

*Oral Questions*

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member has put a question to the minister and the minister is clearly prepared to respond. I am sure that hon. members would want to hear the minister.

**Mr. de Cotret:** It was made very clear the days following the cabinet decision to deal with this issue. Those assessments of environmental impact that deal with cabinet documents will be made available to the House committee on the environment, as we stated back then. The commitment stands, it is there and it will be done.

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**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. In Saskatchewan last week the Minister of Finance said the \$1.3 billion that was added to the agricultural budget for this year had already been committed before the bridge financing, that is being requested by producers, had been met. The Minister of Finance also said that there is no more money.

Does the Minister of Agriculture still promise Canadian farmers that he will find that money for the bridge financing before seeding this spring?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to correct what my hon. friend has said. He obviously received some misleading information or else he would not have repeated that.

What I said in the meetings I had in Saskatchewan, Alberta and also in British Columbia last week was that there is an increase in the budget for agriculture of \$1.3 billion next year. There will be a western grains stabilization payment. There will be transition to the new Gross Revenue Insurance Program and transitional costs relating to that. There will also be funds available for the so-called third line of defence, which was the topic of discussion among the agriculture ministers in Saskatoon a little over a week ago.

The final details of that third line of defence are not available at this point because we are still working on the details, but I am sure that my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, will be anxious to get that information out as soon as the details are ready.

**Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Finance.

The Minister of Finance said last week, in discussions at the same meeting, that the Canadian Wheat Board deficit could approach \$900 million. The western grain stabilization payment is probably going to approach \$400 million. The minister just stated that payments for premiums for GRIP will have to come out of that same \$1.3 billion. The money is committed, and there is nothing left over if he pays all of those bills to cover bridge financing.

Will the minister stand in his place today and say that, if necessary, he will use government contingency funds to bridge finance producers for this spring?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may try to draw whatever conclusions that he wants.

The facts of the matter are that there is an increase of \$1.3 billion in the moneys that will be available for agricultural producers, principally in the grains and oilseeds sector. As I have indicated, as soon as we have precise numbers, the Minister of Agriculture will be getting that information out.

I do want to caution the hon. member on the use of some of the figures that are there, because some of those figures I did not use in my discussions with people in Saskatoon last week.

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[*Translation*]

**CANADA POST**

**Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond):** Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister responsible for the Canada Post Corporation deals with the Corporation's decision to increase by as much as 500 per cent the postal rates for the delivery of regional newspapers.

This major cost increase may jeopardize a number of businesses, because they owe their cost effectiveness to the exclusive sale of commercial advertising. They will have no other choice than to pass this increase on to business people. Last week, two weekly newspapers in my own riding had to lay off 4 employees in order to make up for this increase in their costs.

Could the minister reassure the House and the business community that he will urge the Cabinet to reverse this decision, in view especially of the fact that Canada