

Oral Questions

provide investment in the training possibilities for Canadian citizens, the work that needs to be done to increase our research and development effort, to increase our trade effort internationally, to rebuild the infrastructure in this country.

As these proposals get fleshed out, I think my hon. friend and his constituents will see that there really is going to be value for money here.

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FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Agriculture or to whomever is speaking on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture.

On Friday the minister announced measures to largely deregulate the food industry, to shift responsibility for food safety and quality from government inspectors to industry itself.

Does this government not understand that there are limits to deregulation? Does it not even understand that it is the government's not industry's responsibility to make sure that Canadians do not eat bad meat, rotten eggs or contaminated poultry?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the president of the Public Service Alliance had to panic so much at the announcement made last Friday. Mr. Speaker, you will remember that when the budget was tabled, the Minister of Finance said three departments would review the regulations to ensure they meet the needs of a modern and competitive Canada.

Public health is not in danger here. Most of the recommendations in the report are not related to health or salubrity. They affect the classification and certification of exports. I think my colleague should join me in reassuring Canadian consumers and reaffirming there are no health hazards.

[*English*]

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, we know what competition means. We know that it has meant C-91 and that it was supposed to have

had no influence on health. Now we are hearing that inspectors will look and see what industry thinks after industry has done the job.

My supplementary is addressed to the Minister for International Trade. My question to him is quite simple: Will the minister admit that the North American free trade agreement provides for the harmonization toward an international standard for food quality that is lower than Canada's standards, that these deregulatory changes I asked about a moment ago are a part of that and that Canadians could very well face increased importation and availability on the market, for example, of chemically contaminated foods in increasing amounts from Mexico and the United States?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that my hon. friend has asked me that question. I would like to refer him to the parts of the North American free trade agreement that he clearly has not read. There are specific provisions in the agreement which allow each country to set its own standards. They specifically allow those standards to be set above international norms precisely according to the desires of the country involved and has nothing to do with what the other two countries in the North American free trade area might want to have for themselves.

If my hon. friend would quit blowing off his mouth and listen—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Wascana.

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TAXATION

Mr. Larry Schneider (Regina—Wascana): Mr. Speaker, my question concerns the current practice of Revenue Canada wherein court ordered child support payments are considered a tax deduction for the non-custodial parent and taxable income for the custodial parent. This places an added burden on the custodial parent and at the same time creates a more favourable financial situation for the other parent.

Could the minister advise the House whether or not the government intends to address this apparent inequity?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a very important question, an issue with which I am very familiar.