

April 9/90

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Motions for Interim Supply

Mr. Upshall: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to start tonight just about where we left off before 5 o'clock. The minister was giving us some of his feelings on the debt and promises and expenditures that should be made in this province, and I'd just like to tell the minister exactly what I think of his little speech, where he was getting so enraged. And I could see why he gets enraged, because I actually feel for the minister a bit because he's got himself in such a hole. It's a long way out.

But when you think of it in these terms, Mr. Chairman, we have a situation here where, in 1986, this government attempted to buy an election with money they did not have. And they knew that, and we knew that, and most of the people knew that. So they put out all these great and grandiose promises and asked the people to vote for them.

And now in 1990, when the chickens come home to roost, so to speak, they're cutting back on programs which they supplied with money they did not have and again are asking the people to vote for them because they're good guys, and cutting back, and being responsible and restricting the deficit.

But, Mr. Chairman, you just simply cannot have it both ways, and that's what this minister's asking. You're asking people to, first of all, elect us in '86 because we gave you all these promises, and now elect us in 1990 because we're taking everything back from you. It doesn't make too much sense, does it?

An Hon. Member: -- Keep this guy up; the farm vote is rushing our way.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well, the minister says the farm vote is rushing our way, and I'd just like to ask the minister a question on that regard. Mr. Minister, on page 116 of your budget there is an article that says, refunds pursuant to the farmers' oil royalty refund Act. In 1990-91 there is zero. That's 16 and a half million dollars less than there was in 1989-90. And, Mr. Minister, can I assume from that, that the two cent a litre farmers' oil royalty rebate is no longer in effect?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Yes the farmers' oil royalty refund Act and rebate program is no longer in place. It was tied to the price of oil, and for the period where this fund would have been applicable, I think the payment was going to be something down around a cent a litre and it almost cost as much to send it out as it was going to be worth. So it was discontinued, in fact, effective for last year's budget.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, if you look at the price of diesel fuel from June of last

year till the present, you will find that there is an increase of approximately 1.2 cents a litre. There's a four cent a litre rebate removed by the federal government, and now the two cent a litre provincial rebate has been eliminated. That gives you approximately 7.2 cents a litre or 33 cents a gallon -- 33 cents a gallon, Mr. Minister, that the diesel fuel in this province has increased since last year, or a 16 per cent increase.

Now while you're talking about farmers and farm policy, while you're talking about farmers being responsive to the Tory government, I ask you, Mr. Minister, how you justify an increase of 16 per cent or 33 cents a gallon for diesel fuel in this budget, along with the federal increase and the price increase. You are saying that you are taking the lead and trying to be responsible, trying to get the economy moving. How do you tell farmers of this province that a 33 cent a gallon increase is justifiable?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, I think we're all interested in seeing, whether it's pesticides, chemicals, fertilizers, fuel, interest, no matter what the farmer's input or operating costs are, we'd all like to see those numbers lower, not higher.

To that end, we try to maintain a substantial benefit to our primary producers -- the farm sector -- in terms of their fuel costs. And to that end in this budget, farm fuels are exempt from tax, which is a \$110 million benefit roughly, to our farmers in this upcoming year.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, as I said, with all the increases, including the two cent a litre cut that you put into effect, two cent a litre . . . potential one you said, but it was two cents a litre last year.

An Hon. Member: -- The price of oil went down.

Mr. Upshall: -- It doesn't matter if the price of oil went down or not. The point to be made, Mr. Minister, is the fact that you, while standing in your place and trying to say that you're doing everything you can to support agriculture, are doing nothing to ensure that the farm oil royalty rebate was put in place.

As a matter of fact, you were very anxious to put forward the 21 cent a litre cut that you put in 1986, as an election promise. But we have seen that dwindle down to zero. That's dwindled down to zero at a time when input costs, other than gas and diesel, are increasing; when you are saying that you are going to stand and go to the wall for farmers; when it comes to the agriculture economy; when you provide very little in the way of rebate -- zero in this instance -- in the way of rebate through the oil royalty refund.

Mr. Minister, I would ask you what farm groups recommended that you discontinue the oil royalty rebate?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I can't say that any farm group particularly recommended the rebate be discontinued. I think it's fair to say that most farm groups recognize that redirecting moneys that we might

have put there to research low interest loans, those kinds of things, were a higher priority. We chose not to follow the NDP strategy of years past, where every time there was an election come up, there would be a rebate program go into place.

Is the hon. member suggesting to members of the committee that we either put an administrative . . . Your management style would be to put an administrative structure in place to rebate 1 cent a litre, when probably the administrative structure would cost just as much as the rebate would be. Is that what you're recommending to members of the committee?

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, I am not the one who stands in my place on that side of the House and says that we are supportive of farmers. I know on this side we are because we . . . And every time we stand up and every action that we put forward, it is for the benefit of farmers in rural Saskatchewan, rural communities in general, which overflows to the small-business community and to the working people of this province.

But you are the one that is saying that you are going to the wall for farmers, and in many instances . . . And this is just one instance where you have simply misrepresented the truth to farmers by saying you're going to the wall for them and at the same time taking away another benefit that they have received.

A 16 per cent increase in fuel does not . . . And only 1.2 cent a litre of that is price increase. The rest of it is actions by you and your federal counterparts, you and your federal counterparts who are supposedly, who you say, are going to tag team to eliminate the sorrows and the crisis in rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Minister, I say that that simply is not the truth. I say that all the time that you're saying that, we simply see farmers having higher and higher inputs and basically 75 or 80 per cent of that is due to you and the federal government. So don't stand in your place and tell me that you're being responsible and trying to cut costs to agriculture and the farm community, you and the federal government who are responsible for the majority of a 33 cent a gallon increase in farm fuels.

Now, Mr. Minister, I want to turn for a minute to the question of the spring seeding loan.

On Friday of last week we had asked you several questions on the spring seeding loan, and which you had no answers. And, Mr. Minister, I would like to ask you now, have you come up with any more answers to the questions that were asked on Friday, with regards to the spring seeding loan, than you had?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I'm sorry but, not that I don't want to provide details as soon as possible on the spring seeding program, but I am unable to provide any clarification over what I provided the committee on Friday because I simply . . . some of those decisions have yet to be made. I know there has been further meetings today with lending institutions, etc. So much as I would like to provide the members of the committee with detail, I simply am not in a position to do so.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I think we should pursue this just for a minute because you and I both know that seeding has already started in the south-western corner of this province, and it will be a very short time, a very short time where it will be spreading right across this province . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And you can make a joke of it or not, Mr. Minister; you can make a joke of that or not.

The point remains that you had a budget, you had a budget to prepare that was going to be brought in before March 31 of this year. And you started that budget process last fall. Now, Mr. Minister, if you were serious, if you were serious about looking up or standing up for the needs of farmers, projecting what their needs would be and trying to compensate them for their needs, I tell you, Mr. Minister, you would not be standing in this House on April 9 without any detail of any program that you put forward. And that to me is utter blasphemy, because you simply have a responsibility. You've had many months to prepare this. You knew last fall that there was going to be a need for some assistance this spring, and here we are, virtually right on top of seeding, and you have no information.

Mr. Minister, I would ask you: when did you make the decision to put forward a spring seeding loan?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- During the budget process, certainly, I think we heard, probably not unlike yourselves . . . When you visit with farmers they recognize there's a number of challenges facing the farm sector today. But almost universally, if you tried to distil the observations they would make, the immediate problem that they would raise with you was the challenge of making sure there was credit enough to get the crop in, and so we saw that as the immediate issue that had to be dealt with.

I think probably you and your leader were coming from the same place when you recommended as part of your platform that we implement a spring seeding loan guarantee program. I think all of us were essentially hearing the same thing, that the goal with the most immediacy attached to it was the goal of getting the crop in -- and that's what we're doing with this program, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Chairman, just for the benefit of the minister, we had a program, a very comprehensive program, there's no doubt about that. In that comprehensive program there was mention . . . But that was contingent upon two very . . . or three very important points.

First of all, there was a moratorium until July 1. That would allow farmers a breathing space over seeding. Secondly, there was a criteria of a loan income stability program to be put forward by the provincial and federal governments by July 1. And thirdly, there was a program that should be brought forward by the provincial and federal governments for a debt restructuring program.

So that was in light of a whole package of . . . a whole program so that farmers first of all, would know what their income would be; secondly, would have a debt restructuring package; thirdly, would have some breathing space; and fourthly, then would have the opportunity within the criteria of that loan to ensure that they got the crop in. What you brought forward was one program that added more debt onto the backs of farmers of Saskatchewan. Simply a replay of 1986.

And if you were out in the country and listening to farmers you would know that they . . . and I've said in this House before, if I had a dollar for every time a farmer told me that he wished he hadn't taken that loan, I'd have enough to pay mine off. I'll tell you, that program, if you were listening and you were relating to what the farmers in Saskatchewan were saying, you simply would provide something that was credible.

This is not a credible program simply because it is a program that, number one, adds debt; number two, it brings farmers back to 1986 when they took one of your programs that you said was going to be very responsive to their needs and what you've done is turn around and foreclosed upon many of them -- 18 per cent of them in arrears in the production loan program, 33 per cent in arrears in the ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) capital loan program. That is why, Mr. Minister, we have to get down to the bottom of this thing.

So, Mr. Minister, I asked you who or when you began the decision, when you made the decision, and you said during your budgetary discussions.

Well, Mr. Minister, there is quite a broad range there of when you made your decision. First of all, if you made your decision last October or November, then you've had plenty of time with which to provide all the details to farmers long before they have to make their management decisions.

Mr. Chairman, if the minister would care to listen, I will continue. Mr. Minister, you've had ample time, if you made your decision last fall, to bring forward details that farmers need in order to budget.

