

GRAIN INDUSTRY

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg—St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the individual answering for the Minister of Finance. It pertains to wheat shipments to Russia.

The wheat is moving at only half capacity. In the seaway only 20 ships out of 47 are moving. Only 1.7 million tonnes of wheat have been ordered. That is less than 50 per cent of normal. Despite the government's assurances that the Wheat Board can handle the situation, the tie-up continues.

As I understand it there is a problem in the finance department. It is not giving the right signals to the Canadian Wheat Board.

I want to know what the hold-up is in the Department of Finance.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of my colleague, the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, I will tell the hon. member that the figures we have here indicate that initial payments were made in light of the information available and based on the figures we had. I do not believe that there is a problem. The news report is untrue, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg—St. James): With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, I do not think the minister knows what he is talking about, because we get a very different story from the industry.

There are 27 ships idle in the seaway. The shipping industry has laid off over 3,000 employees and only 1,000 cars have been allotted to the railways. Normally that figure is 4,000 cars. Farmers soon will not be able to move any grain at all. In other words it is a mess out there.

There is a problem in the finance department. I want to know from this individual if he can say explicitly whether the Minister of Finance has given the go-ahead

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to the Wheat Board to apply credits to cover shipping charges. Yes or no.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why, but there are still people on that side of the House who get up and complain about the way this government deals with western Canadian farmers. Never has a government defended farmers in the west and throughout Canada so much.

The money made available to western farmers has increased more than 500 per cent over the years, Mr. Speaker. The initial payments were made and are still being made in accordance with the rules. I think that the hon. member should instead thank us for the way we have acted in recent years, rather than complain and simply report complaints from the newspapers.

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[*English*]

BENZOYL PEROXIDE

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to whomever is speaking on behalf of the minister of health.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has now imposed a requirement for safety labels on acne medicines which contain benzoyl peroxide. Benzoyl peroxide is both a cancer initiator and promoter. Some years ago an external committee recommended that all sales of medicines containing benzoyl peroxide, which is used largely by teenagers for the treatment of acne, be banned for over the counter sales.

Is it now time, now that the Americans have acted, for the Canadian government and health and welfare to act in Canada to protect those teenagers and young people who are using a potential carcinogen on their skin twice daily?

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, with regard to benzoyl peroxide, yes, this has come forward in the news in the last couple of days.