

*Oral Questions*

If the hon. member has any specific suggestions to advance to the hon. minister responsible I would be pleased to convey that to him.

**Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the minister that the unemployment situation in Cape Breton is a national crisis.

People have lost their dignity and families believe the future is extremely bleak. But Cape Bretoners, as Canadians in that region, have not lost the hope that they can make a meaningful contribution to Canadian society.

Therefore, I ask the Minister of Finance if he, in co-operation with the minister responsible for ACOA, will order their federal agencies, CEIC, Enterprise Cape Breton and ACOA to meet with business, labour and municipal representatives to put in place and implement a plan before we adjourn this House at Christmas. Will the Minister of Finance give that undertaking?

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no need to give any orders to that effect to officials of ACOA or to officials of these other departments because they already know what the task is. The effort to create employment and jobs in Cape Breton has doubled since 1984. The amount of money spent in overcoming regional disparity has gone up by a tremendous amount.

In Cape Breton, for example, since the ACOA program started, the authorized contributions to economic development have been \$75 million and \$253 million has resulted in project costs. Extraordinary efforts have been made through Enterprise Cape Breton and in other directions in Cape Breton.

Very often we hear criticisms that we are taking too many chances down in Cape Breton and not the reverse.

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**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance who will be meeting with a large delegation of prairie farm leaders tomorrow, leaders who are here not only because

farmers have no money but because they face a debt problem of Third World proportions as well.

Since 1982, the value of farm assets on the prairies has fallen by \$20 billion. Prairie farm debt stands at \$12 billion, with no income to cover it. Since over 24,000 prairie farmers went bankrupt or became insolvent last year, will the minister stop this devastation of the farm community by placing a moratorium on Farm Credit Corporation foreclosures immediately?

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is very much aware of the trade war that is going on wherein farmers in Canada find themselves in a squeeze.

We have responded not only this year but in previous years. There was a poll that reflected that fact this week where over 90 per cent of the farmers that were surveyed indicated that they are only in business today because of the support that has been given to them by the Government of Canada. That is continuing.

In so far as his suggestion about placing a moratorium on the Farm Credit Corporation foreclosures is concerned, we have a process in place through the Farm Debt Review Board which I think has worked very satisfactorily. It has not been perfect but it has provided a mediation approach where farmers can sit down and work out their credit difficulties with independent people serving as arbitrators. I think that process has worked very well because to provide a moratorium has consequences as well.

**Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister.

I know the government has dished out a lot of money and I know that a blizzard of discussion is going on but the truth is that at the same time the FCC is out there like the grim reaper, mowing down farm families right across the prairies.

Will the minister do what the Agriculture Credit Corporation in Saskatchewan has done and announce an immediate freeze on all FCC foreclosure actions so that there will be some farmers left when this farm crisis is finally resolved.