

Oral Questions

I would point out that unlike comments made by the hon. member, my decision is confined to the evidence before me, not to the speculation of the hon. member.

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister in the absence of the Minister responsible for Western Diversification.

Two weeks ago the province of Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg expressed jointly their willingness to sign a third core area initiative. This took place at a public meeting held in the poorest neighbourhood in Winnipeg.

The federal government for the first time refused even to send an observer. This is after 10 years of working together.

I ask the minister why this government has refused to help the poor of Winnipeg. Why has it turned its backs on its partners at this time?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, without accepting the premise of the question, I will certainly undertake to look into the matter and get back to the hon. member as soon as possible.

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his response to that question.

In addition, the people of Winnipeg have found themselves in very difficult economic circumstances. At no time in the last five years has this government announced any economic plan to assist the city.

Is it not about time that the minister and the government plan an action and begin to help the people of Winnipeg to revive the economy there?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Western Diversification Program was not a program that was designed to help only the larger cities.

As a matter of fact I am sure that he would be interested in knowing that over 3,000 specific projects have been funded under the western diversification initiative in excess of \$1 billion. Many of those were funded in the province of Manitoba and many of those were funded in rural areas. I think the hon. member would recognize the western diversification initiative's

response to initiatives and applications made to it by various entrepreneurs.

I think the record of success is very good. It has been a program that has broadened and expanded the economic base of western Canada. If he would like to have any further information to prove that I would be glad to provide it for him.

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GRAIN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Transport.

The minister is aware that while most Canadian ports are underutilized, the Canadian Wheat Board is shipping grain through the U.S. port of Seattle. In addition a Wheat Board official has admitted that the Gulf of Mexico ports are being considered for future transportation.

Does the minister not agree that Canadian grain shipped with Canadian taxpayers' dollars should be shipped through Canadian ports providing Canadian jobs?

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the subsidies for grain transportation are for the transportation of grain within the country of Canada and do not apply to shipments going out of Mexico.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister.

The minister will know that the Wheat Board has decided to take 500 grain cars out of the eastern system and reallocate them to the experiment through Seattle, Washington. Yet the port of Thunder Bay, which to this government was so important that it had to legislate the grain handlers back to work, is operating at an under-capacity of 4,000 cars.

Would the minister not agree that it makes more sense to divert those cars back from Seattle, put them in the Canadian system and keep Canadians working?

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, the port of Thunder Bay is shipping grain on the routes that they can ship. There are other needs to ship grains out of other ports and the Wheat Board is doing its best to ship the grain for farmers so the farmers get paid.