

Oral Questions

Province of Quebec which has suffered the largest loss because of the severe winter of 1981. The damage had to be measured over a period of time because frost damage does not necessarily show up the first year. It can be in the second year and the third year. With regard to the Hon. Member's Province, there has been no representation by the Province saying, "Look, this is a disaster; it is too big for the Province to look after." The producers in Quebec have made that kind of representation. The Province of Quebec has made some representations but has not called it a disaster. The Province of Ontario has made some representations. We are looking at those three Provinces.

The producers of Quebec have made a claim for, I believe, \$62 million to replace their losses. I think the damage in New Brunswick is about 7 per cent of over-all losses which have taken place between Ontario and Quebec. Quebec has the massive loss. We hope to have a report in the next few days or the next few weeks.

Mr. Howie: I thank the Minister for his answer, whatever it was.

REQUEST FOR EARLY DECISION

Hon. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury): Madam Speaker, the Minister has been in New Brunswick, in many of the areas which have been affected by severe frost. I am sure he knows about the difficult and severe situation in which farmers in Eastern Canada find themselves through no fault of their own. Would the Minister meet with his Cabinet colleagues and press for an early and favourable decision on the request made to him by eastern apple producers?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member is no different from Hon. Members on this side who have the same problem in their constituencies. We are hoping to bring something forward which will be satisfactory, in the not too distant future.

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[Translation]

RAILWAYS

FEED GRAIN TRANSPORTATION—PROPORTION OF SUBSIDIES GOING TO WEST AND TO QUEBEC

Mr. Jean-Guy Dubois (Lotbinière): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. Since the new grain transportation policy was announced on February 1, there has been a great deal of discussion in the press and among various groups in Quebec about the fact that western producers will be receiving \$3.7 billion, compared to \$93 million in Quebec, and it was claimed that these figures were out of all proportion. I would therefore like to ask the Minister whether he could inform the House how payments are going to be apportioned under the new policy, especially to the railways, and perhaps give us a breakdown of the \$3.7 billion?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): To be able to give you a breakdown, I will have to limit myself to the conclusion, which is that if we look at how the \$3.7 billion the Federal Government is going to invest in this plan during the next four years is going to be distributed, we see that producers will be getting approximately \$1 billion over four years, which is about 27 per cent of the total \$3.7 billion. I may add that the western grain producer will be paying more for grain transportation, and in the final analysis, western producers are going to pay twice the amount they are paying now under the Crow Rate system, that is twice \$150 million, and that is going to mean definite increase in payments by producers.

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[English]

GRAIN

TIMING OF CHANGE IN CROWSNEST PASS FREIGHT RATE—EFFECT ON EXPORTS

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport who also represents the Minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board in the House. The Minister in charge of the Wheat Board was quoted as saying that our international competitors in the grain market have an advantage over Canadian producers due to high domestic subsidies in those countries, and that Canada will have to lower its asking prices in order for its grain to meet the competition. In light of these market realities could the Minister explain why the Government is choosing this particular time to kill the Crow, the one long-term program we have to keep our landlocked farmers competitive in world markets?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, as I said two days ago, the debate on subsidies being paid to grain producers around the world is a long-standing one. In our instance in this particular item, the payments are made for production and transportation. We think in international terms that they are comparable with and lower than what other countries of the world pay in similar areas. The debate, as I see it, is not really one of quality. It is one of quantity. From our point of view, others are doing more in terms of subsidizing their export program than we are.

Mr. Althouse: The Minister seems to have missed the point of the question. I was asking why they chose to reduce any semblance of subsidy in this country when it is fairly obvious that other countries are increasing their subsidies because of increasing competition and price cutting throughout the world.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER TABLE STUDIES

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Madam Speaker, perhaps the Minister of Agriculture could explain why he has been making statements indicating that both the East and West will benefit from the disruption to the agricultural community as a result of the rapid change in the Crow.