

(3) Why has the state of Maine been able to dictate to the USDA and Agriculture Canada on the lifting of the border restrictions? Maine has tried for years to prevent P.E.I. potatoes from entering the state or passing through the state. They have tried anti-dumping procedures and border harassment. You name it, they have tried it and have failed.

Maine was losing out badly to Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick seed and table producers, and indeed to table producers from the western U.S. states. They failed to keep up with advancements in the industry and their products could not compete.

As far as Maine is concerned, the PVY-N crisis is the best thing that has happened for them in years, and they do not mean to let go. They and Senator Mitchell are calling the shots on this one, and our government does not have the political or moral courage to take them on.

(4) Are Agriculture Canada's testing procedures up to date and accurate? Other scientists think not and, if proven correct, this could be the cruelest cut of all. It is possible that the whole problem has been blown vastly out of proportion and the reputation of P.E.I. potatoes and Agriculture Canada has been destroyed.

(5) Why has the United States not tested for PVY-N? After all, if we have it, they have it because we have been shipping potatoes into the United States since the time we are told it was first discovered in P.E.I. in 1987. Therefore, they have PVY-N if we have it. As long as the United States does not test—they say they do not have it—is this really logical? If we both have it and it cannot be eradicated, why not strike a tolerance level?

(6) Why has it taken so long to get the 1990 compensation cheques issued? Why are there no forms for the 1991 compensation claims?

How would you, Mr. Speaker, or any of us in this House like not to have been paid during the past year? These farmers are living on bank loans for over a year. This must be corrected.

To conclude, I want to make a few remarks about the farm financial crisis in general.

It is a fact that our farm debt is \$24 billion. Interest on this debt at the rate of 10 per cent is \$2.5 billion. That means the over \$2 billion the government bragged it is going to put into the farm sector this year is merely going

to pay the interest on the farm debt. The only ones really getting paid are the bankers.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I would like to say a few things more, but you have indicated that my time is up. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Egmont and the speaker before him have demonstrated how productive farmers in general are. There is no doubt about that. In turn, our colleague from Prince Edward—Hastings described production, past and present. There is no doubt that they are indeed very productive.

I have a question for my colleague at this point. About the answers the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of State (Agriculture) provided yesterday, the problem is that farmers or producers are requesting protection. We know that agriculture has become as important as national defence. There is no doubt about it, we cannot rely on production from abroad as regards agriculture. We must be self-sufficient. That is a steadfast rule. Here is my question. The Quebec UPA made several representations and, contrary to what I was told in both answers I received yesterday, they asked for our borders to be protected so as to prevent dumping. According to the UPA, the former Minister of Agriculture, the hon. Eugene Whelan was a man of great convictions. I was told that he was the father of joint programs. He is. However, what Canadian farmers need right now is protection.

So, I ask my colleague: is protection provided for in joint programs, is there a moral commitment on the part of the government or is it just left open in the free market? We suggest that government involvement is required to keep the market in line. However, would the government not endanger the Canadian farm industry by claiming that the best approach is to force farmers to produce beyond their capacity?

[*English*]

Mr. McGuire: Mr. Speaker, one thing is certain. That is if Canada continues on its present road, it will not be self-sufficient in food, while at the same time the Americans have made it much easier for their farmers to become more productive and to shed their burden of debt.