

May 2/90

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to all the members of the House, 30 of our public servants, Mr. Speaker, who are seated in your gallery.

These civil servants, Mr. Speaker, are here today to participate in an in depth tour of the Legislative Building and to get a firsthand glimpse of different aspects of the legislative process.

Mr. Speaker, these tours have been taking place since January and have been very successful. They provide instant, important insights to the people who work in the various departments, and are building a strong team of spirit between all of us who serve the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, they are representing the departments today of the Public Service Commission, the Department of Health, Department of Education, Consumer and Commercial Affairs, Economic Diversification and Trade, Social Services, Urban Affairs, and the director of Hansard.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like all members to join me in welcoming our civil servants here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the members of the House to join with me in welcoming a group of 30 grade 8 students from Henry Braun School in the city of Regina in the constituency of Regina North East. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Larry Moleski and Marg Hudson. I'm looking forward to meeting with them after question period at 2:30 on the stairway and talking to them as well after pictures.

And I'd just like to ask members to join with me in extending our greetings and wishing them an enjoyable and educational visit to the legislature today.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lyons: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to all the members of the Assembly here, 51 students from grade 4, 5, and 6 from Mabel Brown School in the constituency of Rosemont, plus four adults who are accompanying them today. They're seated in the east gallery with their teachers, Marg Wilson and Marilyn Bernhardt.

We'll be meeting at 2:30 on the steps for pictures and after that for

refreshments and for a discussion of what's going on in the legislative process that you've seen here today. I'd ask all members to welcome these fine students from Mabel Brown School.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce a friend of mine and a very special guest here today with me. His name is Mr. Roden and he's sitting in your gallery.

Why he's so special to the Saltcoats constituency is that last Thursday evening Mr. Roden won the Conservative nomination out there at Churchbridge. With three very . . .

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: -- There was three real credible candidates out there and, like, 700 people. If Mr. Roden would please rise, I'd like to introduce through you, Mr. Speaker, the next MLA in the Saltcoats constituency, Rod Roden from Langenburg. Help me welcome him.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Federal Funding for Agriculture

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, the Premier has received no doubt as I have, a letter from the president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Garf Stevenson, written today and directed to Mr. Don Mazankowski, a friend and a counterpart of the Premier opposite, saying that the initial prices for 1990-91 are a shock and that among other things, quoting now from the letter:

The economic scenario for Saskatchewan agriculture and grain producers for 1990 and 1991 is nothing short of catastrophic.

Nothing short of catastrophic.

My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier is this. Mr. Premier, can you give the farmers a commitment today in this legislature that the money will be here immediately, the \$500 million that has been requested by you and by others -- no more delays, no more political posturing by you and the Conservatives in Ottawa -- pay out now. Can you make that announcement?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, I held a news conference this morning, as the hon. member probably knows, and I have just received a resolution that the Leader of the Opposition wants to have passed here in the House concerning the initial prices of wheat.

I can say to him at the outset that in my news conference and in my response to his proposed resolution, you will get the very same message, that there is no excuse for dropping the price of wheat. It's like waving the white flag in front of the Germans and the French and the Americans, saying, we give up, we let the price go.

The federal government has acknowledged it's all because of international subsidies and cheating and they have abandoned the fact that the farmers here have experienced a \$900 million loss in income, and now another 25 per cent reduction this year. I said in my news conference and I will say here, Mr. Speaker, that it is completely unacceptable that a national government would back away from defending farmers facing a national and international problem.

I pointed out this morning that the European Economic Community put \$10 billion into a subsidy. United States put \$6 billion in subsidizing wheat alone, in 1988. And that amounts to about \$4 a bushel in Europe and about \$2 a bushel here in North America. We have to have the same.

The resolution here in the House, Mr. Speaker, said that we need \$500 million now, supported by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and \$400 million later, and this whole House voted for it.

The same applies to the resolution yesterday and the same thing will apply to the resolution today -- that we will stand in defence of farmers in western Canada and demand that the federal government do its part and make sure that it comes through and not cave in in the face of the United States or the Germans or the French or anybody else, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a new question for the Premier. One might be heartened if the facts weren't the other way, by the Premier's statement that he is going to stand in defence of the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan, but the facts show the contrary. Now my question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier relates to yesterday's announcement on the initial prices.

As the Premier knows, the Canadian Wheat Board gives the government a range of prices which the government then selects to determine what the initial price is. Is it correct or is it not correct -- in fact I say, Mr. Premier, that it is correct that your Conservative allies, the government in Ottawa, chose the low range of the prices for the initial prices yesterday; that you knew that; and that if you didn't know that, would you please tell the House right now what correspondence you directed to the Minister of Agriculture and Mr. Mulroney, the Prime Minister of the country, in advance of yesterday's announcement in defence of the Saskatchewan farmers that you profess to protect.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, I will tell the hon. member that in front of all the Agriculture ministers the last time that I was in Ottawa, I said

to the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Mazankowski, that he should not only keep and maintain the support that's there, but to raise the initial price of wheat in the country and go to GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and defend it. And I said, you already have the mechanism. If you want a war chest, do it through the initial prices.

