

We have increased the amount of direct support to our producers by approximately 600 per cent in the last six years as a measure of confidence in the industry. We believe there are better days ahead if we can solve some of these problems and I believe that we will.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to correct the minister. The former Prime Minister—and he mentioned this three times during the course of his speech—never, ever gave his finger to the farmers of western Canada. He was on a private holiday with his three boys and he was heckled and harassed—

An hon. member: Salmon Arm, B.C.

Mr. Mills: That is right, it was in Salmon Arm, B.C. His former presence here seems to really rattle members opposite at times.

At any rate, I always thought the purpose of this national government was to lead and to take over when disadvantaged regions or problems could not be met by the provinces. The way the minister talks, it seems as if there is absolutely no problem with the farming community in the country. Agriculture Canada is predicting 39 per cent decreases in agricultural income. He almost comes across as if everything is okay.

At what point does the national government move to help these farmers, regardless of whether of not the province comes in? By the way Premier Devine is acting and speaking on national television, it looks as if he is not about to put his cheque on the table. As a national politician, not a provincial one—and I know that the minister tends to put things off onto the provinces—at what point in time does he act, or does he just let the whole thing go?

Mr. Mayer: I have a couple of comments, Mr. Speaker. Our record has been pretty impressive when it comes to dealing with the provinces of western Canada in support of agriculture. I just gave the hon. member the numbers.

Our responsibility for agriculture is a shared jurisdiction under the BNA Act and our Constitution. I do not have the section in my head, but it is in the same section that refers to fisheries. It is a shared responsibility between the provinces and the federal government. In the last four years, the over-all average for the Prairies

Supply

has been slightly over 80 per cent direct support from the federal government. It would seem to me that that would indicate our record is pretty good and that would be what we could expect.

We are trying to get as much money as we possibly can into the hands of farmers. If we can get a little extra money from the provinces to distribute, that is going to help the farmers. Our responsibility is there, our money is on the table, and we are going to have to act eventually. In the meantime, we want to get the provinces to own up to some of the responsibilities that they have for agriculture which is a shared jurisdiction.

I did not in any way suggest that it is all rosy in agriculture. What I try to do is put some balance on it, and there is some balance. The cattle markets are not that bad. Hog prices are up a little bit, especially in the last two weeks. If one follows what is going on in North America, it does not look that bad for the livestock industry. A big part of our industry is supply managed. They are not doing too badly. It is a \$20 billion industry. About \$9 billion of it comes from agriculture and about \$11 billion comes from the other parts of it. That other part, by and large, is not that bad.

There are sections in the grain and oilseeds industry that are not that bad. I was trying to put it into perspective. Seeding intentions are up. Farm Credit Corporation loans are up, not significantly but that is better than having them down. I was just trying to put some balance on it. Things are not good in a big part of the grain and oilseed area, but there is a part of it that is doing reasonably well.

We will come good on our responsibility. Our money is there. Again, if through some negotiations with the province we can get a little extra money to the farmers, which is what this motion is about, it would seem to me that the opposition and the NDP should be supporting us in our negotiations with the provinces to get a bigger financial package to present to farmers.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I want to say that, in anticipation of the motion today, I made a point of dropping into a number of cattlemen's operations in my constituency over the weekend. In talking to them and, today, talking to relatives of mine from Saskatchewan who are farmers, they acknowledged that there are various programs they find helpful from time