I mean, if you don't understand this process, let me explain it to you. When I am engaging in my spring farming decisions, I start those decisions before the end of the year, last year. If I can, I will make some input cost purchases then. If I can't, I'm deciding over the period of the winter what I'm going to plant, how much fertilizer I can afford, how much chemical I can afford -- basically what my seeding intentions are. We are . . .

An Hon. Member: -- Just wait a minute until the minister, his entertainment comes to a conclusion here.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Chairman, this process, I believe, is for me to ask the minister questions and for him to answer, and in that process I would ask the minister for some respect to listen to what I'm saying.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- Well, Mr. Minister, if you made that decision last fall, the details should be here right now, because farmers have to decide now and all along during the winter what their intentions are. They have to make management decisions.

And the problem is that because of your incompetence in making management decisions, the farmers cannot make their management decisions, because they don't know now if they qualify for the loan, or a number of other questions. So I have to ask you those questions again, just to try to get some detail on behalf of the farmers of this province, who desperately need to know what this program is.

Mr. Minister, the first question I will ask you is: which institution or institutions are going to deliver the spring seeding loan?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- As I explained to the committee on Friday and I have to reiterate today, details such as possible caps, who's eligible, delivery mechanisms, those kinds of things are . . . have been under review in consultation with the farm leader groups, lenders, Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan, and I suspect that announcement will be coming very shortly, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, I asked you the question of which institution or institutions will deliver the program, and what you're telling me now is that you don't know. Now I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the minister does know, and if he doesn't know, he should know because the time is of the essence in the delivery of this program.

So, Mr. Minister, will the banking institutions and the credit unions have anything to do with the delivery of the program?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, as I indicated earlier, those kinds of administrative details are under review in consultation with lenders and farm leaders. I suspect that the Premier or the Associate Minister of Agriculture will be providing those details to Saskatchewan farmers very shortly.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well, Mr. Minister, when . . . will the program announcements be made this week?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I can't say precisely but it may well be.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well, Mr. Minister, again I find it very incredible that you, in this forum, will not give the farmers of this province the information they are so desperately asking for. I mean they have to know; they have to know what your program is.

And your biggest problem is that, because of your indecisiveness, because you couldn't deliver with the federal government a drought program, because you put out a production program in '86 that you got burnt on, the farmers said, after they got it, they said, this is just a political ploy that added more debt to me. You again are going through the same process, and I

find that very incredible.

Mr. Minister, the big question is, due to the fact there are 18 per cent of those people under the production loan who do not . . . who are in arrears, the big question in rural Saskatchewan is, is who qualifies?

Now, Mr. Minister, can you tell me if there is a formula to decide who qualifies? I mean these are very basic questions that you will have already addressed I'm sure. Is there a formula for who qualifies? Is it a universal program? Or will people in arrears not qualify? Could you answer that please?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- As I mentioned, Mr. Chairman, to the committee earlier, the question of who should qualify, precisely who should qualify is a matter of some discussion with farm leaders and others involved in agriculture, and that kind of detail will be forthcoming shortly.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, it is April 9, 1990. Can you tell me if you have made the decision on who qualifies.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, as I said earlier, that particular detail, along with many other details, has been the subject of discussion with farm leaders and others. And I suspect an announcement will be made shortly, relative to that point.

I think one can assume that a \$525 million program, or appropriation for a \$525 million program, I would make the assumption it's going to be a pretty broad based kind of program. I think that's fairly evident by the size of the appropriation.

Mr. Upshall: -- So, Mr. Minister, what you're saying is that you have not made a decision on who qualifies?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- As I said earlier, those details and others are the point of some discussion that's ongoing, almost, I would suspect, on a daily basis. And those decisions, as soon as they are made and the Premier or the Associate Minister of Agriculture is in a position to communicate them to the farmers of Saskatchewan and this legislature, he will.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I don't think you're telling the truth. I think that at this late date . . . And we will see, we will see, we will see when this announcement is made. And, Mr. Minister, I think this announcement is going to be coming out within the next . . . this week. And I think those decisions have already been made. And what you're doing -- the minister who's saying, well we've got to get out of politics and get into policy -- and here we stand in this House, when seeding is virtually upon us, and you are sitting there making mockery of this whole situation, reading his newspaper, ignoring the questions, getting up and making his silly, repeated comment, as I said earlier in this House, that no one believes. That's why I think you're not telling the truth, Mr. Minister.

Now, Mr. Minister, I see in your budget that you have an expenditure for the seeding program and you also have a reimbursement for the same amount,

meaning that, at least by March 31, 1991, that this program will be repaid. Mr. Minister, is that the date that you intend to have all the moneys back in from the seeding program, or do you intend to have it in earlier?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- The assumption, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, is that this would be a short-term, interim funding arrangement, as I said earlier, to get the crop in. And that implies that it is for the spring period and an operating kind of a credit note.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, when do you plan on recalling the loans?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Other than giving you the broad outline of the program, which I have provided this committee and the people of Saskatchewan on budget night, those kinds of details, as I said earlier, along with many other administrative details, have been under consideration and review by the Premier and members of the farm community.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, you will obviously have to have forms to . . . for people to fill out to apply for this loan. Will these forms take the form of a promissory note, as the 1986 production loan did?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- That kind of detail, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, will be forthcoming shortly.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, how long does it take you to prepare forms for this program? How long would it take you?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well, in so far as the delivery of the program is concerned there has been discussions, obviously through and with Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan, other lending institutions, to design the most efficient mechanism possible to get this money in the hands of Saskatchewan farmers as quickly as possible, with due regard both, and to be fair to both taxpayers and farmers alike.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well, Mr. Minister, just to be more specific -- from the time you make your final decision to the program, and so that all the details can be provided through a form -- from that time, how long would it take you to have the forms printed and get them out?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I'm just not sure, relative to the printing of forms and those kinds of administrative details. But I'm sure that officials -- once these administrative decisions have been made -- officials at Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan will be happy to provide you with the details in terms of length of time from printing to delivery to the bank, or the lending institution that's delivering, to whatever.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well, Mr. Minister, you have had some experience in this regard. You had a production loan in 1986 whereby you knew exactly how long it would take from the time you made the decision to have the form printed and have it out. You changed the rules on the production loan and you'd know exactly how long it would take to have that form printed and have it out. So, Mr. Minister, don't give me the garbage that you don't know, or that it will be done in due course.

Mr. Chairman, if the minister would care to listen again. I realize that he doesn't want to answer these questions, and the reason he doesn't want to answer these questions is because I know he's not telling the truth. I know that his decisions are made.

And I simply would ask him for his co-operation. We're not talking here about anything except the lives of farmers, the lives of farmers who are under undue stress because of your government, the lives of farmers and their families who have to make management decisions in light of the fact that you're not providing them with the information that should have been provided months ago, in light of the fact that, as I say, that you are not telling the truth, in light of the fact that you have a responsibility to the farm families of rural Saskatchewan to deliver a program in time for them to make management decisions.

(1930)

Mr. Minister, you simply are not capable, it seems, or competent enough to do that. Mr. Minister, has there been any representation to the banks to ask them to help deliver the program?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- As I said earlier, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, there's been discussions and review in so far as the administrative details of this program, with lending institutions as well as with farm groups and farm leaders in the farm community itself.

Mr. Upshall: -- Could you describe exactly what you told the banks with regards to delivery of the program?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- The discussions, and I suspect there's been numerous meetings, have been headed up by the Minister of Agriculture, Associate Minister of Agriculture and their officials as well as the president and other officials from the Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan. There's been probably several meetings all told and you know, I'm not about to get into the details here of the discussions and the negotiations that have gone on. This is only one dimension of discussions and negotiations we're having with lending institutions. It includes, obviously, the banks and the credit unions, because one other option that we outlined that's being looked at with the lending institutions, that we outlined in the budget speech, is the debt restructuring option. That is on the Table and being looked at, so I don't view this as a start-stop process; it's something that's been ongoing.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, can you tell this Assembly if you gave the banks enough information to allow them to put -- or credit unions -- to allow them to send a memo out to their branches to describe partly what this program entails.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well, I can't answer that question because I don't know precisely what all has been part of the discussions with the lending institutions, number one. And secondly, I certainly don't know what they have sent to their own member branches or their own members of the various

branches across Saskatchewan, because I'm not privy to that information.

Mr. Upshall: -- But, Mr. Minister, what information you are privy to are the details of the program. What I'm saying to you is that now when seeding is upon us, it is scandalous that you would not have for the farmers of Saskatchewan, a detailed program.

That's the reason you got into trouble last year, in 1989, with a drought program. You announced the program with the federal government and then you messed up the delivery of that program so badly that the farmers of Saskatchewan took the money because they needed it, and condemned your government and the federal government. I mean just, you'd think you'd learn from that, but obviously you haven't.

Mr. Minister, I would like to quote to you from your budget address on page 9 when you talk about the spring seeding loan. It says:

Farmers will be entitled to borrow \$12.50 per cultivated acre for inputs such as seed, fertilizer, fuel, chemicals and repairs.

Mr. Minister, can you tell me if farmers will have to produce receipts in order to get this loan?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- That falls in the same category as I described earlier in terms of some of the administrative detail. It's been under review and consideration with the various interested parties. And that detail and others will come out when the announcements are made.

I apologize to you and other members of the committee if my answers today are as vague as they were on Friday, because quite simply I'm not in a position to make those kinds of announcements relative to program detail. I can just reiterate that we recognize the urgency of the situation, we recognize the immediacy of the importance of making sure that the crop gets in, and doing our part.

I think you people recognize the same thing. Your leader recommended that a spring seeding loan guarantee program made good sense; we were of the same view. And that's what we're pursuing in terms of putting in place, and to put it in place as quickly as possible.

