

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**Third Session — Eleventh Legislature**  
**44th Day**

**Wednesday, April 4, 1951**

The House met at eleven o'clock a.m.

Moved by Hon. T.C. Douglas (Weyburn), seconded by Hon. C.M. Fines (Regina City):

“THAT this Assembly urge the Government of Canada to appoint a Transport Controller to have full power and authority to allocate boxcars and lake tonnage fairly equitably among industries to insure that adequate equipment will be made available to the wheat producers of Western Canada for all the movement of grain produced in the 1950 crop year to export channels.”

**Premier Douglas:** — Most members are familiar with the situation which is now confronting us with regard to the shortage of railway cars. There are two dangers which we face. The first is that we may not be able to deliver grain which is asked for by our customers and which they have the right to ask for under the International Wheat Agreement; that is, we have the wheat but it may not be in position for delivery, and we would be in a very awkward position indeed, if customers who have a right, ask for the wheat at the ceiling price, and then find that it could not be delivered to them. Some of the importing countries are stockpiling at the present time and there is quite a demand for wheat under the Agreement, and yet the position is such that that wheat is not in a position that it could be delivered.

At the present time, of the 427 million bushels in the prairie provinces, up to March 8 only 265 million had been delivered. It is estimated there are still 162 million bushels on the farms. About 75 per cent of the terminal and country elevator facilities are filled. I think the figure for the Wheat Pool in this province alone is that a year ago they had 14 million bushels in their country elevators. Today they have 40 million bushels in their country elevators, and this wheat is in such a position now that were it demanded we would not be able to get it on the export market.

The second danger, Mr. Speaker, is that unless something is done between now and the 31st of July to provide additional cars, not only will we not be able to meet immediate demands, but storage space will be so congested that we will not have space for the 1951-52 crop, and our real troubles will begin next fall when the farmers want to deliver wheat and find that the elevators and terminal facilities are plugged. We had a pretty bad experience last fall, in our respective constituencies where we found farmers, after they had filled their granaries, having to dump their wheat out on the ground and put snow fences around it to keep the livestock out, and a lot of that wheat is under the snow today.

If the elevators and terminal facilities are not clear out

**April 4, 1951**

between now and the 31st of July, we are likely to have an even worse situation next fall, with reference to the inability of the farmer to get storage space to which he can deliver his wheat.

I am not going to try to apportion any blame — I do not think that is our particular business. I have been in touch, ever since last fall, with the Board of Transport Commissioners, with the Wheat Board and with the Federal Ministers who are responsible, and the reply I get is that there are very large numbers of our railway cars in the United States. I think the last figures I saw showed that there were over 9,000 more of our cars in the United States now than there had been the previous year. I do not know who is responsible or whose responsibility it is to get these cars back from the United States; and there are fewer American cars here than there were formerly, so that they have more of our cars and we have less of their cars. That seems to be the situation. I cannot vouch for that. It is simply the information which has been given to me by the responsible Boards and Departments at Ottawa; but whoever is responsible, it seems to me that this Legislature is quite within its rights in making representations to Ottawa that these cars should be recovered as quickly as possible in order that we get our wheat into a position where it can be delivered, and that we get these terminal and country elevator storage facilities cleared out to get ready for the 1951 crop.

I am told by those who are in a position to know that, a year ago, we were getting 600 cars a day, and I point out that a year ago we had much less wheat in storage — for instance, the case of the Wheat Pool, who only had about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the wheat in the country elevators that they have today, and less wheat on the farms. A year ago we were getting 600 cars a day. It will require 1,200 cars a day to anywhere begin to move out sufficient of the wheat now in the elevators and on the farms to put us in the same position as we were on the 31st of July, last year, and even on the 31st of July last year we had some 70 million bushels in storage.

