

cants this year is up to 28,155, which is not quite a doubling of the number of applicants. I received these figures this morning from the Canadian Wheat Board. The value of those cash advances this year is \$205,795,000. There has been not quite a doubling in the number of people applying for cash advances, but more than triple the amount of money has been applied for. Farmers are making use of it. If the minister is interested in getting some cash into the hands of producers very quickly, one thing this government could do would be to raise the ceiling on cash advances.

● (1530)

As I pointed out, for some producers, particularly the younger ones starting up—and this may sound foolish in terms of good business—cash flow becomes more important to them than price. The ability to generate money now is very important. If the producer has to wait three or four months for the sale of the majority of his crop, he may not be in business when he has the opportunity to deliver his crop. That is why I say in some cases cash flow becomes more important than selling price.

I would like to see the minister do something to increase the potential to produce in this country. I talk here of western Canada. There are approximately 90 million acres of arable land presently being farmed in western Canada by approximately 150,000 producers. If you do the arithmetic, you find very quickly that Canadian farmers have more arable land under their control as individuals than any other farmer in the world. Therefore, there is a responsibility to make the best use of that land. It should be the responsibility of this minister to ensure that we can produce to that kind of potential.

As I said, the hon. member for Medicine Hat will elaborate on suggestions with regard to the Agricultural Stabilization Act as it applies to beef. I will leave that to him. I would say everyone is in agreement that the federal government needs to show some leadership with regard to harmonization of provincial stabilization programs. We do not need a change in the Constitution to do that. All we need is courage and leadership on the part of the federal government. To date that has been sadly lacking.

Many of us in this House have made suggestions with regard to the small business development bond. As I said on another occasion when speaking in this House, the conditions under which the small business development bond is made available should be liberalized. It should be made available to unincorporated businesses for financing other than new purchases, for lines of credit, used machinery, expansion of buildings by small business and so on. That would help.

There should be no reason why that cannot be done. Some two months ago the Bank of Montreal suggested to the government that it was prepared to do that, pending the government changing the legislation in order that that could be done. However, I see no indication that the government is going to take up the lead.

The government should talk to the banks, instead of shouting at them as a headline in the *Brandon Sun* indicates, and

Agriculture

encourage the banks to have fixed rates of financing for production periods. If a farmer growing crops could have a fixed rate of interest over a production period of six or eight months, it would assist him in planning. It would remove some of the risk from the operation as far as calculating interest costs is concerned. There are some things the minister could do with regard to talking to the banks. We would all support him in that. We would be very interested in seeing this happen.

I do not know how long the Outlook Conference has been in existence. I attended the conference before I had the privilege of sitting in this House. Many have come to refer to it as a look-out conference. That is truly what it is. It is not a question of outlook but how we should look out to stay in business for another year.

That conference usually follows the American outlook conference which is on this week in Washington. In the past it has been largely a one-way communication with the government presenting papers to producers. I think the conference could be expanded in terms of the situation in agriculture today. The conference could go an extra day and there could be some workshops. There is an opportunity to gather together farm leaders from across the country where they could sit down and really talk about the problems of agriculture. They could try and find some solutions rather than the conference simply being a social gathering. Rather than the people just coming together, talking in the halls and having papers presented by the government, there could be some input from the industry. That is something that could be looked at.

Along with several of my colleagues from this House and the Senate, I had an opportunity about ten days ago to attend a meeting in Washington. We met concerning international wheat pricing arrangements as far as Canada and the United States are concerned. I very much appreciated that opportunity.

Something I found very disheartening was a statement attributed to the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board who sits in the other place. He pointed out that this meeting between Canadian and American legislators would not amount to anything because it did not have official government sanction. That was a deplorable statement by the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, and therefore responsible for a large number of Canadian grain producers.

At the meeting we found areas of concern which affected both of our countries in terms of cost of production, our potential to produce and the market conditions we operate under internationally. We certainly reached many conclusions. I hope this minister will not have the same attitude toward that kind of dialogue and possible solutions to problems in grain marketing that his colleague, the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, displayed. If the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board really had the concerns of the agricultural producers at heart, he would not be making fun of such a meeting beforehand, saying it was of no consequence because it did not have official government sanction.

I hope that when the Minister of Agriculture replies this afternoon, he does not do what he did on June 3 last. He spoke