

those who did not make their payments represent only a very small percentage of the total number of those, either in the private or the public sector, who obtained guaranteed loans, through the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and what the hon. member considers as an astronomical number is in fact a very small one.

[English]

Mr. Darling: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the financial community believes the recent changes to the AHOP program, namely, the graduated payment mortgages, will increase the likelihood of default, and considering that the situation is likely to worsen as conventional mortgage rates increase in light of recent bank rate hikes, will the minister undertake to consult with his colleague, the Minister of Finance, and announce some relief for the home owners who face losing title to their homes? Will he review the situation and announce in the House a more sane and economically viable alternative?

[Translation]

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I think the program which could bring the greatest number of defaults in Canada would certainly be the program which would include the proposals announced recently by the Leader of the Opposition, if they were implemented. The proposals of the Leader of the Opposition would have undoubtedly much more serious consequences on the number of possible defaults than the present Assisted Home Ownership Program.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

MEDAL IN RECOGNITION OF NATO SERVICE

Mr. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. It is now three years since the government agreed with a motion I introduced in the House to establish a medal in recognition of NATO service. In the last three years there have been a number of undertakings by the minister's predecessor and himself to bring forward this medal. I should like to ask, once again, when some progress will be reached in the production of this medal in recognition of service in NATO.

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I have only been the minister for two of those three years. The issuance of new medals is not treated lightly, and a number of steps would have to be taken. I expect to announce in the very near future the issuance of a general service medal, rather than a specific NATO medal. A NATO medal produced by Canada would not be appropriate if it was not general throughout NATO. This general service medal will apply to the regulars and the reserves after a minimum length of service in Canada and/or abroad, with special recognition in the form of a clasp for NATO service and other types of distinguished service.

Oral Questions

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I guess I have made the announcement.

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AGRICULTURE

PROPOSED SALE OF GOVERNMENT GRAIN ELEVATORS

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture: it concerns the proposed sale by the government of five inland government elevators.

I should like to ask why the government intends to sell these elevators, especially since last year they turned over a profit of \$1.3 million and this year the projected profit is some \$4 million, while at the same time it is known that the elevators are greatly underutilized. In view of those facts, why does the government want to sell these elevators? Why does it not turn them over to the Canadian Wheat Board so they can be used in a planned and rational grain movement system in this country?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member is asking the same question asked of another government member, perhaps with the hope of getting a different answer so he can say we do not agree.

The whole program is to privatize these operations in which the government is involved. It may be that the grain elevator facilities the hon. member has mentioned can be used to a greater extent. I think he fully understands why these elevators were never used to the extent for which they were constructed; namely, because the government and the Wheat Board did not direct grain there as that would be taking grain away from the private sector. The wheat pools in the private sector handle about 80 per cent of the grain produced in western Canada, and that would hurt that operation. In turn, this decision hurt the operation of the government elevator services.

If the wheat pools, or somebody else, want to make an offer in respect of these facilities—some of which are in very good condition, while others are not in such good condition—that will be considered. Perhaps they may be able to make them function in a proper way.

STUDIES OF POTENTIAL CAPACITY OF GOVERNMENT GRAIN ELEVATORS

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Agriculture whether any studies were carried out that would indicate the potential capacity of those five government-owned elevators, or was the decision to restrict the use of these elevators simply taken in the absence of such a study?

● (1202)

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, these elevators, especially the ones which have been updated, meet the standards for fireproofing and have improved grain-