

*Oral Questions*  
**AGRICULTURE**

MEASURES REQUESTED TO AID FARM INDUSTRY

**Hon. John Wise (Elgin):** Madam Speaker, I do have an example of the sector of the economy where it is not functioning very well. I want to pose a question which is similar to the subject matter raised by my colleague, the hon. member for Bruce-Grey, in his motion under Standing Order 43. While the Minister of Agriculture wrestles with his conscience and soberly considers his future, I want to put my question to the Minister of Finance, if I could get his attention.

I am certain that the minister, through dialogue which he has had with his colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, is very much aware of the fact that a combination of high interest rates, high farm input costs, coupled with low market prices, has caused a financial crisis in the farm community today. In the short term, because I really think that it is serious, would the Minister of Finance now announce and implement a moratorium on farm bankruptcies, foreclosures, and power of sales immediately? Second, would he also transfer immediately—now—an amount of money in the neighbourhood of \$500 million to the Farm Credit Corporation to be used exclusively for refinancing the agricultural industry today? These are short-term solutions.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that among the sectors of the economy that are currently receiving my consideration as I prepare for a budget, is the farming sector. I have had a number of discussions with the Minister of Agriculture, with farm representatives, and with representatives of the provincial governments. I will be addressing all the questions of the economy in the budget. But I would ask the hon. member—

**Mr. Crosbie:** You will be stripping them, you mean.

**Mr. MacEachen:** —to consider whether he is really serious about the suggestion of transferring half a billion dollars at the present time in the light of the strictures which I have received so frequently from his leader—

**An hon. Member:** How about your energy tax?

**Mr. MacEachen:** —and from the former finance critic, about increasing the deficit. The advice from that party has been to decrease the deficit. I heard the Leader of the Opposition, not so long ago, with his own voice, advise me—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. MacEachen:** —advise me, by radio, to reduce the deficit. Therefore, while I am prepared to consider specific proposals, I believe that I would like to get one which is more selective than the rather huge deficit-increasing suggestion that the hon. member has made.

SUGGESTED EXTENSION OF SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT  
BOND PROGRAM

**Hon. John Wise (Elgin):** My supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Obviously, if he had a little better management, he could at least come up with an extra \$1 billion, to say nothing as far as what he will come up with concerning the new national energy agreement. I believe that is in the neighbourhood of \$50 billion. Perhaps that is an area at which the minister could start looking.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wise:** I do appreciate the problem of the Minister of Finance, but when he is putting together his budget would he consider accepting the challenge of the Bank of Montreal as it relates to the amendments required in the Small Business Development Bond? Would he also seriously consider the implementation of the agri-bond principle as well as the annual averaging trust account principle? Would he give very serious consideration to those three recommendations?

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I am familiar with the suggestion made by the Bank of Montreal with respect to the extension of the Small Business Development Bond program to unincorporated farmers. Indeed, the Bank of Montreal has said that it expected to make this financial instrument available to unincorporated farmers in the expectation that the Minister of Finance would pick up the bill. Last week I had a suggestion from presidents of two of the banks. They proposed another scheme which involved the Minister of Finance and the taxpayers picking up the bill. In these circumstances I would like the banks to strive more diligently to find schemes which would cause them to bleed a bit.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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**THE ECONOMY**

MEASURES TO AID MARITIME REGION

**Hon. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury):** Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. In view of the unprecedented increase in unemployment in the Atlantic provinces, the highest in Canada, as well as the severe drop in employed people, and in view of the closure of fisheries plants, lumber mills and small businesses, and whereas the maritimes are the first hit, the hardest hit, and the last to recover from the effects of high interest rates and restrictive monetary policies, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance if he is contemplating any new and immediate initiatives or strategies to deal with these urgent matters.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Yes, Madam Speaker.