

Oral Questions

We are hopeful that we can be successful. If we all work together, I am sure we can be.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, meetings like this have been going on for six weeks now. Is the parliamentary secretary aware that credit is simply drying up for farmers on the prairies?

With wheat prices down by \$30 a tonne and with interest rates up above 15 per cent, farmers simply cannot get credit. In light of the parliamentary secretary's comments, can he assure western agriculture producers that cheques will be sent out before the end of this month? When will payments be made to these producers?

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, it would be very premature to make any indication of that when a meeting is taking place today.

The Minister of Agriculture has indicated that he is very flexible in terms of matching funds that the provinces can make available to match the \$500 million that the federal government has put up.

As I said before, it would be very premature to make any announcement today while the ministers are meeting.

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CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women answered the leader of the New Democratic Party by saying that violence against women was her "top priority". I certainly wish that this matter would become the top priority of the government.

If this is her top priority, and if it is any kind of a priority for her government, why did the government put a cap on the Canada Assistance Plan? This is the federal-provincial funding mechanism for shelters for battered women. Why is their a cap on CAP?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am the minister responsible for the Canada Assistance Plan. I can indicate to the hon. member, as most members of the House of Commons recognize, it is important that the federal government have controls on federal spending.

The one area which has not been controlled up until now has been transfers to the provinces which have been increasing at the rate of 6 per cent per annum. The caps apply only to the wealthy provinces.

In the case of Ontario the cap on transfers on EPF and the Canada Assistance Plan amount to less than 1 per cent of the revenues of the Ontario government for this year. It is absolutely possible for the Ontario government, as it is for other provinces, to find money for family violence or any other area of importance to them.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, the women who are battered in the province of British Columbia and the women who are subject to abuse in Ontario and Alberta are just as battered and just as bruised as any of the women in any other part of this country.

When are we going to see the government take this situation seriously? When are we going to see real dollars and a real plan of effective action to combat violence against women in our society?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, first, the hon. member mentions British Columbia. The cap on CAP amounts to 5 per cent growth per annum, which is permitted for every province. British Columbia did not meet that target last year and likely will not this year. Thus the cap probably will not affect that province.

Second, the commitment to doing everything we can to fight family violence remains. We are determined to do that. We have committed money specifically to family violence programs, quite outside of the Canada Assistance Plan. We are going to continue to do that.

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FISHERIES

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Beauséjour): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the minister responsible for fisheries. Last week, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced a fisheries adjustment program that is far from meeting the needs of the regions concerned. Besides overlooking many communities, it makes no mention of fishermen in Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.