

Western Canada Drought

● (1750)

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I gather that the Hon. Member is asking for unanimous consent?

[Translation]

The Hon. Member requests the unanimous consent of the House to put a question to the Member. Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. Very well. The Hon. Member for Bellechasse (Mr. Blais) may continue his speech.

An Hon. Member: The Hon. Member may continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Could the Hon. Member for Bellechasse continue his speech?

Mr. Blais: Yes, Mr. Speaker, of course, but I was waiting for my hon. friend from Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) to sit down. After all, he has 18 years' experience in the House, and I am very inexperienced at this sort of thing—

Mr. Nystrom: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Blais: If it's a point of order, I will wait—

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, this is a point of order.

Do we have the unanimous consent of the House to ask a question?

Some Hon. Members: No!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Unanimous consent has not been given, and we shall therefore resume debate with the Hon. Member for Bellechasse (Mr. Blais).

An Hon. Member: Only two minutes left—

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, for the sake of courtesy, I mentioned before that . . . Probably my hon. friend from Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) was not listening . . . I had a lot to say but had some other colleagues who were anxious to add a few comments. I think my hon. friend from Swift Current—Maple Creek (Mr. Wilson) will take over now, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague who was kind enough to cede me the remaining bit of time. I am somewhat disappointed that so little time remains because I represent a riding—Swift Current—Maple Creek in the southwestern corner of Saskatchewan—that I believe has suffered more than

any other in the past several years owing to drought, grasshoppers, high winds and so on. It is a riding with some 55,000 residents, most of whom either farm or certainly owe their living directly to agriculture. Consequently, the topic before us is of extreme importance.

I listened with some dismay earlier to my hon. friend, the Member for Algoma (Mr. Foster), the opposition agriculture critic, with whom I have had the opportunity to travel across the country recently on the domestic wheat price committee. That is another agricultural initiative put forward by the Government which impacts very heavily on grain farmers in this country.

Mr. Boudria: Not true. It is an initiative by the Member for Swift Current—Maple Creek (Mr. Wilson). Don't let the Tory Government take credit for that.

Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): I think the Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) is complimenting the Government on that initiative, and I certainly thank him for it.

We are talking about a report, but I will suggest that action speaks louder than words. What we have put forward as a Government is action upon action upon action.

I ask the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) what he considers to be so secretive about the Western Grain Stabilization Plan and the contribution that the Government has made to assist western agriculture to the tune of some \$580 million recently and of over \$500 million last year. Is that a secret?

Let us talk about the contributions to federal-provincial crop insurance programs. According to Saskatchewan Wheat Pool figures, something in excess of \$300 million each year is put into that program by the federal Government. There is the drought relief programs announced last year, with \$48 million toward livestock relief. There is \$150 million toward crop disaster relief. I suggest that this is a direct result of the outstanding efforts of my colleague, the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member. The hour provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock p.m., at which time the House will proceed to the question of the forest fire situation in Atlantic Canada.

At 6.02 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.