So I did precisely what the farmers have recommended to me and recommended across the country, that in fact he raise the initial price of wheat and then go to the wall for it and battle the Germans and battle the French and battle Americans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that was supported by the western ministers of Agriculture. I'm taking that very same message to Manitoba at the western premiers' conference and I believe we'll have the support of all the western premiers, all the ministers of Agriculture in Canada; and by the time we're finished, Mr. Speaker, hopefully every Premier in the country.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the Premier. The Premier just said a few moments ago in response to my second question, that his position has been urging the federal government to keep the programs for rural Saskatchewan. But I must say, Mr. Speaker, that there's been a strange silence by the Premier and the government opposite for the last two years.

Mr. Speaker, over the last two years there's been a reduction of farm aid assistance from Ottawa of \$800 million each of two years. And just take a look at the list. The initial price yesterday, 5 to 600 million, according to Mr. Stevenson. FCC (Farm Credit Corporation) interest rates, 35 million; two-price wheat, gone, 127 million; higher crop insurance premiums, 55 million; farm fuel tax rebates reduction, 25 million; freight rates, 19 million; cash advances, 19 million. That's a total of \$800 million. They've been going on for two years.

Mr. Premier. I accuse you of standing by idly while all of these cuts have been taking place over the two years. You've been more concerned about the political salvation of Mr. Mulroney than the economic reality of the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan. Why should any farmer believe you now that you're standing up here?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that as a result of the efforts that we have initiated in the province of Saskatchewan, the federal government since 1985 has contributed \$7 billion to agriculture here, 7 billion, and we've contributed 1 billion, Mr. Speaker, and the traditional ratio is 7:1.

We've got \$7 billion out of the federal government and we're determined, Mr. Speaker, not to back off now. And we do not have the capacity to match in any kind of 1:1 ratio, nor does any other province expect us to do.

And the only people that are caving in, Mr. Speaker, are the NDP. That's the only people in the country that are caving in. Every time we speak,

they want to cave in. What we get from the NDP was when the farmers come in and when you get the NDP and Barb Byers together they say, well the province should pay half.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they laugh; they know that's the case. They want the province to pay half, and every time the farmers come in, here's a new deal out of the caucus offices of the NDP -- cave in Saskatchewan. Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to cave in. We're going to defend the farmers, and we're going to get money for the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan, and we're not going to tax them to bail out the federal government as the NDP would, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Premier. Is there any wonder at all left -- there shouldn't be any wonder left at all -- based by the Premier's response about why it is exactly that the PCs in Ottawa and the PCs in Regina are doing what they're doing to the farmers of Saskatchewan. Because for a few moments there he was attacking the Ottawa government. Right now in this last question he was defending the Ottawa government.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- He's defending and he's attacking at the same time, and then he goes ahead and name-calls. What happened to Consensus Saskatchewan? All the working people in the province of Saskatchewan helped to solve this problem as well.

Mr. Premier, my question to you is simply this. After six years of being in Brian Mulroney's hip pocket, after six years of doing nothing when all of these programs were cut back in Ottawa -- interest-free cash advances, crop insurance premiums, rail line abandonments -- all of these things articulated; after six years of being in his pocket, in fact singing the support of Mr. Mulroney, I want to tell you, how can you explain today your sudden reversal of position? Isn't it a fact that you're changing your position because there's a provincial election around the corner and you're afraid of your jobs, all of you?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, again, Mr. Speaker, see what it comes down to with the NDP? Politics. It's always politics. They don't care . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want the media to record, and I want everybody else to see, everybody in the gallery and across the province, always when we deal with agriculture they start talking about elections. They forget about the farmers; they forget about families. They forget that when interest rates were 21 per cent, they didn't do anything. All they think about is politics, Mr. Speaker. They don't think about the families.

I'll say, on this side of the House, we have gone to the wall for the farmers. We have squeezed and hollered and pinched \$7 billion out of the federal government and we're going after more. We're not going to quit. We're not going to play the games that you play -- hauling farmers in here and having a few people say, we'll go to a rally, and then they can be run by Barb Byers.

Mr. Speaker, I'll say to you, this problem facing farm families is an awful lot more important than politics, your job, or any of the jobs over there. This is about real families, and we'll make sure that we go to the wall and defend them and not just talk about them like you do.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the Premier. The Premier says that we're talking politics. What is the Premier doing with his attacks on the president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour except playing politics? What is the Premier doing?

He says that we're playing politics. I want to say, Mr. Premier . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. Unfortunately when the Premier rises, he's interrupted; when the Leader of the Opposition rises, he's interrupted. I'd like to ask for your co-operation. The Leader of the Opposition is attempting now to put a question. Let us allow him to do it.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. A new question to the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture. I am talking, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Premier, about the credibility of this government when it says it's defending the interests of the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan. I'm talking about the credibility.

