

AGRICULTURE

PAYMENT OF COMPENSATION FOR DROUGHT

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): My question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture and it concerns the drought payment. The four provinces that are due to get the drought payment have been given very limited information. A drought map was produced which went out a couple of weeks ago, but there is no data going with drought maps to indicate what was the basis of the consideration, what was the average production considered for each township, and how the decision was made. This information is important not only for the Auditor General to monitor the program, but for the farmers to decide whether to appeal the situation that they have been put in with that map.

Can the Minister tell us whether the specific data will be made available, and when?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, to correct the Hon. Member, there are not four provinces eligible. There are five provinces eligible; the three prairie provinces, Ontario and Québec.

Second, all the information that was put out in the form of the maps is preliminary. The basic information was all obtained from the provinces, so the provinces supplied the federal Government through their crop insurance agencies with the information on which those maps were based.

The information was based on a loss to coverage ratio through crop insurance records, which was exactly the procedure that we used in 1985 that people did not like.

The maps are preliminary. Once we have final data from the crop insurance corporations we will be in a position to issue final areas that will define how the full payment will be arrived at.

• (1520)

RELEASE OF DATA

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister tell us how soon the information will be available? There are over 100,000 farm families trying to decide whether to appeal or not. The appeal boards will have to know where that data sits so that they can deal with the appeals. The bureaucrats will have to know what the numbers are precisely so that they can figure out what the payments are.

Air Ontario Crash

When will that data be available to the farmers, the appeal boards and the bureaucrats themselves, so that we will know how much farmers can depend on for this coming crop year?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member asks a good question. Let me try to provide him with some good information so in fact he can provide some good information to his own producers.

First, we will not have the information from the crop insurance agency until about the first of May. As soon as we have it it will then be made available through maps. There is no sense in applying for an appeal presently because everybody should know that the data on which the preliminary payments are made is just exactly that, preliminary data.

So, for crying in the bucket, tell your farmers, your neighbors, to wait until we get the final data because the program was designed by farmers. They wanted us to target it. They wanted us to be crop specific. They wanted to get down to the smallest possible area. That is exactly what in fact we are doing. It is a farmers' program, designed by farmers. It is going to be a good program once the Hon. Member sees the full details of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: I want to advise the House that I understand that there has been an agreement between the Parties to pay certain tributes. I would ask the Hon. Minister of Energy to commence.

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AIR ONTARIO CRASH

EXPRESSION OF CONDOLENCES

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Government of Canada I would like to express my heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the families and friends of those who died in the Air Ontario crash in Dryden, Ontario.

The crash showed to us as Canadians that ordinary Canadians are capable and willing to perform heroic acts. This was done by air flight personnel, as well as by those who attended the crash site. But air accidents also impact on families, communities and our country. It snuffs out the lives of those who were filled with hope and with anticipation. It affects communities and the leadership these individuals have given. It affects people at a personal level. It affects people whose only response can be the question as to why.