

Supply

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) is referring to some remarks allegedly reported in the newspaper he has. I would be pleased if he were to table it, because what he has just said is completely false. I cannot accept that.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member knows full well, I presume, that the Hon. Member is not allowed to table documents, only a Minister can do that.

Mr. Malépart: Mr. Speaker, I would be prepared to table the document. I could remind the Hon. Member for Bellechasse (Mr. Blais) of what he said to his constituents, that there was no money for housing, but then in caucus he voted to waste money on military expenditures, he does not want senior citizens to have more generous allowances, but he is quite satisfied to give out \$2.5 million to the oil multinationals. I hope he realizes that his constituents are intelligent people. I know they are.

Mr. Speaker, I think I have amply demonstrated that, in the field of housing, Quebec has been and is still being taken for a ride. Tonight, hopefully, the Conservative Members will put that on the agenda and bring the Minister to his senses tomorrow at the national caucus. I am not asking them to rise in the House. I do expect them to rise in caucus and see to it that the \$10 million funding goes back in the housing program. I will find out who rose and who did not at tonight's caucus.

I do not have to be there, Mr. Speaker, I have my sources of information.

Concerning the general agreement, Mr. Speaker, after all those cut-backs the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion and the Conservative Members get up at their mutual admiration meeting and say: We signed a \$1 billion general agreement. We reduced it by \$770,000 million, \$300 million less for equalization . . . I am just about finished, Mr. Speaker. Then they turn around and say: We took that away from you for a year, but we are going to sign a five-year agreement to spend money.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks by saying what the newspapers of Quebec think of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion: Confused, Stevens unable to explain his policy.

Mr. Speaker: Question, comments? No questions, no comments. Debate. The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Blais)

• (1710)

Mr. Pierre Blais (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to respond today to the suggestion contained in the Opposition motion that this Government has completely failed in its agricultural policies, especially since this is said with reference to all regions of Canada.

[English]

The facts tell quite a different story and I am glad to set the record straight at this time. Where are they now? Where are they? I would like to refute—

Mr. Riis: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. friend reminded Members earlier that it was not considered parliamentary to refer to Members' absence from the Chamber. I just wanted to remind him of that point.

Mr. Speaker: That is a perfectly *bona fide* point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, sure enough when we are challenged for minutes and minutes on end and asked to answer and to prove them wrong, and someone rises to answer, of course, they are surprised. I will comply with the rules, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

I would like to refute the Hon. Member's allegations, one at a time, starting with the action the Government has taken in support of Canadian agriculture, then the action we have taken jointly with the provinces, and finally I would like to review some of the ways in which this Government has engaged the knowledge and talents found in this House in the development of agricultural policies.

Let us consider for example the fuel tax rebate. The economic statement of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) in November included a rebate of 4.8 cents per litre on farm fuel taxes. That is made up of 1.8 cents to offset the petroleum compensation charge, and a 3 cents rebate on the federal sales tax. These rebates will save Canadian farmers between \$100 million and \$150 million per year.

[Translation]

Those are accomplishments, Mr. Speaker, not smokescreens. This is not 20 years of waiting. Those are accomplishments that can be measured; they are visible and can be assessed by Canadians. This is important. I hope that tomorrow, many will read *Hansard* and find out the facts if they cannot get them elsewhere.

Another example, the Western Grain Stabilization Act. After final payments that amounted to \$123 million last fall—

[English]

The Government set to work to amend the Western Grain Stabilization Act to allow for interim payments. As a result of this Government's swift passage of that legislation, western farmers enrolled in this program received payments this spring totalling \$450 million. That money was extremely helpful to a great many western farmers in defraying planting expenses for this year's grain and oil seed crops.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, \$450 million, that is a lot of money. Reference was made to \$450 million cuts earlier. There you have it, \$450 million that were paid to help Western producers. This is important, because this Government thinks that agriculture is