I am talking about, Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative governments in Ottawa and Regina agreeing to do away with all of these farm programs that I talked about. That you've been lock-step on free trade; you've been lock-step on the GST (goods and services tax); you've been lock-step on privatization, post office privatization; you've been lock-step on Meech Lake. You're in their hip pockets so deep that nobody believes you. You have no credibility.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- And my question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier is simply this. Look, why don't you simply fess up. Why don't you say that these are the things that you and Brian Mulroney really believe in -- free trade, GST, privatization of post offices, privatization generally, Meech Lake. Why don't you just fess up.

Why don't you stop this charade and why don't you acknowledge the fact that the only way Mr. Mulroney is going to listen to the people of Saskatchewan

is by electing a new premier and a new government that stands up for Saskatchewan . . .

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, look at this. All he's interested in is politics and elections. He's not . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. I know that this afternoon there's a great deal of enthusiasm and emotion in question period; however, hon. members who rise to speak still have the right to be heard, and the Premier has a right to be heard, as the Leader of the Opposition had the right to be heard. But in order for that to happen members must co-operate.

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows -- he's been in rural Saskatchewan and I've been in rural Saskatchewan recently -- there's a great deal of pain and suffering.

But I want to remind the hon. member that the people remind me your possibilities and your opportunities to gain money in the 11 years that you were deputy premier here and your connections with the Trudeau administration and Mr. Chre pétien mean that they got zero help from Ottawa here -- zero. So it was the NDP there and it was the Liberals down East, and there was no support.

Now you can criticize \$7 billion that we've got out of the federal government in the last six or seven years. You had 11 years of really difficult times and you got nothing from Mr. Chre pétien, not a dime; nothing from Mr. Trudeau. And you and Mr. Trudeau could talk about your constitution and you could talk about everything else. And you know what happened? The NDP virtually lost every rural seat in the province of Saskatchewan because you never did defend them. You'd buy their land with land bank. You never gave them any help with interest rates.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers know, the farm families know that we'll go to the wall to defend them, and they're not going to be fooled by politics. And that's all you talk about when you get into agriculture is politics. We talk about helping the farmers.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Provincial Assistance to Agriculture

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a question also to the Premier. Yes, Mr. Premier, I agree. You talk about it and you talk about it a lot. In 1985 you wrote a letter to farmers saying you were negotiating a national disaster plan. You talked about it in a letter to farmers then. In 1990 you wrote another letter to farmers saying that the need for a long-term stability program. You're talking about it now.

Well it seems, Mr. Premier, that every four years -- timed around your political agenda -- you start talking about what farmers want. You're as phoney as a \$3 bill on agriculture, and you know it.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- Can you stand in your place in this House and tell the farmers of Saskatchewan, where is your long-term program?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, with the greatest respect to the House, that hardly deserves a response. I will just say to the hon. member that we have designed many, many programs for the people of agriculture. Cash advances at zero per cent, Mr. Speaker, individual line service, rural gas, feeder programs, diversification programs, money that we put out, Mr. Speaker, in terms of just straight cash -- a combination that would amount to a billion dollars in savings to rural people. And we're doing more with community development bonds and other things that we know that rural people have asked for.

So for the hon. member to stand on his feet and say that we haven't done anything . . . If he calls what we've done in the last few years nothing, well then what they did in the last 11 years of their administration was less than nothing. And the media knows that and the farmers know that, and the farmers will speak, Mr. Speaker.

The farmers speak to me and we speak to them and they know the truth. They know that we're fighting for agriculture; it's very meaningful. Mr. Speaker, I will just say to the hon. member, we have designed better crop insurance mechanisms and better support mechanisms, and farmers need us now more than ever and we're not going to back away from them.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- New question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, you stood idly by and watched the federal government pick \$800 million annually out of the pockets of Saskatchewan farmers. Not a peep from you. Now you're struggling to try to get \$225 million back.

Mr. Minister, had you done your job, had you done your job in the last six years, you wouldn't have put farmers in the predicament they're in now. Can you tell me, Mr. Minister, and can you tell the farmers of Saskatchewan, why you stood idly by, turned your back on them when they were paying \$800 million out of their pocket. And can you tell me, Mr. Minister, why you didn't do something about it?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could remind the hon. member of some of the hundreds of millions of dollars that we put into the agriculture program as we go through the various kinds of difficulties we faced.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out to the hon. member that we come up with \$115 million on the drought assistance program just recently; and

Saskatchewan water program was \$33 million; the farm purchase program, \$98.6 million to date, Mr. Speaker; counselling and assistance, \$29 million; farmers' oil royalty program, \$80 million. You can look at low interest loans that have saved farmers \$350 million, Mr. Speaker, and not at 15 per cent and not at 21 per cent but at zero per cent interest rates in the livestock industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've raised \$827 million ourselves, and in 1987 . . . '85-89, we've got \$6.6 billion out of the federal government. Now the members opposite say that's not enough. That's not nearly what they would do, Mr. Speaker. Well it's easy for them to say that's not nearly what they would do. They had 11 years, and between the Leader of the Opposition and Mr. Chrétién and Mr. Trudeau, they didn't have a dime for farmers, Mr. Speaker.

