Oral Questions

tax proposal which specifically take into account recommendations that Canadians have made directly to us as a government and through the finance committee. Again we have made adjustments to the sales tax proposal that take into account what Canadians have said.

After nearly three years of discussing this issue I believe that Canadians are owed a decision on this matter. We believe that it is important to get on with the business of government. What the finance committee chairman was doing last night was trying to get some agreement from the finance committee whereby we could have an understanding of how effectively we could get this legislation back to Parliament. Unfortunately, those discussions were not allowed to continue because of the obstructionist tactics of the New Democratic Party.

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AGRICULTURE

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, in view of the numerous requests by various producer groups including the Ontario Corn Producers' Association, the wheat producers, the prairie pools and the Premier of Saskatchewan, for financial aid to assist the farmers to plant their crops this year, will the Minister of Agriculture tell us today what help will be forthcoming from the government for this purpose?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that would help enormously is if the hon. member would appeal to his colleagues and to his NDP friends to get the crop insurance bill through. It would certainly help very much.

As I indicated to the House yesterday, we have the report of the monitoring review committee that was set up in December. We are looking at it. As we meet in the House of Commons right now the federal deputy minister is meeting with his provincial counterparts and discussing this very important issue.

I can assure the hon. member that we are working on it. It will be a joint federal response with the provinces being involved in the design. Hopefully it will be tar-

geted. It will be flexible and because it is a multi-faceted problem we hope that it can be designed in such a way as to address the multi-faceted situation. Of course the program will be comprehensive and flexible.

I want to assure the hon. member that this is an issue that is going to require shared responsibility and we are working at it on that basis.

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister forgave a $182 million debt for the Commonwealth Caribbean countries. Will the Minister of Agriculture commit his government now to a similar forgiveness of debt and an immediate moratorium of debt repayment and interest for our Canadian farmers as provided for in section 11(1)(e) of the Farm Credit Corporation Act.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the farm debt review board process has been very effective in dealing with this important issue. I think it is also important to note that hon. members make representations about the level of farm bankruptcies. I point out to the House that we reached a high in farm bankruptcies in 1983-84.

Under the Liberal regime farm bankruptcies across Canada approached about 550 on an annual basis. We have progressively brought it down to about 300, which is still too high but certainly demonstrates very clearly that it is the policies of this government that have worked and are removing some of the very difficult problems inflicted by the government of which he was a member.

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IMMIGRATION

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration and it concerns the amendments she proposed to the refugee backlog system.

According to the changes announced today, refugee claimants may now be considered according to such factors as separation of family members, employment, long-term residency, social integration, or whether they have had children raised or born in this country.