

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Fifth Session — Eleventh Legislature
41st Day

Friday, April 4, 1952

The House met at three o'clock p.m.

On the Orders of the Day:

SASKATCHEWAN LANDING BRIDGE

Hon. J.T. Douglas (Minister of Highways): — Mr. Speaker, I would like to report to the House the condition that exists at the South Saskatchewan Landing Bridge.

I expect most of the hon. members know that there has developed a rather serious situation, and I would like to point out, that, commencing yesterday, when we knew there was a possibility of rising waters, the staff of the Department of Highways, both at Swift Current and at Rosetown, kept a very close watch on the situation, and last night, in the evening, it appeared that the rapidly rising waters were starting to subside, and it was thought the danger had passed. However, about 10 o'clock, I received word that it was again commencing to rise. The engineers again returned to the bridge and found that the ice had risen to the deck of the bridge. At 2 o'clock this morning (at least it was 2 o'clock when the word came to me), I was asked that we contact the Air Force to see if assistance could be given in bombing the ice jam. I contacted Group Captain Turnbull, in Saskatoon — he is a man who has had quite a wide experience in this type of work in Ontario — and he advised me a party was prepared to go out and make a survey at break of dawn, this morning. He said, from his experience in Ontario, that this type of bombing was not satisfactory to clear an ice jam.

However, he made a personal inspection of the situation, and reported back — I believe it was about 9 o'clock — advising me that, in his opinion, it would not be wise to try to bomb the ice jam which had formed from the bridge west. He said it would be rather risky, might damage the bridge, and he thought the only effect of such a bombing would be to drive the ice jam lower and to retard the flow of water which was flowing quite freely under the bridge at that time. He also reported that the original jam was at a point somewhere between 12 and 14 miles east of the bridge.

When he advised me, last night, that there was very little possibility of them bombing from the air, I contacted the Army, and I believe it was five minutes to three when I finished my conversation with Captain Hutchins, and by 4 o'clock he had men on the road, and they were at the site of the trouble at 8 o'clock this morning. He also arranged for a demolition crew to proceed to the bridge, from Dundurn, and those men are either at the site now, or on the way.

The Department also arranged to have all the dynamite that we can locate in the province, adjacent to the bridge, gathered and sent on its way; and it will also be there, this afternoon.

April 4, 1952

I think it is only fair to say that we have had exceptional co-operation from the Air Force, the Army and the Mounted Police, in assisting the engineers of the province to take care of the situation. I found that, at 8 o'clock this morning, our engineers, in co-operation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, had instituted a three-way radio system from the bridge, and we are now in a position to keep up constant communication with those on the job.

At 2.30, today, the situation was a little better — not a great deal, and we are by no means free of danger. There is still miles of ice up-stream from the bridge, but the water is still flowing freely; the jam, south, is still holding, which, I think, for the time being, is a desirable thing. However, we have the necessary engineering staff on the job, and the situation is being capably taken care of. We have a plane on the job that will stay there and will pin-point the trouble wherever it is, and all possible is being done, I can assure you, to take care of the situation.

Some Hon. Member: — How much has the water risen?

Hon. Mr. Douglas: — The water has risen, I think, some 20 feet from yesterday morning, and again I am speaking from memory — I do not know exactly — but I believe we have an allowance of 11 feet over the former high-water mark at the bridge site. The fact that the water has risen in a few hours shows the very critical situation that exists. I understand that never before in the history of the country has the water risen to the height that it is now in the Saskatchewan river.

I want to assure the House that everything possible is being done to take care of the situation, and at the moment we are holding our own, or better; but the danger is by no means over.

This morning, when I realized that the breaking of the jam might cause difficulty in the lower regions of the river, I got in touch with the Department of Agriculture, advised them of the situation which exists, and suggested that the people in the river area be alerted. I understand that this is being done, and I understand that the Hon. Mr. Sturdy has also been in touch with the Civil Defence people who are giving consideration to this angle of the work.