Talk is cheap, Mr. Speaker. Six billion dollars from the feds and 1 billion from ourselves is an awful lot more than talk, Mr. Speaker. We're going to put our treasury to the wall for farmers. They'll see it and they're embarrassed by it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care

Ms. Simard: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health, and it has to do with the Murray commission report. Mr. Minister, the Murray commission is recommending a major move toward regionalization, calling for the province to be broken into 15 health regions and giving these regional boards sweeping powers and control over community health services and the ownership of some community health facilities.

It also recommends the establishment of numerous numbers of boards and commissions and agencies -- an entirely new level of bureaucracy, Mr. Minister. Could you please tell us whether or not you agree with the recommendations, and which ones you will be implementing?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that the report handed down yesterday by the Murray commission, by Dr. Murray and other commissioners, is a very comprehensive one. It's a comprehensive report done over a good number of months, and the report is done on a very, very complex system which is our health care system in this province. There's no question that it is that.

The member stands in her place and says today and reiterates some of the recommendations. I heard her yesterday say that she rejected out of hand, just right off the start, before any one of the various stakeholders in the health care system, all of the organizations, the people who have a good deal to do with the governance of health care and so on, before any of them have had an opportunity to respond in any way, shape, or form, the hon. member from the political opposition in this legislature was out there very

quickly and saying, I reject out of hand this and I reject that out of hand.

Mr. Speaker, let me make this point. None of us in this House, whether we be in the government or in the opposition, none of us in leadership positions in the province serve our people well by rejecting out of hand very quickly a very comprehensive report, nor do we serve our people well if we are too hasty in saying either yea or nay to the report so quickly. That's the truth, Mr. Speaker. Many of the groups around this province will be responding and they will be responding to this thing and they have asked that they have an opportunity to do that.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Simard: -- Mr. Minister, for two years you have ducked the health care issue; for two years you have ducked the harmful cuts you've created to the system. It's time for you to start taking some responsibility for the crisis that you've created in health care in this province.

The Murray commission, Mr. Minister, also recommends that these large new hospital regions be given the authority to raise local taxes to a limit of I believe 5 per cent of the government allocation to the region. That could be a tax bill for each region in the area, of some \$5 million, Mr. Minister.

Now what we have in this province is an increase in school tax, an increase in property taxes, Mr. Minister, at the municipal level, because of your off-loading, because of your off-loading of responsibility to municipalities. Do you support, Mr. Minister, another level of taxing authority being allowed to raise moneys through a municipal levy on already overburdened property taxpayers?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, it's interesting what the . . . Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, and I would just reiterate that it's . . . and I believe this. She said to me that as the Minister of Health, you know, you've been dumping responsibility, not taking responsibility for the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, I'll say to the member and to the House, I take the responsibility, my responsibility for the health care delivery system very, very seriously. And because I do, I will reject very quickly that sort of cursory analysis that the member has laid out here in terms of the potential for tax and all of that that's there. No one has been able to analyse that to the point that the member is laying it out here yet, and that's being done now.

Mr. Speaker, the key point in all of this . . . An example last night. Last night I was with both the president of the nurses' union, SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses), and the president of SRNA (Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association) -- two very important groups in the health care delivery system.

Both of those presidents said to me that the reasonable approach to this report would be to have them and many others across the province who have an interest in the health care system, give them an opportunity to respond. And we have said to them, we will give you an opportunity to respond.

It is not serving the public of this province or the health care system of this province well to say, as the member has, I reject this out of hand; this is wrong; I reject change; there shall be no change; we're the old guard. That stuff does not go in 1990, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Simard: -- Mr. Minister, we have been travelling this province for two years and listening to input from groups and professionals. And if you haven't formed an opinion with respect to health care policy in this province, you are severely lacking in your responsibilities.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Simard: -- Mr. Minister, some regions will simply not be able to raise those kinds of tax dollars, Mr. Minister. Some regions will simply not be able to raise those. So that causes concern inasmuch as they will be entitled, if this policy is implemented, to less health care than the richer regions, Mr. Minister.

Now we want to know, Mr. Minister, and you should have an opinion on this -- after all, you've been the Minister of Health for a number of years -- do you approve of this sort of two-tiered system of health care in this province?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, I've said clearly what I don't approve; I do not approve of the alarmist tactics that are being portrayed here in the House today. That's for sure.

Mr. Speaker, this whole spectre of what the taxes would be in regions that are laid out in the report -- as one of the major recommendations, I grant you that -- the whole concept that the member is laying out here, all she is doing is what they have done for so long. They've felt it was successful in the past; it'll be successful in the future. This is the latest bullet in the mediscare war now, Mr. Speaker. The latest little bullet in the mediscare war is, oh, there's a big tax regime coming in and this new commission has done it, and what about it?

Mr. Speaker, that is not a reasoned response to a very comprehensive document. And, Mr. Speaker, it is not the way in which we as responsible people in this House, both sides of the House, should be responding to a comprehensive look at a very complex system.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care

Hon. Mr. Devine: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, thank you. I am pleased to have been able to table the report of the Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care, called Future Directions for Health Care in Saskatchewan.

