

Oral Questions

ongoing discussions and there will be the discussions taking place on a tripartite level in Quebec. Hopefully we will be able to come up with some answers that will be helpful for the city of Montreal, for cities right across this country and for all Canadians.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister or someone in cabinet who can speak for agriculture. They must know that Canada's farm debt is now more than \$22 billion and that the Farm Credit Corporation and the banks are foreclosing on a record number of Canadian farms.

Will the Prime Minister or a representative of the government commit this government to bringing in specific legislation which would halt foreclosure action until such time as there is completed a full investigation of the farm financial crisis in Canada to ensure that we know specifically what impact the debt crisis is having not only on farm families, but on the entire farm-based western economy?

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the hon. member that the government is very aware of the farm debt crisis. We have worked with farmers on an individual basis through the debt review boards and various other activities and will continue to assist agriculture wherever possible in any way because we do recognize the difficult times they are facing. We look forward to working with them.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, the member will know that two days ago Canadian food processors told farmers they had to lower their prices so that the processors could compete better under the free trade deal. Today, Quebec farmers said that they no longer trust the federal government to protect them and they called on the Quebec government to take control of the jurisdiction of agriculture.

Does every province in this wonderful country of ours have to take control of agriculture because this government cannot be trusted to protect the interests of the Canadian farm community?

Mr. Cardiff: Mr. Speaker, this government has responded better to agricultural needs than any previous government in history. We have to recognize in the 1980s that because of the difficulties of the 1970s, agriculture has had a difficult time not only in this country but in many parts of the world.

This government has provided additional assistance to the producers, in the area of at least \$4 billion a year, since we formed the government. I want to add that that is more than in the previous administration, when it was about \$2 billion. We have responded and will continue to respond and work with agriculture and producers until we have a strong viable industry.

* * *

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

Mr. Greg Thompson (Carleton—Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. Customs and Excise officials have for years been conducting immigration and pre-clearance at U.S. airports on behalf of the Department of Employment and Immigration. This service was terminated on October 31, 1989.

In light of the fact that we have a 1974 treaty between Canada and the U.S. allowing this, that Section 115 of the Immigration Act allows the Governor in Council to make regulations, and in light of the fact that we have a free trade agreement that is trying to promote relations and the transfer of goods and services between the two nations, can the minister give us an indication as to how he can deal with this problem and hopefully resolve it for us?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a very interesting question and I can assure him that I intend to consult with my appropriate cabinet colleagues, particularly the Minister of Employment and Immigration and the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

However, in the meantime I understand that customs service is not hampered because of the closure. Aircraft are now receiving free and prompt customs clearance at their destinations or at other airports along their flights. However, because of the hon. member's sincere interest in this matter, I will talk to my cabinet colleagues on this and get to him with an appropriate answer in the not too distant future.