Mr. A. Lopton (Saltcoats): — This situation at the Saskatchewan Landing Bridge is very serious; and I am just wondering if there was any engineering mistake in the level of that bridge. If the rise is only 11 feet, it seems that the bridge might be pretty low, when the ice gets jammed up to the floor of the bridge.

Hon. Mr. Douglas: — Answering your question, I want to say that the clearance of that bridge was, I think, 31½ feet above the normal water level. I am speaking from memory, but I think it was 11 feet above the high-water mark; but the clearance over normal water level was 31½, I believe, which is more, I understand, than some of the bridges over the South Saskatchewan river.

Mr. L.L. Trippe (Turtleford): — Mr. Speaker, I notice the co-operation of the Federal Government, and I sort of fear for them in extending this co-operation, because if anything should happen

out there we will have half a bushel of resolutions condemning them for the bridge.

Hon. Mr. Douglas: — Mr. Speaker, it has been made quite clear. I have said that we have received the very finest of co-operation from both the Air Force and from the Army, and any suggestion that we would criticize them for the help they are giving is entirely out of place in this Assembly.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL AGRICULTURAL CONFERENCE

Hon. I.C. Nollet (Minister of Agriculture): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day are proceeded with, I feel I should report to the Legislature the results of the conference called in Ottawa by the Rt. Hon. J.G. Gardiner, to which all provincial Ministers of Agriculture were invited.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the removal of provincial embargoes on the free movement of livestock and livestock products, and to permit the Federal Government to take responsibility for the movement, marketing and price of livestock.

The Federal Minister of Agriculture (Rt. Hon. Mr. Gardiner) indicated that his Government had decided on a floor price for good steers, already quoted in the press, so I am not putting out any official secrets, as being \$25.00 per cwt., basis Toronto; and the Minister further stated that, before this floor price could be implemented, the Provincial Governments would have to agree on removing present embargoes. Certain provinces, being alarmed regarding the spread of foot-and-mouth disease, had imposed embargoes, but all agreed though that such embargoes could not now be continued and that the matter of control of contagious animal diseases came under the complete jurisdiction of the Federal Government.

Mr. Gardiner wished to obtain an immediate decision by the Ministers present, on behalf of their Governments. However, the Ministers for Manitoba and British Columbia felt that they would first like to discuss the matter with their respective Governments, and would then advise the Federal Government regarding their final decision on removing such embargoes. I stated the viewpoint of the Saskatchewan Government and of this Legislature. I informed them that Saskatchewan recognized that the control of contagious diseases, the movement, marketing and price of livestock, came under Dominion jurisdiction, and that the present provincial embargoes were a decided embarrassment in dealing with the problem at the Dominion level.

I reported to the conference that the Dominion authorities had the disease well under control, and that action being taken in the Regina area clearly indicated that the disease would be expeditiously eradicated, and, therefore, provincial embargoes were no longer justifiable on the basis of disease control.

In regard to floor prices, the matter had been decided by the Government at Ottawa, and the attitude seemed to be, "take it or leave it." In accord with previous representation to the Prime Minister of Canada,

April 4, 1952

and subsequent resolutions passed by the Saskatchewan Legislature, I strongly recommended that floor prices on good steers, basis Toronto, be raised to \$28.55 per cwt., being the average price for the week ending February 23, and endorsed by this Legislature. I pointed out that any price lower than this price would be ruinous to the livestock industry and would not have the desired results in withholding marketing of livestock. It was indicated that even the marketing of grain-fed livestock should be discouraged, and apparently for this reason the floor price was fixed at a level beyond reasonable justification.

I pointed out the impracticability and the financial loss to farmers resulting from returning grain-fed cattle to grass, with the only prospect being a lower price later on. It was my feeling that all finished marketable cattle should be marketed at a realistic price, and that it would be far more practical to advise farmers to withhold unfinished cattle for summer grazing, and that such a plan had more likelihood of success in reducing the number of cattle that might be thrown on the market in the coming months.