As a result of various representations by various Boards of Trade, farmers' groups, etc., we have been seeking to get cars allocated to take damp wheat to Churchill, for instance. I am told that the facilities at Churchill are capable of drying wheat at the rate of 1,000 bushels per hour, and that there are storage facilities there which could be used. I have here a letter from Mr. McIvor, Chairman of the Wheat Board, who said he quite agreed that much of this damp wheat could be taken to Churchill, it could be dried there and stored, but he said he could not get cars. He said he could not even get cars to move the wheat to places where it was needed for delivery, let alone taking it to Churchill for drying purposes; that he had been able to dispose of some 10 cargoes of wheat which will go through Churchill this summer, but it is a matter of getting cars in order to get it to Churchill. And that is low grade wheat — 5 and 6 wheat, and damp wheat — which the farmers are anxious to get rid of and which should be dried and which should be got out through Churchill.

So it is apparent that there is some need for some very drastic action being taken with reference to this car shortage. I mentioned a moment ago that one of the reasons for this shortage is the large number of our railway cars being in the United States. Another reason has been that some of the lake boats have been turned over for the shipment of ore and have been given a fairly high priority. I am told, too, that a lot of the railway cars have been assigned to the paper industry, because there

was a shortage of paper, as everyone knows, and an increased demand for it. Now that they have a chance to sell large quantities of paper, the paper companies have been getting quite a priority with reference to cars.

Now I do not want to have the feeling in my own mind that there is any discrimination against the west with reference to grain cars. I would not like to think that the railways, because of the fact that the west presented a united front on the matter of the Crow's Nest Pass Agreement, were allocating cars to other industries and holding back on making those cars available for the transportation of wheat. But certainly there is some reason why there should be this great car shortage and why our storage facilities should be plugged as they are at the present time. What the reasons may be is not important. What is important is that we have got to have cars at the rate of 1,200 a day from now until the end of the crop year in order to get the present crop out to make room for the crop that we hope will be coming along this summer.

I am suggesting, in this motion, that probably the best way to do it is to do what was done back in 1941 when a Transport Controller was established, and given the responsibility of allocating cars and making sure that priority was set on the basis of how essential a particular industry was. Certainly there are very few industries, next to the actual defence industries, that are more important than the wheat industry, because we have an International Wheat Agreement. It is a good agreement which gives us not an assured market, but an assured market for a percentage of our crop at certain floor prices, and it would be very bad for future wheat agreements if we were the first of the exporting countries to be unable to fulfil our commitments under that agreement. As matters now stand, if importing countries were to demand the wheat, as they have a right to do, at ceiling, we might not be in a position to make deliveries.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I feel that this Legislature is quite within its rights in urging that some action be taken, and in this motion I am suggesting that a Transport Controller be appointed, and that he shall have full authority to secure the necessary railway cars to see that the farmers can get the wheat they have grown in this past year into a position where it can be delivered to meet our commitments, and that the storage facilities be cleared out so that we can find room for the 1951 crop.

I, therefore, make the foregoing resolution, Mr. Speaker, seconded by Mr. Fines.

**Mr. W.A. Tucker:** — Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to delay the House either. I notice that the way the resolution reads, it says "fairly equitably." I think it should be "fairly and equitably", because we want it more than fairly equitably. I suggest that that "and" be put in there. In any event that could be fixed up.

I understand that the Wheat Pool have been making representations along the same line, and I think it is quite in order for us to make these representations and make them as strongly as we can. Apparently one of the great difficulties which has been prevailing for some time now, is the fact

**April 4, 1951**

that our cars get across to the United States and it is almost impossible to get them back again. There is one thing about it — if a government official were given the exclusive job of looking after this matter, he could keep after the External Affairs Department, because it looks to me as if it is a matter which has to be taken up practically through our External Affairs with the Washington Government, because these American railway companies have the cars, they make a lot of money out of them and they just simply are finding ways and means, apparently, of hanging on to them. It is a matter that will have to be dealt with at the highest possible level, because it is simply not to be tolerated that we are in danger of losing millions of dollars of crop because some railway companies in the United States want to keep cars out of which they can make a good profit.

I think we have a right to ask our Government that they should ask the Washington Government to see to it that their railroads quit this attitude. There is no reason why those cars should have to stay so much longer in the States now than they used to, and I think one of the ideas that we should have in mind in this resolution, is that we are very dissatisfied with that situation. It is certainly not in keeping with the good-neighbour policy that has prevailed between us and the United States Government, and it is a matter, I think, of bringing it to their attention so that they insist that their railway companies do not hold the cars any longer than absolutely necessary. If that situation were remedied it would make quite a difference.