The report which was presented to the government is the culmination of two years investigation into changing health care needs. I have asked the commission to give it the widest possible circulation. Province of Saskatchewan has an excellent health care system and it is the envy of much of the world. But we know that we cannot be complacent, Mr. Speaker. What's worked in the past is fine; we have to be ready for the future. We want to make sure that we're the very best in the world.

As we enter into the 21st century, we must be constantly on the look-out for ways to improve our system, to ensure continuing high quality, to ensure that it remains accessible to all, to ensure that it remains relevant to changing illness and health care patterns, to position it to take advantage of improvements in diagnosis and in treatment technologies, and to assure its affordability for future generations.

The Commission on Directions in Health Care under the chairman of Dr. Bob Murray, was appointed in June of 1988 to conduct a public review of the Saskatchewan health care system. The commission was asked to look ahead and ensure that our health system would be ready to meet the demands of the future. The commission's report is now complete and tabled in this House.

And I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the commission's contributions on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan. For commission members, the preparation of this important document involved countless hours and miles away from their homes and their families. A particular thank you, Mr. Speaker, to commission chairman, Dr. Bob Murray, and a special thank you to deputy chairman and executive director, Walter Podiluk, and to the commission members -- Morris Anderson, Berva Farr, Ernie Moen, Maureen Kurtz, and Bishop Blaise Morand.

This province was built on a tradition of consultation and co-operation. It is this same spirit, Mr. Speaker, of listening and sharing on the part of Dr. Murray and the commission that made this report possible.

Thank you as well to the ladies and gentlemen of the commission, and for their outstanding efforts, to more than 600 individuals and groups who made presentations to this commission all across the province. Their contributions are equally appreciated.

Now that the commission's work is complete, we intend, along with the people of Saskatchewan, to review this report very, very carefully. I've asked the Minister and the Associate Minister of Health to closely review the report. It will be their responsibility, along with other officials, to make sure that we study and examine all the implications and proposals.

In addition, I finally want to offer this government's assurances today to the people of the province that will have a chance to discuss this report. As health care providers, as health consumers, and as concerned citizens, we understand that when something as important as our health system is being reviewed, we will look at it very, very carefully and listen to your ideas, suggestions, and evaluations.

This report represents an important step in maintaining and enhancing a health care system to meet the needs of the 1990s and the 21st century. And, Mr. Speaker, it ensures the province's health system continues to be a model for the rest of the world and for years to come.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Ms. Simard: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have perused the health care report. We find that it contains many positive suggestions but also some recommendations that cause us a considerable amount of concern.

We have raised a number of those recommendations in this legislature and with the public and with some health care groups in Saskatchewan. We have today begun our process of consulting with Saskatchewan people and health care professionals and health care groups across the province to determine what their feelings and recommendations are with respect to the Murray report.

We believe it is now important for the government to state what it intends to do and what its health care policy is, because we've gone through a very dry period with respect to health care policy on the part of the government. In fact there has been a substantial erosion of our health care services because of their privatization of some health care services and because of their cut-backs and harmful policies in the health care system.

We have now had a two-year study, and we understand that the government and the Minister of Health is once again wanting to delay the implementation of any good health care policies and delay taking responsibility for the crisis it has caused in the health care system. They, I understand, are referring the report to another body to be studied, and they simply are refusing to take responsibility.

We recognize the contribution that has been made by the Murray commission and the members of the Murray commission, and I believe that they have certainly put their best foot forward. But we may not agree with all the recommendations, Mr. Speaker. We may have concerns with some of the recommendations and questions concerning some of them. And as opposition, Mr. Speaker, we will be raising those concerns and asking those questions and protecting the interests of the people of Saskatchewan and the medicare system.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Bill No. 19 -- An Act respecting the Promotion, Development, Control and Regulation of the Production and Marketing of Agricultural Products and Certain Amendments to Certain Acts resulting from the enactment of this Act

Hon. Mr. Martens: -- Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill respecting the Promotion, Development, Control and Regulation of the Production and Marketing of Agricultural Products and Certain Amendments to Certain Acts resulting from the enactment of this Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

MOTION UNDER RULE 39

Federal Assistance for Saskatchewan Farmers

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day I would like to seek leave of the Assembly to introduce the following, what I would view, emergency resolution. I've given a copy by letter earlier this day to the Premier to notify the government of our intention to do so.

The motion I shall read very simply; I would propose that I move, seconded by my colleague, the critic for Agriculture, the member from Humboldt, by leave, that the following motion be introduced and debated and dealt with by this House:

That this Assembly condemns the Government of Canada for failing to provide adequate assistance to Saskatchewan farmers at a time when the sharp drop in the initial price will mean a loss of 500 million to \$600 million to Saskatchewan farmers; and further that this Assembly calls on the Government of Canada to provide an immediate, direct federal cash payment of \$500 million to Saskatchewan farmers as advocated again by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool on May 2, 1990, and to implement a sound, long-term, farm income stabilization plan.

Leave granted.

