

Oral Questions

foundland. This was not a unilateral decision by the Government of Canada. [English]

The Truro-Sydney line has not been abandoned. CN has tried to sell that line. It has received some proposals that it is examining at the present time. These will have to be examined by the government as well.

CP's action this week is not the removal of the line. CP is asking the NTA to give it permission to do so. During that process everyone who is not in agreement will have the occasion to make their comments known. This is a very good democratic process.

[Translation]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The minister will surely be able to elaborate in his answer to the supplementary question. The hon. member for Moncton has the floor.

[English]

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): Madam Speaker, Atlantic Canadians are going to feel a lot better after that announcement.

With the abandonment of rail service in Atlantic Canada, transport traffic on our killer Trans-Canada Highway will dramatically increase. The Prime Minister continues to dither on whether there should be a national highways upgrading program. Each weekend in New Brunswick we read in our newspapers about more deaths on the Trans-Canada Highway.

Will the minister commit, whether other provinces join in or not, to upgrade the Trans-Canada Highway in New Brunswick?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, the hon. member opposite will know that at a meeting with the Prime Minister of Canada last March, the first ministers agreed that a program to repair our national highways would be set up with federal participation. Later, the Minister of Finance included this item in his budget. Since then, discussions have been held with the premiers and the ministers of transport to try to come up with a solution acceptable to all provinces.

INTEREST RATES

Mrs. Louise Feltham (Wild Rose): Madam Speaker, although interest rates today are significantly below those of previous years, yesterday's interest rate increase will no doubt present problems for small businesses that need to borrow money to start up or to expand.

My question is for the minister for small business. What initiatives is he undertaking to help this vital sector of the Canadian economy?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question.

At present in the House we are amending the Small Businesses Loans Act to raise the ceiling. I have also indicated that we can improve that Small Businesses Loans Act even further to give access to federal loan guarantees to small business. The Federal Business Development Bank has increased its loans 13 per cent this year.

We will continue through all our regional agencies to help small business. There will be new initiatives coming as well, as the Prime Minister said last night.

Madam Deputy Speaker: A single question from the hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings and a single question from the hon. member for Skeena.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister or whomever is answering on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture today.

We know that a cold and wet summer and fall in Ontario, and as well in much of Canada but particularly in Ontario, have left 1.5 million acres of corn in the field. Farmers have been unable to harvest 90 per cent of the crop because of high moisture content in the corn and in the fields. Farmers are strapped for cash. The present advance payment program does not allow the use of that program for standing crops.