot compete without the futures infrastructure. Colchester applied for a futures program in November. I wonder if the minister could indicate whether Colchester will be successful in its bid.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): As the hon. member may know, Mr. Speaker, we have decided to announce the second round of funding for that program. Second generation support will be available through a process of reselection of communities which can demonstrate continuing need. Local EIC officials will have the details of the reselection process. When the review is complete I will advise the hon. member of the outcome of the Colchester application.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment. In the Oldman ruling, the Supreme Court unequivocally confirmed federal jurisdiction over the environment.