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my first words . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well the Minister of Justice says he hopes that he doesn't foul this up, the consent by the government to debate this emergency resolution. I will say to the Minister of Justice that it doesn't foul us up, but it certainly surprises us, because this is the first time that the government has consented to any motion that we introduced by this side. And I think that that's unfortunate that they haven't done so earlier. So I think that the minister opposite should note that and perhaps effect a permanent change as far as his colleagues are concerned.

Mr. Speaker, I don't intend to speak at length with respect to this resolution but I do intend to say a few words, and I do intend to say that the words that I have spoken are the words which are being echoed everywhere in rural Saskatchewan, in fact western Canada.

They are the words that this province is in crisis in farming and farm gate issues and in agriculture. In crisis -- a crisis which has been coming for quite some time now, a crisis which the provincial government here in Regina and the federal government in Ottawa should have seen, and in fact I would argue, did spot as early as 1985, maybe even earlier than that.

In 1985 the federal government indicated publicly that it was about to introduce a permanent full-time disaster relief program for the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan. And at that time the minister of our province, the minister of Agriculture who is the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan, sent out a province-wide letter to all of the producers, in effect indicating that that was going to be the case and that the government in Regina was going to support this initial emergency response by Mr. Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government in Ottawa. So the issue has been before us now since 1985 at least, if not earlier.

The crisis is well-known, and I won't detail the specific characteristics of it other than to very briefly highlight the obvious visible impacts. Farmers in difficulty with respect to their financial operations total anywhere now between 10,000 to 15,000 in the province of Saskatchewan, according to the numbers of the debt review board notices which have been given out.

When you travel rural Saskatchewan, as I had the pleasure of doing yesterday all day and evening in the Kindersley, Eston, Elrose area, you see the tangible results of this kind of crisis everywhere -- farm families in stress, farm families worrying about whether or not it's worthwhile to seed a crop this year. Farmers actually raised that question with me, farmers who are struggling about the future, not only in terms of the short run but the long term.

And in addition to that our towns and our villages and our communities who support and buttress and are in a sense the hub of the activity of the rural people of the province of Saskatchewan, also now have and have had for quite some time, a large shadow of gloom and doubt about their futures hanging over their heads.

Yesterday's announcement of the initial prices for the year 1990--91 was a severe body blow. Mr. Speaker, I happened to be in Eston at The Eston Press offices at the time that the announcement came across the Teletype and was reported to me. Present at The Eston Press were a couple of the journalists, and immediately thereafter a couple of farm people, who I had occasion to discuss this with. And I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, the disappointment, the concern, I would even argue perhaps to use the word, although it's a bit excessive perhaps, the fear which was evident there with respect to rural Saskatchewan, certainly in the Eston experience that I had, was something which I don't care to go through.

(1445)

These initial prices are bad news; these initial prices are yet another additional, serious body blow to the people of the province of Saskatchewan

and to the farming community which is Saskatchewan, or putting it bluntly, to the province which is Saskatchewan.

Today the gravity of the crisis was further highlighted by a person who I know that we all respect and whose opinion we value very highly. The president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Mr. Garf Stevenson, wrote to Mr. Mazankowski, the federal Minister of Agriculture, and I've got a copy of his letter here, sir, dated May 2, 1990.

I think it's important to put on the record of this House what exactly Mr. Stevenson said. It's not a very lengthy letter, but the words are powerful, they're pungent, and they tell the story more eloquently than any one of us, I suspect, could say.

The letter reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Mazankowski: Further to my letter of April 17th, we have witnessed today an additional shock . . .

I'll stop there, Mr. Speaker, by highlighting the word shock. That is a very dramatic and important word, and that was the word used by Mr. Stevenson. He says:

. . . an additional shock to the financial situation facing prairie grain producers as a result of the announced initial prices for wheat and barley in the 1990-91 crop year.

Mr. Stevenson continues:

The expected drop in grain prices announced for the 1990-91 crop year translates into a further drop of at least \$500 - \$600 million in Saskatchewan's realized net income next year. The most recent projection for 1990 may also be significantly overstated as well. Given this kind of economic climate, how can producers possibly arrange credit and finance their farm operations this year?

He then writes:

The economic scenario for Saskatchewan agriculture and grain producers for 1990 and 1991 is nothing short of catastrophic and will require substantial infusion (of Saskatchewan) of government assistance to cover the shortfall for this period.

And he closes:

As stated on previous occasions, Saskatchewan farmers need immediate financial support from your government. It is imperative that the requested \$500 million assistance package be delivered to producers immediately. It is equally imperative that a further assessment be undertaken in light of the initial price announcement to determine and quantify the additional support that will no doubt be required this fall and in 1991.

The situation is desperate (Mr. Stevenson says) and we need action now.

Mr. Speaker, note those words -- shock, catastrophic, desperate, we need action now. I don't think you could choose any other words in the English language to emphasize the point that you seek to make.

That is the impact of the initial grain prices announced yesterday, and it's also the result of the fact that now over the last four months, notwithstanding the pleas of farm leaders like Mr. Stevenson and others in the farm communities, we have still yet to hear positively from Ottawa that the promised \$500 million in cash payment -- cash on the dash, as I call it -- is going to be made. We have still to hear this. There has been absolute silence on the \$500 million; in fact one could even argue instead of silence, obfuscation by the conditions and the rules which Mr. Mazankowski and Mr. Mulroney and the Conservative government in Ottawa have attached to the proposals taken by the farm leaders here in Saskatchewan and, as it turns out, by the members of this Legislative Assembly.