We want to work and work well, and that's why we're involving farmers and farm groups and lending institutes and Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan in terms of the exact design of the program.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well, Mr. Minister, you can keep saying that our program is the same as yours, but as I outlined earlier, it is totally different and in a totally different context. And you can continue to tell these falsehoods and hope that it'll get you out of trouble, but it simply will not.

We have seen the urgency of your programs before. In October 1988, the federal government, along with you, had announced a program saying there's going to be a drought payment. We saw eight months go by with decisions

being changed daily as to how the program is going to be delivered, and who is going to get it, and what the effects would be. The urgency was there; you simply did not deliver.

And again we see in 1990 the urgency of some form of relief, some form of organized debt restructuring of income stability, and land transfer for farmers, and you simply fall flat on your face when it comes to delivering those programs.

Mr. Minister, I find it appalling, and I will continue on this vein for awhile because I think that you have the answers. And you can stand up there and deny all night if you like that you have no idea what details this program are, but I am going to continue to ask the questions because I think you do have the detail, and if you don't have the detail you darn well should.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, with regards to the institutions delivering the program, in your . . . if the Minister would listen. Mr. Minister, in your deliberations with farm groups was it recommended that ACS deliver the program, or was it recommended that ACS and/or a combination of banking institutions handle the program?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I think likely the case has been made at one time or another, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan. There are probably some more arguments to be made there, just a single delivery mechanism, good arguments for perhaps both, and perhaps equally good arguments for the traditional lending institutions, banks and credit unions. And those kinds of details are the ones that the Premier and Associate Minister of Agriculture have been reviewing with farm leaders.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well, Mr. Minister, the more you keep repeating the fact that you will provide no details, the more that I'm sure the farmers in this province will understand just how negligent you are.

I mean we have a serious, serious problem in agriculture in this province. We have been asking . . . as your leader, the Premier of this province, and the Prime Minister said in 1985 that there would be long-term programs. And yet year after year after year we see you failing to put forward details, failing to put forward a proper program to start with, and failing to deliver for the people of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Minister, I don't know if you've been out in rural Saskatchewan since your budget or not. I would take it that you haven't by the way you're answering your questions, and I'd take it that you haven't before that by the way you've answered your questions as well.

And if you were out in Weyburn, Mr. Minister, then you didn't ask the right questions, because I have yet to hear one farmer who said he was going to take this loan, not because he didn't need some assistance but simply because (a) there are no details. He's going to get sucked into a program

that he's going to . . . he or she may not like in the end.

And number (2) they came through a production loan that they got burnt on by you and your cohorts on that side of the House, because first of all you said it was going to be the hassle-free cash and then the next thing you know they were foreclosing on record numbers. And now there's 18 per cent of those production loans in arrears.

And, Mr. Minister, you must know, if you're out in the country, that farmers . . . that this program that you say, by your budget, is going to cost \$40 million to service -- that farmers simply are not going to take it.

What they're going to do is they're going to reduce their inputs. They're either going to cut back on chemicals, or cut back on acres seeded, in general to reduce their input costs, because you're not providing them with anything on which to determine whether or not they'll be able to get some more money or how they're going to pay it back, at a time when seeding is upon us, at a time when the decisions have to be made and should have been made weeks ago.

So, Mr. Minister, the farmers of Saskatchewan are asking me for details and that's why I'm standing in my place here and asking you.

And you're asking us to pass an interim supply Bill in this House that will have the effect of spending money on a program that you absolutely refuse to give us answers on.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- So, Mr. Minister, again . . . I asked you before how long it would take you to deliver this program. So, Mr. Minister, if you could just in broad terms tell me . . . you said the program would be delivered in the near future. Does the near future mean this week or next week, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, look, all of your questions relative to who's eligible? -- is there going to be a cap? what security is required? -- all of those questions are reasonable and fair questions. I would never want to suggest otherwise. But so that we can have this program be the most efficient possible, be fair to farmers and be fair to taxpayers, to work out the administrative details, the Premier, and rightly so, has chosen to consult with farm groups and farm leaders, the farm community, and lenders.

Everyone recognizes the urgency of this. And I hope that perhaps announcements can be forthcoming yet this week, or certainly next week, although I don't know that precisely. But everyone is working towards a goal of sooner rather than later.

Your questions are fair enough. Farmers do want to know those details. And we will be looking to provide them, the Premier will be looking to provide them just as soon as he can. Not an unreasonable request. I'm

just saying to you in all honesty, I don't have the detailed information that you're looking for.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well I'll tell you, Mr. Minister, the word there that you have no inkling of what it means, is fairness. I mean if you were being fair, this program would be in place.

Why were you not consulting with farmers last summer or last fall in order to put a program in place that would benefit rural Saskatchewan? I mean you're talking about being fair. I mean don't give me the garbage about in fairness having consultation. Because you know and I know and the farmers in Saskatchewan know that if you wanted to be the least bit fair you would have had that program in place months ago.

Now you can stand in your place and say, I'm sorry I can't give you the answers. But I tell you, Mr. Minister, all you're doing, all you're doing is playing politics with the lives and the hearts of rural communities and rural families, because those are the people who absolutely need some leadership and government. And you're providing them with no leadership. You're providing them with no leadership and no program. And, Mr. Minister, I will tell you . . . you say this program's going to cost you \$40 million. Well I'll go on the record as saying, Mr. Minister, that I'll bet this program doesn't cost you 10, simply because I know what farmers are saying out there.

And for the life of me, where are all your rural members? I mean you talk with all . . . talk about consulting.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- You talk about consulting with farm groups, and you're the government that claims to have this great "in touch" with rural Saskatchewan because you have all the rural members. Well I've been to my constituency and several of their constituencies, Mr. Minister, and I know farmers simply will not take this loan. They will sooner cut back and do without. Even though the prospects of moisture look good this year, even though the fact that they could possibly get some return this year by a crop, they won't take that because they know that in the end run it is not what they need.

And besides the fact that you are telling us details of the program, you are telling us that consultations are ongoing. Well, Mr. Minister, that is a sad, sad statement, for any government with all those ministers, and one back-bencher, of all those ministers supposedly representing rural Saskatchewan. And you do not have the capability to bring forward a program that will tell farmers, on this late date, what the details are? Well, Mr. Minister, that's exactly why you're in trouble. If you went back to Weyburn and talked to farmers, as you say you did, then you should know -- and I think maybe you do know; if you don't then I'm sorry to say that you simply are so far out of touch that it will be impossible for you to ever be in touch again.

Mr. Minister, would you estimate what . . . in light of the production loan

program, in light of the arrears that are in the province through ACS, in light of all the foreclosures that you and your Premier have been putting forward to farmers, could you estimate to me, what percentage of Saskatchewan farmers do you think will take your spring seeding loan?

(1945)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, as I said, the details as to exactly who would be eligible precisely, are being worked on and in consultation with the farm groups. So that would be the first step to determine who is eligible. I would suspect it will be a broad based program, given the appropriation for it. That's point number one.

Point number two. Then the issue becomes one of, it may well be that there is several -- well not may well be -- I suspect there will be several tens of thousands of farmers eligible. Then the question becomes one of, will all those who are eligible in fact use the program or engage the program? And I have no way of predicting that number at this point in time.

I would think, just to add some additional comments by way of background, as I understand, about a third of farmers are debt free right now. I suspect that third also do not take out operating loans to get their crop in this spring. I think there are a substantial number, however, who do take out operating loans to get the crop in.

And I would think that if I was a farmer out there, in my operating loan, in the conventional sense without this low interest program, had an interest rate of 15 or 16 or sixteen and a half per cent, and the government program had an interest rate of ten and three quarters, being the good business heads that farmers are, at least that I find they are, I would think that most of them would probably look at that pretty favourably. And if they're going to go that route for operating funds, I think they would probably engage the government program because that's a saving of 5 or 6 per cent over what they might normally pay to get operating funds at.

So I think that farmers being the good business heads that they are, will realize the advantage of the lower interest rate.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, farmers being the good business men that they are, are telling me that the program stinks. It really does stink because it is absolutely useless when it comes to any form of restructuring. It is absolutely useless when it comes for you to tell them what the details are. They don't know. And as I said, Mr. Minister, they are making arrangements now. They're getting their seed cleaned. They're making arrangements to buy seed, if they have to, because there was a shortage of crop last year, and there was poorer crops in some areas so they have to purchase seed. They have to make these decisions, Mr. Minister. And for the life of me I cannot understand why you are not aware of that fact. I can't understand why you and your so-called agricultural oriented caucus over there can't understand that farmers cannot be toyed with as you are toying with them.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, you have absolutely no credibility when it comes to this program. And as I said before, I would be stretching it if I said that there would be \$10 million worth of government money used in this program. Because the farmers who received the production loan program simply got burned by that program. And you know that and I know that.

Well, Mr. Minister, I don't think there's going to be any credibility on the part of your government with regards to farmers in this program. I know that because I've been out there talking to them. They phone me, I phone them. There's a communication.

The fact that you and your government are saying that they're standing up for farmers simply adds to the fact that they don't believe you. And I don't believe you because I think this program . . . that you know exactly what it is, and you're simply lying to this -- or not telling the truth to this Assembly -- and I think that that will eventually rest on your shoulders, Mr. Minister.

You're asking us to pass an interim supply Bill, when you will not provide us with the details, when you know the details. And I would be willing to bet that this program will be announced this week. And I know that the time from the program to be determined, and for the forms to get put out, is much longer than that. So, Mr. Minister, I guess I'll just say, we'll see. Go ahead.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Minister, I want to ask a few questions about this loan program because having been home on the weekend to Shaunavon, you'll know that down in the south-west, many people are in the process of not getting ready to seed, but in fact they're out picking rocks now and putting on the drill fills and probably later this week on the south line -- Climax, Frontier, and Val Marie -- they will be seeding. And you're saying you're now in the process of deciding the criteria for the program.

