

wan, something that previous NDP governments never had the courage to do.

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CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. His standard line in his answer today is that everyone is in the dark. I submit to you that the Minister of National Revenue is skating on thin ice on this one.

Last fall, a study prepared by his own department warned that the GST could lead to an annual increase of two million travellers to the U.S. In fact, in the first six months of the GST, same-day cars to the U.S. increased by 4.8 million. Why did the minister go across the country saying that the GST would not be a factor in increasing cross-border shopping when he knew better.

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I will out-skate that hon. member anytime.

An hon. member: He is just an old referee.

Mr. Jelinek: Obviously he already had his question written prior to the answers I gave to his colleague. So instead of repeating my answer, I will just point to the *Canadian Economics Observer* from Statistics Canada which confirms the things I have been saying for the last 18 months.

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are blowing the whistle on this minister.

An hon. member: They are going to throw him out of the game.

An hon. member: Put him in the penalty box.

[Translation]

Mr. Kilger: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the Minister of National Revenue. The bankruptcy rate among small and mid-sized businesses has reached a record high. Unemployment continues to rise throughout the country, particularly in border communities. Can the minister explain his inaction in view of the damages to the national economy? Will he now admit that the mayor of Sarnia was telling the truth when he said that Revenue Canada was aware of the problems and their consequences but that neither the minister nor his department did a thing about it?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): I have met with all the border communities and their mayors as well as the border business communities, including the Mayor of Sarnia, the former Liberal candidate in the last election by the way. We have come to the conclusion, and I believe, that there are many problems which are far more complex than just taxation and federal government policies. This problem of cross-border shopping spreads across all three levels of government, the private sector, labour and other organizations.

As a result, in co-operation with the Retail Council of Canada, with the chambers of commerce, with labour and the provinces and the communities, we have embarked upon a program which is resulting in the reduction of the cross-border shopping which Statistics Canada released this morning. I think we are on the right track.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg—St. James): Mr. Speaker, I would like to have from the Minister of Agriculture a definitive answer on emergency assistance to farmers. I am not looking for information on what the government has done so far, nor am I seeking information on what the government might do under the new safety net programs over the next couple of months.

Mr. Speaker, I want the minister to address the \$1 billion shortfall of the last crop year. That shortfall has left farmers in dire straits.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Harvard: Shut your mouth.

Mr. Speaker: I would point out to the hon. member that if it is necessary, he might ask the Speaker to intervene. Would the hon. member put his question, please.

• (1450)

Mr. Harvard: Mr. Speaker, the farmers are demanding emergency assistance, and I would like to know from the minister whether he is going to provide it, and if so, how much?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the hon. member does not want me to repeat the impressive record of this