So this, Mr. Speaker, is a grave crisis. And it's a grave crisis, and I think it's worth the debate again today because today we are seeking now to introduce at least two other important dimensions to the previous resolutions of this House.

Number one, we are seeking to introduce the Stevenson request for the \$500 million immediately; and number two, we are seeking to introduce as well the statement, the powerful political statement of this legislature, that Ottawa really must act, or if it fails to act, it does so at its own peril.

Mr. Speaker, I'm urging all members of this House to vote unanimously for this resolution, and that moreover we should amend the resolution to actually ask that it be sent, a copy of it be sent to the Prime Minister and to Mr. Mazankowski as an expression, if it's passed, of the unanimous feelings of the farmers and the members of this Legislative Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my second point -- my first point being the gravity of the crisis -- is to do a bit of an analysis of what it is that has contributed to this crisis that we are now debating this afternoon. And, Mr. Speaker, my contention is that since 1984 when Mr. Mulroney was elected in Ottawa, that consistently for the past six years the government here in Regina, under the leadership of the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture, has essentially played the role of active supporters for the various serious changes to federal agricultural policy which have been initiated over the last six years by Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Mazankowski. They have been activists in supporting these various initiatives.

I think a very brief review of these initiatives, all of which have prompted Mr. Stevenson's request for the \$500 million, is important for this House to hear and to remember and to not forget. And they are as follows, Mr. Speaker, not necessarily in the way they took place or in the order of importance.

Some of these initiatives that the Premier of this province, the Conservatives allied themselves with the Conservative government in Ottawa

are as follows. We had first of all the question of the free trade debate and its impact on farming and its possible impact on the principles of orderly marketing in the Canadian Wheat Board and supply management programs.

We've seen since the implementation of the free trade deal, the pork wars. We've seen the \$900 million enhancement program by the United States. We have seen the Americans break the spirit, if not the law, of the Canada-United States free trade deal. And we've seen the Premier of this province passionately and actively campaigning all around the province of Saskatchewan and in fact outside the province of Saskatchewan in support of a free trade deal which has produced very little for the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan and holds the prospect of great danger for rural Saskatchewan in the weeks and the months and the years ahead.

There are other examples. The example specifically with respect to changes to farm policy are devastating, again with the shuddering silence, the overwhelming silence and complicity of the government opposite in this provincial House.

We've seen, for example, the elimination of the interest-free cash advance program. That's a cost of about \$14 million. This Premier, this Minister of Agriculture, that government, Mr. Speaker, has not uttered a word at all in protest. We've seen the reduction in the farm fuel tax rebates. That's a cost of \$25 million more from the pockets of the farmers, again with the active support and initiation by the members opposite. We've seen increases in freight rates, \$19 million.

We've seen high increases in interest rate charges, Mr. Speaker, interest rate charges which now have gone through the ceiling -- interest rate charges which are killing our farmers, killing our implement machinery dealers, killing the small-business people everywhere, but especially in rural Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, we've seen a Premier who has been silent on this issue, or when he does go down to Ottawa to fight the interest rate problem, comes back with the result being yet another increase in the interest rate situation, almost inevitably. And we've seen this as a policy which has taken place as well.

The crop insurance changes mean more expenses for the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan, not only in the premiums, but perhaps even some further difficulties in the way the crop insurance program is being administered and delivered. And then as a result of the Canada-U.S. free trade deal, you remember the two-price system for wheat was eliminated. That's a loss to Saskatchewan farmers of about \$127 million, Mr. Speaker, yearly, annually, gone because of this government in Ottawa and in Regina, these two governments agreeing that those kinds of programs should be the programs that the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan face.

Interest rates impacting on the banks, credit unions, but what about FCC? This is a farmers' bank, the Farm Credit Corporation. You'd think that if there was any organization which had compassion and sensitivity and concern for the farmers and for rural Saskatchewan, rural Canada, it would be the FCC, owned and controlled by the PCs opposite. But instead their interest

rates have been jacked up by \$35 million, and of course yesterday's announcement on the initial prices has added, according to Mr. Stevenson, an additional 500 to \$600 million withdrawal or loss of purchasing power or money for the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan -- a total, Mr. Speaker, of at least \$800 million over each of the last two years.

And we've seen in addition to that, policies of privatization, the shutting down the post offices all over rural Saskatchewan, the shutting down the basic public utilities of the province of Saskatchewan, or at least they're trying to do that with their privatizations of SaskEnergy.

And they have said, on top of that, that they support in principle the federal government's discussion paper called the green paper on agriculture, which if implemented would be the revolutionary document which in effect turns agriculture and the way we've done business here upside down, because the green paper puts all of its eggs in the basket of the free market system. And that's exactly the way Conservatives in Ottawa and Regina actually think that agriculture should be run.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would say this. I would say that this silence . . . I would say no, this act of compliance, this acquiescence, this act of acquiescence and support for all of these programs that I've talked about and others, reflect at the real heart of matters the problem that the farmers of Saskatchewan face today.