Once you decide the criteria, how long will it take from the time the farmers fill in their application form until they are able to get the money, either from their banker or from ACS?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I can't say precisely, but everybody is working towards the same goals -- have the details available as soon as possible, have a delivery mechanism that is efficient and efficacious, fair to both farmers and to taxpayers; and I think we all share the same goals.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Minister, how long do you estimate it will take you, from the time the criteria is announced, before the money will be in the farmers' hands? What's your best guess?

Maybe you could ask your officials who are sitting with you how long it would take to physically move the program from the date of announcement of criteria to getting money in the hands of farmers.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well we can't say precisely, but as I said earlier, we're all working to the shortest time-frame possible. We realize seeding

is fast coming upon us. Certainly, as you mentioned, in the more southern latitudes, seeding, given weather conditions and soil temperature, can start after mid-April, certainly.

So I think the farmers there have a comfort first, knowing there is a program coming, and secondly, that everyone's working to put together a program that will be administratively not cumbersome but at the same time be responsible and responsive and fair to the taxpayers and farmers alike.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I want to tell you that on behalf of the farmers that I met with on the weekend . . . I happened to have occasion to attend a Ducks Unlimited banquet in Shaunavon, and many of the farmers who live in that area took the opportunity to come out and support Ducks Unlimited.

But the talk around the supper was basically what an outrageous program you had developed here, in terms of the ten and three-quarter per cent money that you're going to be offering to farmers.

Many of the farmers who were attending that banquet simply said this, and they wanted me to relay it to you: that you're making a mockery of farmers in that part of the province, because the seeding program that you talk about is not in place. The program that you talk about to help farmers seed is nowhere in sight, and you know it, and the Premier knows it, and you sit in your place here and laugh about the whole program because, I guess, it is a joke.

And I think the farmers of Saskatchewan now see your program to help them get the seed in the ground as being basically a joke and nothing more than politics being played with their futures. And you tell us that you're consulting with farm groups to decide the criteria. Can you tell me what groups you're meeting with, or what groups you plan to meet with this week, to plan that criteria?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I wasn't at the meeting myself, but I'm advised that the Associate Minister of Agriculture met earlier today with many of the same groups, I think, that were in a week ago, including the National Farmers Union, Sask Wheat Pool, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. I presume canola growers would be there, the western Canadian wheat growers would be there, United Grain Growers -- did I mention the wheat pool? -- those kinds of groups.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Well, Mr. Minister, you indicate that you've met with them. Have you got any meetings lined up for the future? You were telling my colleague from Humboldt earlier that you were going to be meeting with groups of farmers to decide. Now you're telling me who you've met with. I would like you to list for us what groups you have planned to meet with in the future.

You mentioned to my colleague from Humboldt that you were going to be meeting with farm groups. Now are you having subsequent meetings with all these groups or did they not tell you what they thought of your program when they met with you this morning?

Tell me, Mr. Minister, if you could, what meetings have you got lined up for the future with farm groups that you were indicating to my colleague from Humboldt?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well I can't give you precise details as to when and what further meetings will occur, except to say that the meetings will be ongoing, whether it's with farm groups or lending institutions. Because the challenges facing, as I think this is an important point to make, is there's no single program that agriculture's going to solve all the challenges that our farmers and farm communities face.

The first and immediate goal is to make sure the crop is in. There's things like the international grain trade war that has to be dealt with, things like debt reduction have to be dealt with, things like a new mandate for the Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan that have to be dealt with. So I can see it being a busy time for farm groups, the Premier, associate minister, our caucus, our government, our cabinet, indeed all the farm leaders.

And I think it's a tribute to the leadership of these farm organizations that they're prepared to give of their time and their advice, and continue to work with us to put the best possible programs in place for Saskatchewan farmers and Saskatchewan communities in general.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I want to go back to the statement you made to the member from Humboldt, that you had a number of meetings lined up with farm groups, and I want you to tell us which groups you plan to meet with and when you'll be meeting with them so we can then decide when the program will be ready.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well, as I say, I don't have precise details because it's an ongoing process. It looks to me, at a minimum, it's been weekly lately; it may well be weekly for some good, long time.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I think clearly what the minister has been doing here is misleading the farmers of the province. He indicates that he has meetings lined up, and then when pressured on it to find out when the meetings are going to be held, he says he has no meetings lined up.

And clearly what we have here is a Minister who doesn't understand either his own program, or he does understand it and is not willing to share the information with the legislature and the farmers of the province. Either one of those options doesn't put a very good light on this government and their agricultural program.

Well I can tell you, Mr. Minister, that what the farmers of the province are saying: that a loan program that will offer to them hundreds of thousands of dollars, in fact \$500 million dollars at ten and three-quarters per cent, is like throwing a drowning man an anchor. It simply is not going to do the trick, unless the trick that you want to perform is driving farmers off the land. And this fits well with what the

Premier talked about -- when he was a professor at the University of Saskatchewan back in the 1970s -- when he talked about 80 per cent of the farmers being inefficient.

We all know that literally thousands of farmers are losing their land because of the Conservative program, from back in 1985, that offered a billion dollars to Saskatchewan farmers at 6 per cent. That's when times were better. That's when things were not as bad as they are today.

And the solution of offering them money at an interest rate that's 50 or 60 or 70 per cent higher than what you offered them back in 1985 isn't going to do the trick. That may come as a surprise to these members of the Conservative party, but it isn't going to do the trick. In fact, what it will do is mean that a subsequent government, three or four years from now, will have to try to set in place a program that will solve the agricultural problems of today. And I can tell you that's exactly what a government -- a New Democratic government -- will be doing as soon as we're given the opportunity to set in place our agricultural program.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Now, Mr. Minister, I want to say to you that as well, many of the farmers who were at this banquet that I attended on the weekend, were saying as well that they couldn't understand why you set up a program that will subsidize loans to the tune of 20 or \$30 million in the coming year, but you have \$64 million for Cargill.

Do you want to tell me, Mr. Minister, how you as the Finance minister of the day justify that kind of an investment in Cargill versus that kind of an investment in 60,000 farmers?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well first of all the investment in Cargill is to buy a 49 per cent interest in a major asset of fertilizer-producing, manufacturing, processing plant. Farmers use about \$300 million worth of the fertilizer each spring in this province. I think that a major plant like this can be very useful for farmers in terms of, at a minimum, stabilizing their fertilizer costs, providing jobs for our young people, and thirdly, providing yet another avenue for processing of our natural gas resource, by manufacturing and processing it into fertilizer. So that would be the reason why we would undertake that kind of investment on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers and Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Now relative to the spring seeding program, you suggested it's like throwing a dying man an anchor . . .

(2000)

An Hon. Member: -- A drowning man.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- A drowning man, rather, an anchor. Now formerly in this program the kinds of ideas that were put on the table was the notion that the loan be for basic spring seeding needs, that both the lender and farmer certify to the satisfaction of the Agriculture Credit Corporation,

that a loan guarantee is required as collateral, and because the government is guaranteeing the loan, that commercial lenders provide it at well below the prevailing interest rate.

Now these were all ideas that were put on the table and part of discussions and negotiations as the administrative detail and design of this program goes on. And I don't think those are unreasonable kinds of considerations. Now whether they'll be exactly that in the day, I don't know. But I ask you: are those unreasonable considerations?

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I want to tell you that you're to be answering the questions, but many farmers are saying it's very unreasonable, absolutely unreasonable that you would expect farmers today, in 1990, with a depressed world market, when they weren't able to pay 6 per cent interest back in 1985, and I'm sure the chairperson of the committee understands that. He comes from a farming area and he will well know that farmers cannot afford to pay ten and three-quarters per cent interest.

And I can tell you, Mr. Minister, that this may be a joke to you -- you sit and laugh about it and you've been laughing all evening -- but many farmers out there don't take this as a joke. I mean, they make their living trying to farm, and farming with Conservative governments in Ottawa and Regina has become a very, very difficult task. In fact, they haven't had such a hard time trying to make a living on the farm since the last time we had Conservatives in Ottawa and the province at the same time, back between 1929 and 1935.

And many of them believe that that isn't by accident that farmers are in this kind of a destitute situation, when we have extreme right wing governments in Ottawa and Regina and in many other parts of North America, that they really believe, the many farmers and polling indicates that, are moving away from the Conservative Party simply because they believe that the words of Grant Devine . . . or of the Premier when he was the . . .

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. The member knows he's not supposed to use other members' names in the legislature debate.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Yes, when the Premier was a professor at the University of Saskatchewan and talked about 80 per cent of the farmers being unable to carry on or non-productive, as he would have it, that this is a strategy of Conservative parties and Conservative governments, that the reason we have record numbers of farmers leaving the land in the 1980s under Conservative governments and in the 1930s is a plan of Conservative governments to build up bigger and ever larger farms.

Now, Mr. Minister, I want to say to you that many farmers are concerned about how the loan program is going to operate -- whether it will be handled out of ACS, as you've indicated is a possibility, or whether the banks will operate the program. Can you tell me what options you're looking at in terms of how the program will be administered?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, before I get into that, it might be worth pointing out to the committee that these notions and these concepts

that I just laid out before the committee, about some things that would be worthy of examining and putting together a spring seeding program, I basically was quoting them verbatim from an attachment that he called garbage. I was basically quoting from an attachment that was sent in a letter to the Premier by the Leader of the Opposition, on February 26, where they said, we should have a loan guarantee program and that the loan be for basic spring seeding needs. Now how can that be a good idea on February 26 and a bad idea on April 29? Could the Leader of the Opposition explain that flip-flop, that doublespeak? Could he explain that to us, the members of this committee, and the farmers of Saskatchewan? Could they explain that to us?

