

Oral Questions

already have plans for next year because we will not give up until illiteracy is beaten.

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• (1150)

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Madam Speaker, my question was for any one of the three ministers of agriculture, but since none of them are here I will direct it to the government bench generally.

The minister announced yesterday a payment to the farmers in Saskatchewan. There is still a bit of concern because the Saskatchewan government, which is only putting in \$39 million, indicates that it does not know where that \$39 million is going to come from.

Could anyone on the benches across indicate if this is going to slow up the payments to the farmers? When can they expect some assistance from this program?

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I am not particularly aware of the problem the member is talking about. It was May 31 that that agreement between the federal government and the provincial government was announced. The federal contribution to the program is \$238.3 million. The province is coming up with substantial amounts of money to match that program as well.

I am sure that the farmers of Saskatchewan must be very pleased because they are receiving the largest portion of that \$500 million program and it has to be coming at a very appropriate time.

The province will be making the payments to the producers. How soon that is going to be, I do not know, but the program has to be developed for distribution of those funds.

Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Madam Speaker, the program was announced as pre-seeding assistance to farmers so that they could have money for seeding. For 80-cent-per-acre assistance from the Saskatchewan government, the federal government has forced these farmers to wait for over two months.

Is there any reason the government did not put out this money and collect from the provincial governments later?

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, as I am sure the member knows well, it takes time to develop a program and deliver that program. As I said before, we will get that program out through the provinces post-haste.

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[*Translation*]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Supply and Services. Bill C-21, an Act to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act and increase employee premiums, has not yet been passed by Parliament. Could the minister tell us by what right the deductions on paycheques of federal employees have been increased?

[*English*]

Hon. Paul Dick (Minister of Supply and Services): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for the question and to inform hon. members that the deductions that are taken off employee paycheques are taken off in accordance with the regulations and the law that is in place right now. The new law she is talking about, of course, is being held up by her party in the Senate.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the minister might wish to clarify his answer because we have been informed that the new premium rates were implemented as of January 1, 1990 for all federal government employees.

I ask again on what authorization those deductions are being taken off.

Hon. Paul Dick (Minister of Supply and Services): Madam Speaker, under the present law, a premium rate is announced every year. At present, the legal rate is \$1.95. An adjustment was announced late last year by the hon. Minister of National Revenue, who made it clear that it was voluntary pending passage of C-21. The recommended rate is \$2.25. We are making the deductions in accordance with the law and regulations in place now.