

Oral Questions

This kind of questioning, to try to drive a wedge between parts of the country and suggest that one part is getting more than the other, does not do this party any good when it is trying to be a national party.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mayer: Part of it is going to go to Quebec. With regard to the core area, we are presently in negotiation with the province and the city to see what we can do to address the need there. With regard to education in the north, we have also had discussions with the province. If I remember correctly, the province has agreed to pick up part of the money it needs to continue with that program this year. It involves one of the native training programs at the University of Brandon. It has had a very good track record.

We will do our very best, through not only my department but the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, to support this very worth-while initiative.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, my question involves another hard-pressed region of Canada, the Atlantic provinces, and is directed to the Minister of State for Transport.

The Minister of Transport, in answering a question yesterday, demonstrated just how unconcerned the government is with respect to critical regional economic development issues in Atlantic Canada. All the Atlantic premiers support improvements to the Trans-Canada Highway through New Brunswick. The leading economic think-tank in that region supports and has been pushing for it since 1988.

Why does the government continue to stall in providing direct financial assistance to this critical regional economic expansion development project?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, it might be useful at this point to give some numbers on the major transfers that are made to the provinces and the rate of growth of these transfers to the various provinces. This is very enlightening.

Newfoundland increased from 1984-85 to 1990-91, 7 per cent; Prince Edward Island, 6.9 per cent; Nova Scotia, 6.2 per cent; New Brunswick, 7 per cent; Quebec, 3.7 per cent; Ontario, 7.3 per cent; Manitoba, 7.7 per cent; Saskatchewan, 10.3 per cent; Alberta—

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. minister could pass those figures across to the opposition.

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, of course we in the Liberal Party applaud any initiative that would help the economy of all regions of this country, but we also have a question for the Acting Minister of Agriculture, because the minister is no doubt aware that today, 40,000 farmers across Canada depend on our quota system, a system that is threatened by action currently being taken by the Americans at GATT. Can we expect a commitment from the minister that the interests of Canadian farmers will be supported at the GATT talks and that the Government of Canada will not abandon Canadian farmers to the mercies of the Americans?

[English]

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, this question keeps coming up day after day after day. To the extent that it gets raised it causes uncertainty for farmers that they do not need.

The government's position is very clear. We have two ministers in Geneva this week making our case on behalf of marketing boards. About 70 per cent of the supply management industry in Canada is located in Ontario and Quebec and they are rightfully concerned.

We had with the two ministers in Geneva yesterday representatives of the supply management agencies. They are totally aware of our position. It has not changed. It was developed in total concert with those industries, with some of the producers who were there with us yesterday in Geneva, and it will not be changed unless they ask us to change it. They are telling us they do not want to change it. It will not be changed. It has been the same for a year as when it was put together and it will continue to be that way until the GATT negotiations are complete.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to ask questions because there are 40,000 Canadian farmers who are depending upon this Parliament and this government to defend their interests at the GATT.