

Supply

is going half way out to the person who needs the lifeline.

What must happen—and I believe there is no question in the agricultural community—is that they have to look at the crop that is presently there, the one that no support has come forward for, and apply GRIP principles to that, the same as if GRIP was in place and not just borrow from next year's GRIP payments to keep somebody in a position where they can make their NISA payments this year.

The reason that the interim payment was suggested, in my opinion, is that the government felt we must have some funding available so farmers could pay the NISA payments required to enter the program. As a result, an interim payment was suggested in GRIP. That interim payment in GRIP will only go back into the government coffers to cover the NISA costs. In many cases, therefore, the farm community will not come up with any extra dollars, will not have the dollars to plant the crop next year. They will have a few dollars to enter and pay into a program.

I think it is inherent upon all of us to realize that we have a crop that has been there for a year, that has been promised some support and that support is not forthcoming. My colleague is suggesting to me what possibly could happen if those payments are not made or if the support does not come.

I can clearly suggest that if half the farmers in my riding are in serious financial difficulty, adding more dollar and cent pressure to them will only put them under. Therefore, our agri-food industry is in jeopardy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): On a point of order the hon. opposition House leader.

Mr. Dingwall: I am just wondering, Mr. Speaker, if the government is going to be able to have a minister sit through the proceedings for the remainder of this day which is an allotted day to my colleagues in the New Democratic Party. There was a period of time when there was no member of the cabinet on the front benches. I am just wondering if perhaps, Mr. Speaker, through you to the members opposite, you could ascertain whether or not ministers will have the time to participate in the proceedings that are taking place here today.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I would remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who knows the Standing Orders very well, that one cannot point out the presence or absence of a colleague in the House.

I am pleased to recognize the Minister of State for Agriculture. Resuming debate.

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of State, I want to add to what my colleagues have said about the situation facing Canadian farmers, which is the subject of the motion by the hon. member for Mackenzie.

Mr. Speaker, we must admit that the difficulties are not confined to one region of Canada. At the present time, grains and oilseeds in Ontario are in a similar situation to the one in the West. Horticulture has very varied problems, including adverse weather conditions in eastern Canada. In your very beautiful riding, Mr. Speaker, it has delighted vacationers, but we must also admit that it has been the despair of the many market gardeners in your riding and the horticulturists in mine.

The motion before us, however well-intentioned it may be for farmers, suggests that governments are indifferent to the situation, are doing nothing to remedy it or are sitting on their hands. That is not true, Mr. Speaker. Previous speakers have shown that. The federal government has dealt with the need for various types of transitional programs for the implementation of measures to help farmers across Canada.

Farmers are expected to receive \$3 billion in income support for 1991, of which nearly \$2 billion will come from the federal government. This means that 61 per cent of this aid will be redistributed by the federal government throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, the complex problems facing modern farming were never really attacked on so many fronts at once before we did. I remember that with the previous agriculture minister nearly two years ago, we set up twelve task forces to analyse all the programs for farming across the country. These task forces have done outstanding work over the last two years; the reports are not all in and have not all been implemented, but they helped us see the complexity of the problems.