I can't understand it, Mr. Chairman, for the life of me. I can't understand it. In a letter on February 26, all these notions were worthy of examination and part of a platform, and here we are, barely a month later, and all of a sudden they are not worthy of examination by government and farmers and lenders in terms of a spring seeding program, Mr. Chairman. I can't understand that flip-flop and that doublespeak that comes from the opposition leader.

Secondly, in so far as the administrative details of who will be providing these loans, I think it's fair to say that all options are being explored, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, we're trying to carry on a civil conversation to find out some information for the farmers, and I can't understand why the minister keeps blowing his top. He sits in his desk and laughs while we're asking the questions, and then when he stands on his feet, he blows his top. And I can't understand what's going on with the minister. I guess he's under a lot of pressure and a lot of pressure from farm groups. I know it's not unlike the Premier, who last week blew his top with a group of farmers who were in the building. But I want to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well now the minister is yelling from his seat. Now he's yelling from his seat. But I want to ask the minister, can you tell me what options you're looking at? You indicated you're looking at all options. What are those options you're looking at?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, as I explained to your colleague earlier, I think some would make the case for Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan being the primary delivery mechanism, others for the traditional lending institutions: banks and credit unions across rural Saskatchewan, some for a hybrid of those two options. And that's the kind of thing that's under discussion and review with both lending institutions and the farm community.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Minister, what is your preference? Personally, you as minister, who have the deciding voice in this, what is your preference? Which way would you handle it?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- As I said earlier, my view is to end up with the delivery mechanism that's efficacious, efficient, fair, reasonable and responsible to both farmers and taxpayers alike.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Minister, I'm sure that answer will shed a lot of light on the question for the farmers who might be interested or might be reading verbatim, or, in fact, even watching the proceedings on television.

But I want you to be serious for a moment if you could, and give an indication whether the farmers will be going to the Royal Bank to get these loans, the (Canadian) Imperial Bank of Commerce, or whether it will be like the payment that was made back in 1985, and I'm sure even Mr. Chairman would be interested in knowing your response to this. Which way are you and your officials leaning? At this point, I mean we're a matter of days away, surely at this point you would have a feeling or an idea of where you're going. It simply can't be that you're still working in a vacuum even though at times it looks like it. You simply must have an idea. Your officials must have an idea how the program's going to work.

Are you leaning towards using the bank system: Royal Bank, and other banks, lending institutions, or are you planning to do it through the government agency?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, as I've said several times, all options are being explored and I don't know as I can add any more to details. We can expect an announcement in the not too distant future relative, because of the urgency and the immediacy of the spring seeding needs, from the Associate Minister of Agriculture or the Premier and Minister of Agriculture himself.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Minister, I can hardly believe what I'm hearing here, that you're saying you're days away from making the announcement but you've got no idea of where you're going to. And I see that the member from Morse, the Associate Minister of Agriculture, has now moved in closer and that may be of great assistance. And maybe now we can ask some of the questions about how the program is going to work.

I wonder, Mr. Minister of Finance, if you would ask the associate minister whether or not there will be a cap on the program, what the limit will be, and how much each farmer can expect to get in terms of an upper limit. What will be the limit on the program?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, those kinds of details, I've said earlier -- eligibility, caps, administrative details, security required -- we can expect an announcement in the not too distant future because of the urgency of the situation.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Minister, as you know there are literally thousands of farmers who are facing . . . have received foreclosure notices from the provincial government and the federal government, FCC (Farm Credit Corporation) and ACS over the last couple of years.

Can you tell me, Mr. Minister, or does your colleague from Morse know whether these people will be eligible for the program, people who are facing foreclosure notices or have received foreclosure notices? Can you tell us whether or not any of those farmers will be eligible for the program?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- As I said earlier, in terms of who is eligible precisely, has been the point of some discussion with lenders, farm leaders, with the notion of coming up with a fair and reasonable program at the end of the day, and I have every reason to believe that that is what will be accomplished. Certainly that's a serious enough question. It's one that deserves some fair amount of time for lots of reasons that will be well known to yourself. You don't want to over-react on the one hand; on the other hand we do have a responsibility to taxpayers as well across the province, as trustees of the taxpayers' dollars, and at the end of the day I'm of the view that the rule of common sense will apply here, in terms of what the farmers and the minister and the associate minister have come up with.

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Minister, we're going to go on here for a long time with you because it simply isn't good enough to come to the Assembly and ask for part of the 500 million for a loan program and not have any detail. That simply won't work, and it's not how the legislature should work. It's not how democracy should work, and it's certainly the issue when it comes to a \$4 billion deficit.

You people have got yourself into this problem of deficit simply by this kind of management -- by the seat of your pants; by not knowing where you're going; not knowing the criteria; just saying look, to the taxpayers of the province, give us the money, trust us, and we'll take care of it.

Well I can tell you that the people of the province are getting sick and tired of your style of management, of your style of management coming here for hundreds of millions of dollars, which is what we're doing here tonight, debating how you're going to spend it, and you say to us glibly, laughingly, you don't have to release how you're going to spend it. You don't have to know any of the detail.

Well I believe you do know the detail. I believe you're embarrassed about it, that you're not wanting to give it out to the Assembly, that you want to hide it somewhere, and I say to you that isn't good enough. We're going to spend a good, long time with you trying to find out the details of the program, not because we dislike you or don't trust you; because it's our job to know where the money's going to go.

That's why we come here to the legislature. The chairman of the committee knows that the way the committee works on interim supply is that the minister is to defend and explain how the dollars he asks for are going to be spent. Now for two days we've asked you, sir, how is the money going to be spent, and you say, we don't know. Our job then is to continue to ask you until you come forward with the answers. And this may take several more days, but I say to you, that it's important for the taxpayers of the province to know where the money's going to be spent and what the details of the plan are. And I think that the people sitting around you know. I think they know. I think you're the person who's supposed to be the conduit, who will not release the information to this committee. And that isn't good enough.

And I say to you we're going to get into this and ask many questions about the program. I hope that over the next few hours you can come up with some of the answers, because it just is not conceivable that you would come here and ask for hundreds of millions of dollars for farmers who are facing foreclosure, unable to seed their crops, and you say the details of the program have not been announced.

And I would simply ask you, Mr. Minister, to ask your colleague, the member from Morse, the Associate Minister of Agriculture, if he doesn't have it with him, to go to his office; to pick up the folder where he has this information; bring it to you so that you can release it. This is where we do it at -- in the Assembly so the people of the province know. And I ask you, Mr. Minister, if you don't agree that that's the legitimate role of the committee, and if you will release to us the detail of the program at this time.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

(2015)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- We have . . . in the budget, and this is what I would ask the committee to do, is advance interim supply. There'll be full and ample opportunity to examine in detail under Agriculture's estimates, this vote. And it's not unusual for the Minister of Finance to ask the committee to vote some interim supply, until the committee has had a chance to fully examine all the departmental spending estimates. That's the basis, the democratic basis, for this institution here in this legislature.

I have been as forthcoming as I can. I've outlined budget night, and since then, the broad brush principles behind this. It's for basic spring seeding needs. It's \$12 an acre. All of those kinds of . . . it's \$525 million that's being made available for it, all of those kinds of details. Because we want the best program possible in the interest of farmers and taxpayers alike, there has been discussion, negotiation, and consultation with lenders and farmers alike and we don't apologize for that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Shillington: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I've listened over the last two days -- Friday and today -- to what I think is really an incredible performance.

Mr. Minister, in some ways your . . . Let me just deal with one item which may not seem important but I think is symbolic of your confusion. Mr. Minister, you continue to refer to Janus as someone with two heads. In fact, this Roman god has one head but two faces -- one which looks forward, the other which looks back, and the god was therefore better informed. Mr. Minister, I say that's not important but it is symbolic of your confusion. Just as you have confused that, you have confused everything else.

Mr. Minister, we began on Friday, we began on Friday, Mr. Minister, asking you to show me -- I thought it was going to take 15, 20 minutes -- asked you to show me where the \$234 million from potash had gone to pay down debt. Mr. Minister, if you care to review the verbatim, what you gave us

was at least four different explanations, none of which were consistent, some of which were completely inane.

You began, Mr. Minister, by telling me that I ought to look in the non-budgetary items -- of all the nonsense, of all the nonsense, Mr. Minister. When it turned out that that explanation, Mr. Minister, wasn't doing you any credit, you went on to some entirely different explanations, Mr. Minister. Today, Mr. Minister, this afternoon, we spent an hour and a half, Mr. Minister, with you patently avoiding a fairly simply question. What Crown corporation profits go to make up, and what goes to make up the sum of \$310 million, Mr. Minister? We asked you to break that figure down. You spent an hour and a half avoiding the issue. You claimed, Mr. Minister -- and nobody can believe this -- you claimed, Mr. Minister, that you didn't have the information. Just to make sure that there was nobody who could credit such an explanation, you gave us a great deal of detail about coal, oil, potash, natural gas. You gave us all that. But when we went back to the figure of \$310 million, Mr. Minister, all of a sudden you had no detail; you knew nothing.

Mr. Minister, we asked you, Mr. Minister, we asked you, Mr. Minister, what -- we asked you, Mr. Minister -- what sums went to make up the \$310 million. We asked you what the other Crown corporations were contributing; you claimed not to know. When we asked you who sat on the board of directors of the CIC (Crown investments corporation of Saskatchewan), assuming they would know, it turns out you were one of them, Mr. Minister. You've almost certainly seen the annual report or had access to the annual report from the Crown investments corporation.

Mr. Minister, this evening, having disgraced yourself -- and I think there's no other proper term for it -- having disgraced yourself Friday morning and this afternoon, you've come back this evening. Mr. Minister, you want interim supply, and you haven't got the details on a \$550 million program which is probably going to be largely committed and gone before the next interim supply. This is money which is going to go in the next month, if it goes at all.

