

Supply

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I do not think that is necessary. The hon. member is probably answering a phone call or watching it on television.

Mr. McDermid: Do you want us to stand up and say there isn't a farmer in the NDP here?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): On debate, the hon. Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds.

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear what goes on across the way. I noticed that the hon. member for Broadview—Greenwood got up. I think it is fair to say that the only thing he knows about agriculture is the fact that he has something green in the name of his riding. When I hear him talking to the hon. member from—

Ms. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As a member from an urban riding, I would like to object very strongly to the opening comments of the minister. All of us who represent urban ridings care very much about farmers in this land.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): That is not a point of order, it is a point of debate.

Mr. Mills: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would never, ever want to claim that I knew as much about agriculture as the minister, but I must tell the minister that I have been actively farming for close to 26 years on a full-time basis. I resent his shots. I think they are really cheap and I think that his attitude is such—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order. That again is not a point of order. It is a point of debate. All hon. members will have an opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

Mr. McDermid: What nonsense. You bought the farm for an investment.

Mr. Mills: You're so smug, John, you don't see what's going on.

Mr. Harvard: So now the Tories are against investment. What a bunch of hypocrites.

Mr. McDermid: Who woke you up?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I was just saying that all hon. members will have an opportunity to question or comment on the minister's speech if we can get to it.

The hon. Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds.

Mr. Mayer: Thank you very much again, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to impugn anybody in terms of their attitude toward agriculture. What I was merely doing, when I referred to the hon. member for Broadview—Greenwood, was commenting on the observations he makes about agriculture. All I can do is judge people by the way they comment in the House. On the basis of those comments I have to assume, and unfortunately conclude, that he does not know very much about agriculture. When I hear him saying that the member from Moose Jaw gave a fabulous speech, it reminds me of the old saying that what we don't understand we explain to each other. That seems to be what was going on between these two.

The hon. member from Moose Jaw talks about the Canadian Wheat Board losing sales to the Soviet Union. Let me put the hon. member's mind at rest on that. That is not the case. We are in the fourth year of a five-year long-term grain sales agreement with the Soviet Union that calls for a minimum purchase of 25 million tonnes. The hon. member would like to know, I hope, that before the conclusion of the fourth year we will have sold over 20 million tonnes, so we are not losing sales to the Soviet Union as a result of EHP. That is not to say that we are not losing prices, which we are, but we are not losing sales.

The member talks about the Canadian Wheat Board being relegated to selling only barley and wheat. Let me tell you what that means. The hon. member should know that of the three grains that the board handled a year ago—wheat, oats and barley—oats made up one-quarter of 1 per cent of all sales. By volume it is less than one-quarter of one per cent.

In addition, as a result of us removing oats from the Canadian Wheat Board, there has been a considerable amount of investment in western Canada and some jobs have been created. In Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, there is an oat facility going up which is going to process about 100,000 tonnes of oats a year. They are going to spend \$17 million. There are three reasons they are building in Portage. First, it is a good location, close to the U.S. The second reason is free trade, better access to the U.S. market. This is a \$17 million investment. They are going to process 100,000 tonnes of oats, close to a quarter of Manitoba's annual production, in one facility. The third