The situation is probably more serious than we realize, with so much grain that is damp on the farms, and as the Pool people who have studied the situation say, and as the Premier mentioned, it would take 1,200 cars a day now to handle the thing, and apparently there are not as many cars available as last year, when they managed to get, on an average, 600 cars cleared a day. So the situation is very serious, and I agree that anything we can do in any way, shape or form to help out in regard to the situation, should be done, and, of course, we do support this resolution, because it is something that the very best man they could put on the job should be put on it until the situation is cleared up.

I saw in the paper a couple of days ago that, at some place or other, they are trying out some sort of a system of introducing hot air into bins of grain to endeavour to dry it to some extent. I do not know whether many experiments have been made along that line. I presume that they have been made. I hope that the Department of Agriculture is alert to the situation, and that, if any means has been found of dealing with bins of wheat that is very damp, experiments have been conducted as to turning the grain over in some way, endeavouring to keep it from heating, because it is going to be a terrible state of affairs if this grain cannot be shipped out and begins to heat all over the country. There are a great number of these automatic mechanical loading machines whereby they can load wagons and so on with grain without it having to be shovelled, by gasoline engine and so on, and I think it might be possible to save a lot of grain if experiments were carried on in regard to moving grain from bin to bin by these grain-loading machines. Of course, moving it exposes it to the air and dries it to some extent and keeps it from heating. I hope that everything possible is being done in finding out anything that can be done in regard to keeping the grain from heating and that the Agriculture Representatives are fully prepared to bring any information to the farmers on anything that has been found out, because

it looks to me as if we are going to be faced with a situation, the moment that the cold weather is definitely passed, that may be very bad in some parts of the country. I just make that suggestion: if any way has been found then it should be briefed to the Agricultural Representatives, and any farmers who have found any effective way of dealing with the situation, their information should be passed around as much as possible.

It will not be so difficult now when so many people have these loading machines that actually are put in the bin and they can actually transfer grain without it being shovelled. When I was on the farm and a situation like this developed, it meant shovelling the grain back and forth from one pile to another which was a fearful job; but with the machines that they have today, it may be that the farmers can do quite a bit, if they cannot get their grain shipped, to save it from heating. I hope that that situation is receiving the attention of the Department of Agriculture in every way possible. I do not mention that in any controversial way, but I can see that we are probably facing quite a crisis in this regard, and I think that we should give every possible support to this resolution, and make representations in any way we can to alleviate the situation.

**Hon. Mr. Nollet:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that we have been very much concerned about damp grain ever since last fall, and farmers have been advised, both by radio broadcasts and the Agricultural Representatives who have also been properly briefed and have given as much advice as we have available to farmers in simple and cheap methods of drying grain. I think all the farmers are pretty well acquainted with how to handle hot grain; they have had experience with that before and they do not need much advice. The fundamental fact remains, however, that we had this boxcar shortage last summer, and instead of improving, it has got worse and worse. The proper authorities have had months and months to take care of this situation and nothing has been done. We can advise the farmers as to how to handle the grain on their farms, but when you find facilities at the port of Churchill laying vacant, where the grain could be dried and not being utilized, someone has to undertake the responsibility for that.

**Mr. Tucker:** — I might ask the Minister: the use of the Port of Churchill would help a bit, but the total capacity, as I remember it, is only a little over 2,000,000 bushels and once it was filled up that would be the end of it until you could ship it out. I mean there is no use saying that that would solve the situation.

**Hon. Mr. Nollet:** — No one was suggesting that, but it would help.

**Mr. R.A. McCarthy:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words on this resolution. I am very much in agreement with what both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have said.