Mr. Minister, you had no details; you would tell us nothing. Even such questions as you ought to have had the answers to -- what options are considering -- you wouldn't tell us anything, Mr. Minister. You spent an hour this evening avoiding giving us any information. You sat, Mr. Minister, like an arrogant pup reading a newspaper when you should have been listening to the questions that were put to you and answering them.

Mr. Minister, I have not seen a Minister of Finance behave the way you've behaved. I've never seen a Minister of Finance read a newspaper, carry on, laugh with other members, and make every conceivable effort to convince the committee that you're not listening, because that's what you've done.

Mr. Minister, the information you have given us has been confused. It has been wrong. But more important, Mr. Minister, you have gone out of your way to make sure that this committee has no information at all.

Mr. Minister, I therefore think it's appropriate to move, seconded by the

member from Regina North East, I'm going to move:

That the motion be amended by reducing the total sum by the amount equivalent to the minister's salary.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

DThe division bells rang from 8:23 p.m. until 8:36 p.m.

Amendment negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas

Romanow	Anguish t
Rolfes	Hagel t
Shillington	Lyons t
Lingenfelter	Calvert t
Tchorzewski	Lautermilch t
Thompson	Trew t
Upshall	Koenker t
Kowalsky t	

-- 15 R

Nays

Schmidt	Pickering t
McLeod	Sauder t
Hodgins	Toth t
Smith	Petersen t
Maxwell	Wolfe t
Kopelchuk	McLaren t
Martens	Baker t
Meiklejohn	Swan t
Hopfner	Muirhead t
Swenson	Johnson t
Neudorf	Gleim t
Gerich	Britton t
Klein	Gardner t
Berntson	Saxinger t

-- 28 R

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Shillington: -- Thank you. I noted that the applause was somewhat scattered at that victory, Mr. Minister. Your attempt to drum up applause wasn't exactly thunderous.

Mr. Minister, heretofore we have had schedules attached to interim supply Bills. There is no schedule attached to this one. And I wonder, Mr. Minister, why we're departing from what has been a useful practice in the past.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- The practice, I'm advised, is that the only time a schedule has been attached in the past is if it deviated from the straight one-twelfth request. And this is the standard one-twelfth request until

the committee has examined all the estimates and can vote the entire sums.

Mr. Shillington: -- Mr. Minister, are you saying that all of the sums voted to each of the departments is exactly one-twelfth?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- One-twelfth of the amounts to be voted, that's correct.

Mr. Shillington: -- And there are no deviations from that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- That's correct, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Shillington: -- Mr. Minister, I accept your explanation. I may say that I don't recall having seen it done this way in the past.

Mr. Lyons: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, recently the Government of Saskatchewan signed an agreement with the Government of Canada in which the Government of Canada had pledged to pay to the Government of Saskatchewan, \$1 million a month for 10 months for an assumed delay caused by the federal court of Canada in the Rafferty-Alameda project.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, first of all, could you outline to us the agreement on when that money will be paid; or will you tell us if it has been paid; and thirdly, if it has been paid, could you outline to the committee to whom it has been paid outside the Government of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- The minister in charge of Sask Water Corporation could probably provide you with the most details, but I'll do the best I can, based on the understanding I have. The money does go to Sask Water Corporation. My understanding is it comes monthly and that to date Sask Water Corporation has received \$2 million.

Mr. Lyons: -- Mr. Chairman, another question to the minister. Mr. Minister, could you tell us when the first cheque was sent and in what method has the money been disbursed to the Saskatchewan Water Corporation?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- In so far as the exact date and when the first cheque came, I don't have that kind of detail, but the cheques that come to Sask Water Corporation are held by Sask Water Corporation.

Mr. Lyons: -- Now, Mr. Minister, the agreement was between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Government of Canada. I presume that the cheques were sent to the government and there was a disbursement made to the Saskatchewan Water Corporation. I'm wondering if you could tell us tonight: is that money being held in trust by the Saskatchewan Water Corporation or has that money been paid out in disbursements to any other party outside the Saskatchewan Water Corporation?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- My understanding is that it's being held in trust by Sask Water Corporation. But I preface that remark by saying that's my best understanding and all the details are likely more appropriately put, are those kinds of questions to the minister in charge during examination of

his estimates. But my understanding is that it's held in trust by Sask Water Corporation.

Mr. Lyons: -- I noticed you used the words, "are held in trust." Am I to take it from your answer that in fact there have been no disbursements made, from the Saskatchewan Water Corporation, of that sum payable to the Government of Saskatchewan, or has in fact that money been paid to people like Panteluk Construction?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- My understanding is there's been no disbursements to date, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lyons: -- Well I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you can tell us that in regards to the halt placed on the Rafferty project by the federal court of Canada, would you explain to the committee what agreements are in place in terms of non-performance by the government, in terms of its contractors that it had engaged to build the Rafferty-Alameda project, and have in fact any moneys been paid to any contractors or other persons from Sask Water Corporation or from the provincial government . . .

Mr. Chairman: -- Order, order. I've allowed wide-ranging debate on this interim supply resolution, but members must realize that this is not an appropriate place to get into detailed questions on the operation of specific department programs.

I refer members to debates of June 14, 1989, as follows:

Detailed questions should be asked of the minister of that department. Interim supply covers the whole government and all its expenditures, but not any detailed questions should be asked of separate departments under an interim supply Bill.

(2045)

Mr. Lyons: -- Thank you very much for that enlightened ruling, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Minister, let's put it another way. In terms of the overall operations of the Government of Saskatchewan and its disbursements in general, in general has there been any disbursements made to any contractors in regards to any of the departments of the provincial government as a result of the shut-down of the Rafferty-Alameda project?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- That question requires some detailed knowledge which I do not have, but my understanding is no.

Mr. Lyons: -- Well, Mr. Minister, is there in place in any government department, with any agency or Crown of the government that would require a disbursement in the general spending of the provincial government, a default for non-performance? For example, if in fact as a result of the shut-down through the court ruling, is the Government of Saskatchewan liable to pay to any person or any persons, moneys as a result of that shut-down?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, I don't have that kind of detail with me and I think those questions are better put to the minister in charge.

Mr. Lyons: -- Well, Mr. Minister, here we have a situation where we have \$12 million . . . or pardon me, \$10 million, the potential of \$10 million arriving to the Government of Saskatchewan, into its coffers, and you're telling this committee that you don't know precisely what's being done with that \$10 million. You say it may be held in trust by Saskatchewan Water Corporation, but then again it may not be held in trust, is that correct? No. So you're positive that it's held in trust, which was not the answer, Mr. Minister, that you gave to the committee just a few minutes ago.

Secondly, you say that you don't know whether or not the Government of Saskatchewan is liable to pay out of the coffers of the treasury, provincial treasury, moneys to people who are affected by the shut-down of the Rafferty-Alameda project.

Now, Mr. Minister, it seems to me that if the Government of Saskatchewan is on the hook for moneys due to contractors or to workers or whatever, as a result of that shut-down, that you would have a knowledge of that situation.

So I say to you, sir, that I find your answers totally unbelievable, that you as a Minister of Finance would not know whether or not the Government of Saskatchewan is liable for any contractual arrangements with anybody engaged in that government project at Rafferty-Alameda. And I wonder, sir, if you would check with your officials to seek their knowledge on whether or not the Government of Saskatchewan will be liable as a result of that shut-down, monetarily liable.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- The payments to the Sask Water Corporation have no bearing on the Heritage or Consolidated Funds, as I said earlier. My best understanding is they're going to the Sask Water Corporation, held in trust, and no disbursements have been made to date, as far as we know.

Mr. Lyons: -- Well, Mr. Minister, the agreement that I read -- it was a copy of the agreement signed between the Government of Canada and the province of Saskatchewan -- named the province of Saskatchewan as the party to which those payments would be paid. Are you now saying that those payments aren't paid to the province of Saskatchewan but are paid directly from the federal government to the Saskatchewan Water Corporation? Is that clear, or do in fact those payments come into the general . . . into the Consolidated Fund, and disbursed out of the Consolidated Fund?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- They're paid to Sask Water Corporation in right of the Crown.

Mr. Lyons: -- Well, Mr. Minister, that may be all well and true but certainly the cheques, if I'm not mistaken, would go, would be accounted through the general revenues of the province of Saskatchewan in terms of being in right of the Crown. But I'll leave that for a moment.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, if, in this interim supply Bill that you are asking, for which you are asking, whether or not there are any plans to pay any legal fees in connection with the shut-down of the Rafferty-Alameda project.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I don't have those kinds of details, Mr. Chairman.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman:

Be it resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1991, the sum of \$334,961,200 be granted out of the Consolidated Fund.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman:

Be it resolved that a sum not exceeding \$65,942,100 be granted to Her Majesty on account for the 12 months ending March 31, 1991.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman:

Be it resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1991, the sum of \$65,942,100 be granted out of the Saskatchewan Heritage Fund.

Motion agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

FIRST AND SECOND READING OF RESOLUTIONS

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, I move that the resolutions be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to and the resolutions read a first and second time.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move:

That Bill No. 11, an Act for Granting to Her Majesty certain sums of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Year Ending Respectively March 31, 1991, be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to, and by leave of the Assembly, the Bill read a first time.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, and under rule 48(2), I move that the Bill be now read a second and third time.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill read a second and third time and passed under its title.

(2100)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 10 -- An Act respecting the Manufacture, Sale, Use, Consumption, Collection, Storage, Recycling and Disposal of Ozone-depleting Substances and Products

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, The Ozone-depleting Substances Control Act, which we are considering here this evening, reflects a commitment, and I say to you, Mr. Speaker, a serious commitment on our part to take concrete action to protect the earth's ozone layer.

