

than \$15,000. Because of that burden, many have defaulted. This government has imposed a 3 per cent surcharge on those loans in order to discourage default.

Some hon. members: Shame.

Mr. McCurdy: My question to the minister is this: Will he explain how increasing the student debt load can possibly be designed to cut down on defaults?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, students are the future of this great country.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Weiner: That is precisely why the Prime Minister indicated education is such a high priority.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Weiner: Mr. Speaker, we are proud of our record of achievements.

An hon. member: Yes, sir.

Mr. Weiner: In particular, since 1984-85, we have doubled the Canada Student Loans Program from some \$200 million to over \$400 million. Unfortunately, the debt, the defaults have more than tripled within the same period. So it was more than natural to begin an analysis to see what methods can be implemented to help with the administrative costs of some of those debts. The small administrative fee which is repaid at the end, when they are already in the work force, did not seem like much of an obstacle in the shared responsibility of education between the two levels of government, the parents, the family, and the students themselves.

• (1450)

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair.

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair in asking the supplemental question to which he is entitled will be very clear to dissociate himself from the demonstration that we have just had in this Chamber.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, there is no member of this House who would reasonably assume that I was in any way responsible for any of—

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. Dairy farmers in Quebec and Canada are worried. Is the Canadian offer tabled at GATT likely to reassure them?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, Canada's position tabled Monday at GATT— I personally met leaders of the Quebec agricultural industry on Monday, and this morning, in the newspapers, I found that most Quebec agricultural organizations and most Canadian organizations have come out in favour of the Canadian position at GATT. We feel that our position is balanced and represents the interests of all Canadian farmers, and I am particularly proud that Canada will be able to count on the support of all Canadian farmers in defending their interests in Geneva.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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[*English*]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, I have disavowed any responsibility for the actions in the gallery. I look at the other side for someone to disavow responsibility for the government's side behaviour.

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to put his question.

Mr. Shields: We don't believe you, Howard.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member would help the Chair and put his question.

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Students has protested the 3 per cent surcharge. The government's own advisory committee on student financial aid has also disapproved of it.