In proposing a floor price of \$28.55 per cwt., I pointed out that this price was already \$5.50 per cwt. below the price prevailing week ending January 5, 1952, and that the expanding economy and present high level of employment indicated that this price of \$28.55 was already a real concession to consumers. It was pointed out, too, that the price of pork products had reached disastrously low levels.

I presented a packer's grading certificate received from a farmer at Spiritwood, Saskatchewan, indicating a return of 14 cents per lb. dressed weight for an extra heavy hog, and this same animal marketed the week ending January 5 would possibly have returned at least \$23.00 per cwt. Heavies, at that time, were recorded at \$25.50, Saskatoon.

In addition, the price of poultry products and many other primary agricultural products have reached unwarranted low levels at a time when the rest of the national economy is booming. Therefore, I made strong representations that the Dominion Government reconsider a floor price on beef, submitted to the conference, and I suggested that it be revised upward in line with prices prevailing the week ending February 23, being \$28.55 per cwt. Toronto; \$28.50, Winnipeg; \$26.50, Saskatoon; and \$28.50, Edmonton.

Further, Mr. Speaker, in looking at the general supply situation in Canada, we know that, this year, we will have a surplus of about 80 million lbs. of beef, but I think the Dominion Government is unduly alarmed. I note that, in previous years, we have had very much higher surpluses of beef and we were able to dispose of them. I am quite certain, Mr. Speaker, that the attitude taken by this Legislature is suggesting the price levels we did in our Resolution is realistic, and that it will assist the agriculture industry to return back to normal. I might add that even the present floor price of \$25.00 per cwt. Toronto, is to be reviewed in June, with the prospect being that they will be lowered if the grass cattle come on to the market.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Government at Ottawa will reconsider revising those prices upward. They are not unreasonably high.

They are fair, and they already represent a substantial loss to farmers who are feeding cattle, particularly when you compare them with the high prices of 39 cents per lb. prevailing on the Toronto market last June, and an average, for 1951, of \$28.22 per cwt. throughout the year. I think we are reasonable, and I wanted to report this to the Legislature since I expressed, I think, the viewpoint and the opinion of the Legislature in this matter.

At 10.45 o'clock p.m. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, and being seated on the Throne, gave His Assent to certain Bills and was pleased to deliver the following speech:

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

It is my duty to relieve you of further attendance at the Legislative Assembly and in doing so I wish to thank you and congratulate you upon the work you have done, and to express my confidence that the results of your labour will be of benefit to the people of the Province.

Many important matters have come before you for discussion and decision.

Terms of reference for a Royal Commission, which will be appointed to investigate problems that have arisen in our agricultural economy, have been approved. A useful report has been made available by the Legislative Committee which investigated the high price of farm implements. Steps have been taken which will implement at an early date the major recommendations of the Report on Provincial Municipal Relations. The increases in Mothers' Allowances which have been approved will bring further assistance to a deserving group. Plans for accelerated highway and power construction programmes have been approved. Proper conservation of Saskatchewan's oil and natural gas resources has been provided for. With a view to preventing economic discrimination, legislation has provided for equal pay for equal work as between the sexes. Legislation giving to any citizen the right to sue the Government of Saskatchewan without a fiat has been approved. I note with satisfaction that plans have been laid to provide for the celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the establishment of our Province.

I thank you for the provision you have made to meet the further requirements of the Public Service, and assure you that the sum of money voted will be used economically, prudently and in the public interest.

In taking leave of you, I desire to thank you for the manner in which you have devoted your energies to the activities of the Session, and to wish you the full blessing of Providence as you return again to your respective homes.

The Hon. Mr. Williams, Provincial Secretary, then said:

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly: It is the will and pleasure of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor that this Legislative Assembly be prorogued until it pleases His Honour to summon the same for the dispatch of business, and the Legislative Assembly is accordingly prorogued.