

Oral Questions

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister what specific agreement the federal government is negotiating with the province of Manitoba to try to turn around this very dismal economic performance?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the western diversification initiative has funded well in excess of \$1 billion toward endeavours in western Canada. It has been very much a part of strengthening and broadening the economic base in western Canada.

In addition, there are the ongoing programs that are negotiated on a partnership arrangement under the auspices of the co-operation agreements wherein the province itself identifies the priorities that it wishes to identify and support. We work out agreements on that basis.

I should say to the hon. member, because I am sure he would be interested, that in terms of regional development funding as outlined in the budget of February 1991, out of the total package of \$1.1 billion western Canada is getting about \$363 million in terms of the western regional development funds which are in addition to some of the established programs.

I guess the short answer is that there are a number of co-operation agreements in place. We are providing heavy support to the agricultural sector. Of course we are always interested in sitting down with the provinces and helping them work toward developing any new industries or expanding any sectors that they wish to identify.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, on a short supplemental, I would also indicate that since the Western Diversification Program came into effect that is when we started to have these dismal figures in the province of Manitoba.

Again referring to the government's own figures, my question is this: The region of Canada within our provinces that has the highest unemployment is northern Manitoba with 23.3 per cent unemployed. Why has this government not negotiated a new northern development agreement to make sure there is infrastructure and training in that region.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the hon. member bad-mouths the western diversification initiative. There are something in the order of 400 specific projects that have been funded or assisted through the Western Diversification Program.

An hon. member: In Manitoba?

Mr. Mazankowski: In Manitoba alone. In total there have been 2,700 initiatives funded in western Canada.

Is the hon. member suggesting that we should cancel the western diversification initiative, that we should cancel the 300 or 400 projects that have been funded in Manitoba? Is that what he is suggesting? When he says that everything has gone to hell in a hand basket since the western diversification initiative came in, it means that he is not supportive of the 300 or 400 projects that have been funded.

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HEALTH

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Yesterday I met with Barbara Hood Hall, president of the Northwest Territories Mental Health Association. Mental illness affects more Canadians than any other disease. The northern territories lead the nation in illness and poor health. The north experiences higher death and disease rates and higher birth and infant mortality rates than the rest of the country. Cancer is four times greater. It has the highest rate of suicide in the country.

Knowing this, how can the minister withhold moneys much needed for this desperate situation from the Government of the Northwest Territories?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, since the most recent agreement on formula financing, which I believe was signed in December 1989, the Government of the Northwest Territories has been accepting more and more responsibility for the administration of programs in the general health area. We have had a number of discussions with the Government of the Northwest Territories about the responsibility it has accepted to administer these programs.