

*Supply*

**Mr. Mayer:** At the end of the day there is going to be no GST paid by farmers. It is going to save them \$250 million. Why is the hon. member not supporting us in that? I do not understand this. What they are doing is totally political. We know what the NDP did in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It put in a land bank and proceeded to buy 1.3 million acres of land when it was in power in Saskatchewan. We know that record. We know what the Liberals did. They had their Prime Minister come out to western Canada to give us the finger and tell us to sell our own wheat. We know what their record is. What is the record of this government?

He talks about the over-all problem—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** The member for Kamloops on a point of order.

**Mr. Riis:** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. friend, the Minister responsible for Grains and Oilseeds, referring to the situation out in the west. I wonder if he could confirm that the most recent projections are that 10,000 farmers in Saskatchewan alone will likely lose their farms this year?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** The hon. member will have an opportunity on questions and comments to ask the minister a question.

**Mr. Mayer:** Mr. Speaker, I have with me projections done by Ag-Decision for the United Grain Growers which have just been released today which show seeding intentions. That might be a little more interesting. The hon. member in whose name the motion stands says that farmers are not going to get a chance to put their crop in the ground because of lack of credit or lack of finances. He might be interested in these figures.

In Manitoba over-all seeding intentions for wheat are up 8 per cent. They are up 3 per cent in Saskatchewan for wheat and up 6 per cent in Alberta. Over-all seeding intentions on the Prairies are up by 2 per cent. In other words, farmers are going to seed 2 per cent more land this year than they did last year.

To say it another way, summer fallow is going to be down. When you summer fallow you do not seed crop. Summer fallow is down 2 per cent and over-all seeding intentions are up. That does not sound to me like an industry that is going out of business.

Admittedly there are problems, there is no question there are problems. But also bear in mind that the motion only refers to grains and oilseeds and a little less than half of the industry is based on grains and oilseeds. It is roughly a \$20 billion industry in Canada and a little over half of it is livestock products and other special crops. So we are talking about half of the industry.

I will give you some more interesting figures, Mr. Speaker. The member spoke about the FCC. There is no doubt we are concerned about interest rates. These are loans approved by region to the end of March this year. They are up this year over last year and I will give you the numbers for Saskatchewan. The number of loans is up from 558 last year to 751 this year. In other words, farmers are borrowing money to buy land, to increase their operations.

In Manitoba the number of loans a year ago was 156, this year it is 315. So over-all seeding intentions are up. Moisture conditions are a little better, and moisture conditions are a big part of it, there is no question about that. They are much better, although not universally. There is an area in the southwest corner of Manitoba and the southeast corner of Saskatchewan that still has problems with the weather. But over-all the industry is starting to turn around.

Second, there is no mention at all in the motion about what is going on at GATT. The grains and oilseeds industry is largely dependent on exports. We have to deal with what is happening at GATT. I happen to think that we have reasonable prospects for reaching an agreement at the GATT, for a couple of reasons.

First, this is the first time ever that agriculture has been on the main agenda as far as the GATT is concerned. That is a significant event in itself. These over-all discussions have been going on now for about four years.

Second, we saw a year and a half ago that if we could not get a proper deal in agriculture it was likely to jeopardize the whole round. Those, to me, are two reasons why there is room for optimism that we are going to settle some of these things at the GATT. If we can do that, we will know probably before the end of the year at which time the GATT negotiation period runs out, that is going to be a positive signal as far as the over-all industry is concerned.