

Oral Questions

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, regarding tobacco policy, right from the first Speech from the Throne the Government said that health promotion and disease prevention were a major plank. I have been working on that very diligently. In fact, I have often been accused of being too active in that field. When our policy is announced, I hope the Hon. Member will endorse it and will obviously see it as a great improvement on what she has done.

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AGRICULTURE**SPECIAL CANADIAN GRAINS PROGRAM—PAYMENTS TO FARMERS**

Mr. Lee Clark (Brandon—Souris): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture who knows that there is considerable uncertainty at the moment in respect of the extent of landlords' entitlement to a share of the \$1 billion Special Canadian Grains Program. Would the Minister explain to the House whether a payment should be considered as part of grain receipts, and whether a landlord should be entitled to a share of that payment?

● (1500)

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, in an effort to clarify this matter the department sent a letter to all permit bookholders the first part of this month. I welcome this opportunity to clarify the matter further. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the cheques will be issued directly to the producers or to the farmers themselves. We would expect that the normal tenant-landlord agreement will be applied with respect to the Special Canadian Grains Program.

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[Translation]

CANADA POST CORPORATION**OPERATIONAL PLAN—MINISTER'S POSITION**

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard—Anjou): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for Canada Post. According to the Canadian Press, the Minister stated that he does not believe the chairman of the Standing Committee on Government Operations that studied the postal plan intended it to give rural residents a veto on post office closures or changes to postal services as recommended in the unanimous report released March 23. Did the Minister meet with the committee chairman and, if so, what made him retract his unconditional support for this unanimous report?

[English]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, the recommendations of the report are already policy. The Hon. Member would know that if he read the letter that I sent to all Members. Under the Canada Post Corporations Act, which was supported by all Parties in this House, the Post Office has the responsibility to manage. I have indicated that I will guarantee that Canada Post will do that in a sensitive and a proper way and a way which reasonable people can understand, appreciate and agree with. That remains a commitment. If that remains at odds with what the committee recommended, then so be it. I have to fulfil my responsibilities.

RURAL POST OFFICES

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard—Anjou): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell this House what the misunderstanding is? The committee report was unanimous. In clear language we find this is the report:

(a) that no closure of a rural post office or change in rural service be undertaken without meaningful consultation and the consent of the community affected.

How clear can it be? Why is the Minister playing with words and creating fear in the community?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is the Hon. Member and people like him who are creating fear. In the letter I wrote to the Hon. Member—and again I plead with him to reread it—I indicated that in the event of any change Members of Parliament will be the first to be told. There will be consultations with the people affected and the changes should be of the sort that reasonable people can agree to. I do not know how much clearer I can make that statement. It is just a repetition of what is in the letter. Why does the Hon. Member not read the letter?

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Humboldt—Lake Centre. I would ask the Hon. Member for one question, please.

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AGRICULTURE**TOBACCO—ALTERNATE CROPS PROGRAM**

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Would the Minister of Health tell us whether his proposed tobacco program will contain more assistance to reduce tobacco acreage than has already been proposed under the Alternate Crops Program, which is a \$15 million program to find alternate crops to tobacco, or is the \$15 million crop payment to take tobacco acres out of production? Is the Minister proposing any further programs to that in his soon to be announced tobacco program?