

Supply

investments in western grain transportation were very discriminatory and they were made solely in favour of western farmers.

A quarter of that money came from Quebec and statistics show that, during the last 15 years, Quebec lost two billion dollars more. These are huge losses. When the federal government announces the elimination of the Crow rate and talks about a compensation package, it only has in mind western farmers, the constant winners for 15 years, with the grain subsidy and the unfair federal investments in agriculture. Quebec has always lost out. The unfairness is blatant, even more so when one recognizes that Quebec farmers earn on average about \$25,000 for their very hard work.

A farmer can work up to 80 hours a week. He works the equivalent of two jobs for a total salary of \$25,000. So, the 30 per cent cut in milk subsidies and the 15 per cent cut in farmers' revenues are a blow to milk producers. It is a blow because their revenues are not that high. The inequity is obvious and we have discussed the subject at length.

The overriding theme is that Quebec, in practically all areas, has always been subjected to this sort of unfairness. Even though the other members in this House will not admit it, Quebec has been a cash cow for the rest of Canada. This is obvious in every sector, whether it is the sale of goods and services, or the research sector. As regards the latter, over the last 15 years, Quebec has been getting, on average, 10 to 15 per cent of research investments. Ontario was the big winner, with an average of 50 per cent of the total federal assistance. Again, Quebec lost money.

I could give you a whole list of examples where Quebec was the loser, but I will stop here. At some point, Quebecers will have to put their foot down and say: "Enough is enough! We are fed up with these injustices".

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): Hear, hear.

Mr. Marchand: This is why Quebec farmers must also assume their share of the risks involved in that venture. Obviously, there are some concerns. Achieving Quebec's sovereignty will not be a breeze. Nobody said it would be. However, in the middle and in the long term, there is no question that Quebecers will benefit from such a move. This is no question about that.

There is a transition period which raises several issues, including for the farming community.

• (1710)

Indeed, farmers too wonder what will happen once Quebec opts for sovereignty.

The hon. member for Lotbinière answered some very important questions earlier. The government is resorting to fearmongering when it says that Quebec dairy producers will lose all their quotas. Such arguments are not reasonable and are obviously based on emotions.

Quebec buys beef from Alberta, grain from the western provinces, corn and soya from Ontario. We buy a lot more outside the province than we sell. Do you think that, all of a sudden, the rest of Canada will refuse to buy our butter or our cheese, and that Quebec will no longer buy beef from Alberta? Of course not. It is totally unreasonable to think that the rest of Canada would force us into such an unfair situation.

I certainly believe that sovereignty will be beneficial to Quebec farmers.

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Québec—Est who clearly described the obvious advantages for Quebecers to opt for sovereignty as soon as possible. It has also been demonstrated that the federal system does not work. I know that my Liberal and Reform colleagues do not like it when we talk about inequity, even though it reflects the real situation, so let us say that the federal system does not work, if this is the expression the federalists would rather use.

On that issue, the hon. member for Lotbinière was very eloquent. He used figures and several arguments to show that it is impossible to ignore how the Canadian Department of Agriculture has harmed the interests of Quebec.

Let me conclude my remarks which can be interpreted as a question to the hon. member for Québec—Est.

Without asking for more than what Quebec is currently giving to the federal government in the area of agriculture, and given the fact that Quebecers already pay 25 per cent of all federal taxes, if we were to get our hands on a similar proportion of the agricultural budget and to manage the whole thing, then we would be able to provide our farmers with an additional \$500 million—since the federal Department of Agriculture has a \$2 billion budget—in addition to the \$300 or \$350 million budget of the Quebec Department of Agriculture.

I know how capable, passionate and proud our Quebec farmers are and I am sure this will give them a competitive edge. So, I want to say thank you to my colleague from Québec—Est.

Mr. Marchand: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead.

What he said is true. Quebec farmers will likely have a greater share of the province's revenues, money that was not available to them before because it was distributed elsewhere. But once