And, Mr. Speaker, I say this in the context of other provinces across Canada. I say it in the context of other jurisdictions across North America, and, in fact, all over the world, who are committing and pledging to their constituents in whatever location it may be, to play their part in protecting the ozone's layer. And I view this as Saskatchewan once again playing part in a world-wide initiative.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the ozone layer, located between 25 to 50 kilometres up in the earth's atmosphere, protects us from the damaging effects of ultraviolet radiation from the sun. Today it is estimated that the ozone layer is decreasing by about 1 to 3 per cent annually, as a result of the release of CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) into our atmosphere.

In this regard, Mr. Speaker, scientists tell us that an increase in exposure to ultraviolet radiation will result in more cataracts and skin cancers. It will also reduce our crop yields and damage aquatic life. Mr. Speaker, this Act demonstrates once again, Saskatchewan's determination to participate in the world-wide movement to eliminate the manufacture and sale of ozone-depleting substances.

In fact, this initiative goes much farther than the international protocol that was recently signed in Montreal, which asks for a 50 per cent reduction in CFCs. In keeping with the initiatives of our federal and provincial counterparts, this Act will result in 85 per cent reduction in CFCs by the year 1998.

Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, presently does not have any CFC or Halon manufacturing facilities. However, the substances are in use in the province in such things that we all use as individuals, Mr. Speaker, in refrigerators, air conditioners, and fire fighting equipment.

In addition, rigid and flexible foams are also in use in this province. And accordingly, this Bill will not only ban the manufacture, but more importantly the sale of any product containing an ozone-depleting substance. On the date of the proclamation of this Act, it bans the manufacture and sale of any aerosol can or pressurized canister such as air horns or portable, hand-held fire extinguishers, and any packaging such as fast-food wrapping that contain CFCs or Halons.

Mr. Speaker, regulations will also be developed to phase out by specific dates, before 1998, the manufacture or sale of other products which may contain CFCs or Halons. These include rigid foam insulation, flexible furniture foam, cleaning solvents used on electronic or electrical equipment, protective sprays for application on photographs, lubricants in the mining industry, in refrigerators, air conditioners, coolers, and many other applications.

In addition this Bill provides for the systematic phase out of CFCs, Halons, and other ozone-depleting substances in other applications by no later than December 31, 1998, including products that are manufactured in any process that uses these substances.

Mr. Speaker, as ozone-depleting substances are being phased out and replaced, there's also a need to collect, to store, to recycle and ultimately dispose of these substances in an environmentally sound and acceptable manner. This Bill provides the authority for regulations to be developed to ensure that this is done and to ensure that it is done properly.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out another important aspect of this Bill. Section three, subsection (4) exempts personal consumers from the provisions of this Act. In other words, Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for phasing out and replacing ozone-depleting substances is not placed on the individual but on the manufacturing and service sectors. It is these sectors that must ensure that these substances are not available after certain specific dates set out in the regulations. Accordingly the onus will be on the manufacturers of new appliances to use alternate substances which will not harm the ozone layer.

Likewise the service sector will be responsible for ensuring that ozone-depleting substances and existing equipment are removed and replaced with alternate substances at the time of a service call and disposed of in an acceptable manner. A person who wants to buy an air-conditioner for his automobile or home, for example, or a person who already has an air-conditioner in his car or home, is not responsible for ensuring that alternate substances are being used in these appliances. Therefore, individuals need not worry about having to face unexpected costs to replace consumer products containing ozone-depleting substances. This will occur through normal maintenance and eventual replacement of these pieces of equipment.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to acknowledge the proposed Bill to amend The Environmental Management and Protection Act with respect to Ozone, which was recently introduced by the member representing Regina North East. I

appreciate the member's good intentions and his efforts with respect to this piece of legislation.

However, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support his Bill, as I do not believe that it went far enough. The Bill is too narrow in its application as it only considers propellants and packaging. It does not consider rigid foam insulation, flexible furniture foam, cleaning solvents used on electronic or electrical equipment, protective sprays for application on photographs, lubricants in the mining industry, in refrigerators, air-conditioners, coolers, and other applications. It also does not contain a systematic approach for phasing out various applications of ozone-depleting substances. As well, the prohibition sections of the member's Bill are very restrictive and I believe somewhat unworkable as these sections do not allow for the transport, storage, and disposal of ozone-depleting substances once they are phased out.

Mr. Speaker, what are we to do with the CFCs and the Halons if we were to pass such a Bill? Mr. Speaker, the Bill that I am speaking to today is a more comprehensive and tougher Bill than the one proposed by the member representing Regina North East. I believe that by developing tougher legislation and implementing it, we can demonstrate our commitment to achieving, and in fact exceeding, the Montreal protocol.

Mr. Speaker, we can all play our part with the serious problems of ozone-depletion by passing this Bill. I would invite members opposite, notwithstanding the fact that they have introduced their own legislation with, I believe, good intentions; I would ask members opposite to pay very strict attention to the essence of this piece of legislation, and to add their support to an initiative, Mr. Speaker, that I believe other jurisdictions around the world are, as well, doing; and we in Saskatchewan want to play our part in protecting the ozone layer for the benefit of all Saskatchewan residents.

I therefore, Mr. Speaker, do move second reading for The Ozone-depleting Substances Control Act.

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to make some remarks on this Bill and also on some of the comments that the minister opposite has just made, and then I shall adjourn the debate in order that we can consider further what the minister has said here today and provide time for others of my colleagues who wish to, I know, speak on this particular legislation.

I listened to some of the things that the minister was saying and I was impressed by his comments, "demonstrates Saskatchewan's determination," but at that point my being impressed ended because I was saying to myself, if only the same determination by the government opposite would apply to other important issues that are so important to protecting our environment -- things like doing an adequate environmental impact study on a major project, which the government has refused to do at the Cargill fertilizer plant. If there is such determination, why isn't that done?

Such things as public involvement and public reviews of environmental

impact statements which are not being carried out in the Meadow Lake pulp mill situation -- although there has been a great deal of expressed concern about the implication of that project on the Beaver River and on the forestry and on the livelihood of people who have lived there for hundreds and maybe thousands of years. The government has refused to provide the public review and public inquiry that is so important in order that the concerns of those people be addressed.

I wish there was the same kind of determination when it comes to that kind of thing. I wish, Mr. Speaker, that there was the same kind of determination when it comes to carbon dioxide emissions, which are doing some terrible damage as they affect the greenhouse effect that's developing, we know, in the world today -- a very serious problem, almost of crisis proportions. I wish the government were just as determined to do that; instead they have made a move in this budget to do away with urban transit and actually force more cars on our streets and our roads so that more of the carbon dioxide emissions can be spewed into the atmosphere and further aggravate the greenhouse effect which is developing.

The minister made a comment on the private members' Bill which I introduced, which was Bill No. 1 of this House, and I will just want to make this comment at this time on it and then make some other comments later. The minister said that the Bill was not far-reaching enough. And I'm not here to defend that Bill; I want to talk to the principle of this Bill. I simply want to say that that Bill was precisely the same Bill as was introduced in the Ontario legislature, which is in effect in Ontario and is working extremely well. The one thing that that Bill provided which the minister's Bill does not provide is a consultation process with the public and with people who are going to be affected. I'm really quite surprised, in fact shocked, that in the legislation put forward by the minister here today . . . once again the interests of the public and the interests of environmentalists and the interests of people in the industry are being ignored and they will have no input, because the Bill does not require that there be a public consultation process in the formulation of the regulations that are going to have to come as a result of this legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, there has been talk of this type of legislation for some time now. And the minister will agree that it's spurred on by research and expressions of concern by many informed scientists and interested organizations. So there really has been no reason why there has had to be such a delay beyond even last year, when the government first mentioned that it was going to introduce this legislation in the throne speech, a little over a year ago now. It was mentioned in the throne speech, nothing was done, no legislation was introduced and it was just one of the several commitments which the government made at that time, over a year ago, which has yet until today not been delivered on -- a promise made and a promise broken by the members opposite.

The throne speech again of this year, on March 19, made no mention of any environmental legislation, not one. Can you imagine that, Mr. Speaker? No mention of environmental legislation even though the members opposite know, we know, the media knows, the public knows, that it's one of the prime

concerns in the public mind in this country and in North America at the present time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, because of the government's failure, we took it upon ourselves as members of the opposition to introduce a private member's Bill and I'm glad that we did because finally it either embarrassed or it forced the government to take some action. I think the government opposite finally realized that it could no longer get away with the kind of gamesmanship that it has been playing over the past several years and only responding to the issue of the environment because the polls were now saying to them that either they better get on the bandwagon or they're going to be in deep trouble.

If they were really serious about it, Mr. Speaker, this legislation would have been here last year, as the former minister of the Environment promised and as the Premier promised in his throne speech and as the former minister of Finance promised in his budget. It didn't come, but it's here now and we welcome it because it's a move in the right direction. And we're glad that it's following the trend that we set by introducing that private member's Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Now, there are other issues. This is not enough. This is a move in the right direction but it is far from enough when it comes to introducing legislation dealing with the environment. The government opposite promised a year ago that it would introduce a comprehensive waste management program, including recycling. As a matter of fact, they promised to have five pilot projects on recycling. Never saw the light of day on them. Then the Minister of the Environment, the new Minister of the Environment went to the SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) convention and guess what? He re-promised the pilot recycling blue box programs, but he then reduced it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the Minister of Finance, who didn't answer any questions when he had his committee just here a while ago, is in the House talking from his seat. I wish he had been that forthcoming when questions were being asked on the interim supply Bill, Mr. Speaker.

But anyway, let me get back to the subject. The Minister of Environment went to the SUMA convention and he re-announced the blue box program one more time, except now he had downgraded it from five pilot projects to one or two pilot projects. So that commitment, in fact, instead of being implemented, is actually going backwards.

I'm not suggesting that that's the magic answer, because obviously it's not. But for goodness sake, governments cannot dilly-dally and twiddle their thumbs and only mouth the words and do nothing. It's time that they provided some action.

