

Oral Questions

The industry, together with the provincial governments, has launched an initiative. It is my understanding that the province of Ontario has reluctantly agreed to participate, which will hopefully result in the termination of the tax altogether.

I would like to tell my hon. friend as well that the difficulties that the industry is facing right now have in the main to do with the decline in our major markets, particularly in the United States. Perhaps the exchange rate is another serious problem. Nevertheless I will take the hon. member's comments into account as will my friend, the Minister for International Trade, and work with the province of Ontario to alleviate the problem.

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SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State for Agriculture.

The minister has remained on the sidelines while supply management has been attacked by editorial boards, foreign governments and misinformed consumer groups. Why has the minister responsible for consumers and for farmers remained so silent on this issue? Will he tell Canadian consumers today, in this House, that they are not paying too much for the supply managed products?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, it would be very interesting to know where the Liberal Party stands on supply management, if it is in favour of it or if it is against it.

This government supports all Canadian farmers across the country, those who are under supply management and those are working on the export market. That is where the government of Canada stands and will stand for a long time.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party stands right behind Canadian farmers and supply management.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speller: This is just the latest attack on supply management in the past few weeks. All the while this

minister has done nothing while people take pot-shots at supply management. I ask the minister, is his vow of silence self-imposed or has he been instructed to do so by his Conservative colleagues?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, the record of this government speaks for itself and we need not take lessons from anyone.

This was supposed to be a government which upheld the interests of farm and dairy producers, yet it did not even have the courage to maintain a long-term dairy policy at the time we took office. You had left the issue pending for five years. The first thing we did was to implement a long-term dairy policy to defend Canadians farm producers and consumers. As a matter of record, dairy products rose barely 5 per cent in recent years while the cost of living went up 17 per cent.

I am not worried, Mr. Speaker, and the agricultural producers know this government supports them.

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[*English*]

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Yesterday at the Belanger-Campeau hearings in Quebec City, a Montreal economist, Pierre Fortin, who has worked for both the federal government and the provincial government in Quebec, said that the Bank of Canada is now working on a possible scenario for monetary union with an independent Quebec and that the Department of Finance is working on scenarios to divide up the debt between Canada and an independent Quebec.

I would have thought the federal government might have found it more worthwhile trying to work on plans that unify this country instead of contemplating separation.

That being the case, can the Deputy Prime Minister confirm that these studies are going on, how extensive they are, and what the role is of the Prime Minister's office.