The wheat situation down in the eastern part of the province is very serious. We not only have damp wheat down there, but we have wet wheat; and I have had considerable experience with damp wheat and tough wheat and the various degrees of dampness and wetness. When you get wet wheat that is a serious situation. It is likely to start to deteriorate any time now, in the

**April 4, 1951**

next few days, and that wheat will carry along until, say, the first of June; and tough wheat might possibly take you into the middle of June, without any loss; but we are going to have an immediate loss down in our part of the country if something is not done right away.

I was interested in the discussions of the different causes of this thing, but one thing you must remember which contributes greatly to this is the amount of wet wheat which we had which went into these driers. We only have, at the head of the Lakes, a capacity to dry a certain amount of wheat which I think, probably, over normal years is fairly ample; but every once in a while a year crops up like this where we get an altogether out-of-proportion amount of damp wheat, and there was one time this winter when an enormous number of boxcars (I forget exactly how many) were tied up there on the siding because they could not dry this stuff. Now if you put tough wheat through a dryer, you can get it through, I think, once; if you get damp wheat it has to go twice; but when you get into wet wheat it takes three times. That means that one car of wheat will take three times as long as it ordinarily would be to get it moving. So one of the great causes of our car shortage is that they could not handle the stuff down there on those sidings around those dryers.

I just wanted to bring that to the attention of the House. I quite agree with what has been said on it. It is a serious situation and anything we can do here at this level should be done, and certainly, wheat that is dry can be held over. It may be inconvenient and make a fellow hard-up, but he is not going to lose it; but this out-of-condition wheat is going to be a direct loss in a very short time if something is not done about it right away. Just what can be done, I do not know, but certainly this is a step in the right direction, and I hope that they will take some immediate action and see that this out-of-condition stuff is started moving just as soon as possible.

With regard to drying wheat in bins, we have had a lot of experiments with that in the past, and a lot of fellows have rigged up a great number of ingenious arrangements and all that sort of thing, but as far as I have been able to . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order. I do not think this resolution has to do with the methods of drying wheat.

**Mr. McCarthy:** — Well, I thought it had; in the regard that they are trying to get cars to move the wheat, and if it is not moved, it should be dried. All I wanted to establish was that it is a serious situation with regard to the damp wheat — more serious than the dry, and I do not intend to carry it any further; but what I was going to say was that, in my opinion, this damp wheat has to go to a proper facility to be dried, and while you can help tough wheat a little by moving it around, when it gets past the stage, the dryer is the only place for it, and if we do not get it to a dryer almost immediately we are going to have a tremendous loss in this province.

**Mr. Speaker:** — I should warn the House that the Premier is about to exercise his right to close the debate. Any member desiring to speak in this motion should do so now.

**Premier Douglas:** — Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask that the word “and” be put in between “fairly” and “equitably”, so that it will read “fairly and equitably among industries” and so on.

I might say just a word, Mr. Speaker. What my hon. friend said about the question of drying wheat has been a factor, but I want to point out something I think the House should be aware of, and that is that that is only a very small part of the reason for the congestion. The congestion started, first of all, because the crop was late last year. That was part of it. And a lot of it was not able to get on grain boats before the navigation season ended. The other reason was that a lot of the boats formerly used for shipping grain had been transferred to other places, and since that time there has been a very marked decline in the amount of cars made available for grain. I have the figures here: from August 1 to December 30, 126,000 car loadings as compared with the previous year, 159,000; if you bring it up to the latest figure which we have, which is for March 17, there is a drop from 189,000 cars a year ago to 171,000 car loadings this year. That is a drop of over 18,000 car loadings, whereas, on the other hand, pulpwood cars have gone up from 96,000 to 135,000; pulpwood and paper from 135,000 to 148,000; cars, autos and trucks, from 40,000 to 43,000. Most of the other major items are getting more cars whereas we had dropped, in the fall by 33,000 cars and up to the 17th of March we had dropped by 18,000 cars, where for every other of the staple fields, the amount of cars had gone up, so that, basically, it is the allocation of cars, and that is the thing that we are asking to be rectified.

**Mr. McCarthy:** — What I wanted to establish was that we should move this wet grain immediately.

The question being put, the motion was agreed to unanimously.

The assembly then resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole on certain bills.

The Assembly adjourned at 11 o'clock p.m. without question put.