(2115)

Now I could go into a long dissertation on how the government has treated the environmental laws of this land when it came to the Rafferty-Alameda project, but that debate has been a good one and it will continue at other times.

I could go and talk about how the government has ignored environmental concerns when it comes to the establishment of a major industrial project like the Millar Western pulp mill in Meadow Lake, where the government refuses to have public hearings of any kind because obviously they're afraid that some of the hard questions that might be asked on environmental concerns might not be answered.

I could talk about the Saferco-Cargill situation, where the government would not even require that Cargill provide an environmental impact statement, whereas everywhere else you can think of, Mr. Speaker, in this country and in North America, such a plant is required to provide an environmental impact statement and further is required that the government hold public hearings. Only in the province of Saskatchewan, where there is, as the minister says, a demonstration of Saskatchewan's determination, do we ignore such an important matter.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, just for one more example. When it comes to the pollution of our rivers, and we know that there are places in the Saskatchewan River from which it is recommended that people do not eat large quantities of fish because of the mercury poisoning, what is recommended, that where it is clearly shown by research that the levels of oxygen in some of the . . . some of the areas are so low that we can't sustain life any more.

And then we see a proposal where out of the city of Edmonton they're going to put on, produce, establish a massive garbage dump site literally on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River, which could even further pollute that important waterway and source of water supply. And what does this minister and this government do? They applaud it. They applaud it.

They do not instruct their Department of Environment to do an investigation and to see what the implications might be. The minister simply jumps in his government airplane. He flies to Edmonton and he meets with the proponents -- the people who proposed the project. And they tell him, it's okay, Mr. Minister. And he comes back and says, it's okay because they told me so.

Well I say, Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough any more. That's just not good enough any more. You don't risk, you don't risk for hundreds of years, this kind of a project on the banks of a river of any kind -- never mind one that supplies water supply to communities all the way from Edmonton down to the Hudson Bay -- by ignoring some of the implications as the government opposite is doing. I think that that's deplorable. If this government was really as determined as the minister said a few moments ago, I ask: why have all of these things been ignored and not paid attention to as they should have been?

Mr. Speaker, there are some things that we all face in our province and in Canada and the world which can no longer be ignored. And we should know that. And matters of the environmental protection fall within that . . . the category of highest priority. What is happening to the ozone layer is only one of many environmental issues that are begging for action, but it

is an important one. And this matter is too serious for the usual fine words and the stalling that governments, such as this government opposite, have provided in the past.

Talk will not start the process which can contribute to needed action to protect the ozone layer, and that's why, although we think that it's taken too long, we're prepared to indicate that this Bill is a move in the right direction, and we're prepared to support it.

I will be making some amendments because there are some inadequacies here which are not in the Bill and which the minister may not refer to, and I, in the committee, will be dealing with that. But in principle, Mr. Speaker, it is a Bill that's worth supporting.

There have been many voices that have been heard, urging that governments act without delay. But this government, for some strange reason that's unexplainable, had to be dragged, and it had to be embarrassed, into finally acting -- and it seemed to be doing it when it is an election year.

Now there are some, Mr. Speaker, and I want it put on the record, who have argued the importance of dealing with this ozone protection issue. I have here a Leader-Post article from Thursday, February 16, 1989, just before that famous throne speech and budget speech of over a year ago, when the government promised this legislation. I want to, for your benefit, Mr. Speaker, and for the record, indicate what it says. And it says the following:

There was some disturbing new evidence this week of our atmosphere changing for the worse. It comes in the form of scientific data based on international study pointing to the presence of a wandering, and on and off again, ozone hole over the northern reaches of the planet.

In recent weeks the hole has been located over Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic, and the hole is suspected of having been caused by ozone depletion brought on by release of chemicals, notably CFCs, which break down the ozone layer.

And it goes on then, Mr. Speaker, to say:

We should regard it as a sign that there is something wrong with the atmosphere and deal with it accordingly.

And then this editorial went on further to say that:

Armies may be difficult enough to turn around, but it is all the harder to halt or reverse environmental change.

So it is not too early to take the action that we're taking here. It's not going to solve a world problem. It's going to take a global effort, but the global effort starts with each and every one of us, and in Saskatchewan we can do our part to making sure that that global effort takes place, as has been done in Ontario and I commend that province for that. And I think it was notable at the end how the editorial writers concluded this article

when they said:

The dangers of over-reacting, in the face of the latest news from the ozone front, pale compared with the consequences of raising our hands in defeat and of doing too little, too late.

We can't afford to do too little, too late, Mr. Speaker; we should be doing our part and we cannot wait for that.

Then there was further articles. I take this, Mr. Speaker, from a Washington newspaper, an article from the Associated Press in which it said:

The depletion of the ozone layer in the earth's atmosphere by chlorofluorocarbons could be even worse than previously thought, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said yesterday in urging a stepped-up attack on the use of CFC compounds.

And it went on to say:

The depletion that has already occurred calls into question our earlier projections of future damage.

And this was stated by the EPA, Environment Protection Agency administrator Lee Thomas, September 27, 1988.

So the warning signals have been there. Mr. Speaker, even the industry, even some of the industry has expressed and admitted to the fact that there is a serious problem here that we have to address. I have here a letter which was written to me by the Canadian aerosol companies, from the Canadian Aerosol Information Bureau, and I found it interesting what the first paragraph in that letter to myself said, when they said:

Concern for our environment should be a priority for each and every one of us. A safe environment is an issue which must be recognized and addressed by the leaders of government, business, and the general public alike.

And they start the second paragraph with three words which I think are important, and they say: "Action is needed."

Now I can only take them at their word, and I suspect, and I have to accept the fact that they're being sincere in this, but it indicates, Mr. Speaker, the kind of support that has been there. And so the delay that we have seen in Saskatchewan is unexplainable because there was really nobody that was opposing it. We know better and better every day how unthinking human and industrial activities have had a destructive impact on much of the earth's natural environment.

The atmosphere has not been an exception, and the ozone layer, which shields us from over-exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun, is decreasing by an estimated 1 to 3 per cent each year -- 1 to 3 per cent each year, Mr. Speaker. The radiation from ultraviolet rays causes skin cancer. As the minister did say, it reduces crop yields and can cause

damage to aquatic life. A serious depletion of the ozone layer could affect most life on the earth, including human life.

Did you know, Mr. Speaker -- and I think that this is extremely important -- it is estimated that a 3 per cent reduction in stratospheric ozone protection is estimated to produce 2,000 additional Canadian skin cancer victims each year -- 2,000 each year, in addition. Environment Canada reported in a fact sheet in June of 1987 some rather interesting and important facts. So the federal government department has recognized the problem that's there.

I found it interesting that in the late '70s steps were taken to reduce the use of CFC in spray cans. This was in the late '70s. However, it is shocking that the use of CFCs is now rising again. In spite of all of this evidence that's been around, the use of CFCs after the late '70s is on the rise again. And so it's no wonder that the depletion of the ozone layer is occurring at a rate of something like 3 per cent a year.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, global action to control these chemicals must be taken well in advance of any evidence of a major depletion of the ozone layer beyond what's there now. But global action requires all of us to do our part. There will be no action unless we all show a willingness to play our part, and Saskatchewan can help to play that leadership role in this area by implementation of this legislation. And I say it's not good enough simply to pass it. It's not good enough simply to have it go through this House. The government must be serious in making sure that it's proclaimed soon, and that regulations are formulated soon. And we don't have a situation, as we had with The Clean Air Act, in which the government introduced legislation to amend The Clean Air Act and it took them three years -- two years, I'm sorry, I correct that myself -- it took them two years to implement that legislation, while it did nothing.

It's not good enough, Mr. Speaker, and I urge the minister to really pay attention to this. It's not good enough to go through the motions of bringing the Bill here, hoping simply to bide time, saying what a wonderful thing we have done, unless the government is serious in following up with the appropriate proclamation and the appropriate regulations, after the appropriate consultations that have to take place.

We're not the first ones. Ontario has already done it. In 1987, Canada was a signatory to an international treaty which would reduce the use of ozone-depleting CFCs and Halons by 50 per cent by the year 1998. Last year, the federal government went even further and gave a commitment to eliminate 85 per cent of ozone-destroying, commercial chemicals but has provided no legislation yet.

In Ontario's legislation which was proposed last year, Mr. Speaker, it would ban the use of ozone-depleting chemicals by 1991. And so I ask the minister, and I will be asking him in estimates, if Ontario can do it by 1991, why is the minister in Saskatchewan saying not until 1998? And I hope that he will be prepared to explain the reason for that.

But it's something that's happening that is in the right . . . moving in

the right direction, Mr. Speaker. I don't know want to take more time on this because I do believe the Lieutenant Governor is standing by and I don't want to keep the Lieutenant Governor waiting.

I simply want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there are a number of questions which we will want to address in this legislation. We will be asking why there is no provision for public and all kinds of other consultation in the formulation of the regulations. It is somewhat surprising that a government which in recent weeks has now sort of become a born-again consulting government, why it is not, although it talks of consultation, although it talks of consensus, although it talks of being open government, will not provide a guarantee that there will be consultation and openness in this particle of the legislation which is so important, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I simply want to conclude by saying that there are going to be other members of my colleagues in this caucus who will be wanting to say a few words on this issue. We will ask the appropriate questions when the committee is considering this Bill and I will look at it carefully to see what amendments are required, and then we'll be moving those amendments as we see fit, if they are required. For the meantime, Mr. Speaker, I beg leave at this point to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

(2130)

ROYAL ASSENT

At 9:39 p.m. Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took her seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bill:

Bill No. 11 -- An Act for the granting to Her Majesty certain sums
 of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Year
 ending on March 31, 1991

Her Honour retired from the Chamber at 9:41 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 9:42 p.m.