At the heart of that problem is, simply put, that the governments in Regina and in Ottawa believe in the organization of farming on the basis of the free market system, full stop, period.

They believe in the Cargills of the world, whether it's at a Belle Plaine fertilizer plant or a meat packing operation in Alberta, or whether it's Cargill in the grain gathering and marketing system. They believe in the free market system. And that's the explanation for the silence, or at least the acquiescence . . . the active acquiescence if not passive acquiescence of what the government is doing.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, some people say, you know, you shouldn't politicize this matter. I wish dearly that I could not politicize and wouldn't have to politicize this matter. But the problem is that the government in Regina and in Ottawa has embarked on a philosophical direction with respect to farming which has led us to this crisis of which I speak.

I mean, I don't share their philosophy, obviously, but they have a right to advocate it and to support it and to implement it. I only wish that they'd be up front in this. I wish that Mr. Mazankowski and Mr. Mulroney and the Premier of our province and the associate ministers that we have here, I wish at least that they would get up and say: look, farmers of this province of Saskatchewan, it's going to be free market; forget about everything else; we're going to give you transition. At least they'd be open and honest about it and they'd be up front about it.

Now I'd fight that like crazy. People on this side would fight it. But this government is not doing that openly. What they're doing, of course, is implementing these policies on a gradual piecemeal basis -- a budget here, a budget there, a program here, a program there. And they're doing it, quite frankly, I say in a way which is betraying and deceiving of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Let me give you a specific example of what I'm referring to, Mr. Speaker, when I say deception. I'm referring here to the Speech from the Throne which was delivered in this Chamber on March 19, 1990. Now, Mr. Speaker, if you take a look at that Speech from the Throne, on page 4 of the full text which was tabled that day, the Premier of this province, who wrote that Speech from the Throne, speaking to the agricultural crisis talked about a commitment -- that was the word that he used -- a commitment from the federal government for financial assistance.

And at the time of March 19 and for the months prior to March 19 there is no one, not even journalists in their wild stretching of the imagination could construct any other conclusion except that that commitment referred to the \$500 million which was the subject of the debate as initiated by Mr. Stevenson and the other farm organizations.

We witnessed all of the Premier's trips to Ottawa fighting for the \$500 million. We witnessed the statements and the press conferences in Regina. We hear the letters from the farm leaders. Everybody knows that the commitment which was being referred to -- although I have to say truthfully did not have the words \$500 million in it -- in the context of the debate could have no other meaning except it was going to be \$500 million cash on the dash from Ottawa. And these people told the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan that they had the commitment that it was going to be there.

And here it is May 2, several weeks since March 19, and we have absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker. That's an example of the deception of which I talk, the cruel deception that the farmers of Saskatchewan are being subjected to . . .

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

(1500)

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have another example of what I'm trying to make, because I say I regret very much to raise this kind of a tone to what I hope will be an unanimous motion. But I have a copy of the Premier's television address on March 5. You, sir, will remember that March 5 television address where he commandeered the journalists of the province of Saskatchewan, who trailed along him like some sort of a . . . in the slick wash of the Queen Mary as he hurried on to the private chambers of the television studios and his Premier's office here, and delivered that speech on agriculture.

And what did he say? And here's the copy of the transcript which I have here. Quote. This is the Premier's words now on that March 5 address:

I told the Deputy Prime Minister, Saskatchewan people need half a billion dollars right now . . .

This is March 5.

I told the Deputy Prime Minister, Saskatchewan people need half a billion dollars right now to get ready for spring seeding, and another \$400 million just to compete with unfair subsidies of foreign governments.

I also told Mr. Mazankowski that Canada needs a \$1 billion contingency fund to keep us from becoming casualties in subsidy wars.

I'll stop there. But note the timing in what I say and then ask whether or not I am not accurate in my words. On March 5 he told the Deputy Prime Minister that he's got \$500 million that is needed for the province of Saskatchewan. What else could one conclude when on March 19 -- 14 days, two weeks later -- in the Speech from the Throne, the Premier announces that he has a commitment? What else to conclude but there was a commitment here?

And then, just continuing on from this text of March 5, the Premier writes and says following, quote:

Thousands of farmers have to have cash for spring seeding. There is no disputing this fact. We agreed (referring to his meeting between Mr. Mazankowski) we agreed to jointly fight the subsidy war at the international negotiating table. And I can assure you, Saskatchewan's farm community will have direct input in those efforts. We simply must succeed.

And then closing:

And the Deputy Prime Minister confirmed that farmers affected by last year's regional drought will be receiving additional crop insurance compensation prior to seeding. I came back from Ottawa with a mutual agreement to work out the farm financial crisis.

Were the words of the Premier on March 5, 1990 on television in the pure presence of anybody who cared to watch that TV show. Those are the words.

Now, Mr. Speaker, those who say we're being political, I say I have no apologies for that, because I want to know from this government: were these just words or do they mean something? When he said there was a commitment, was that just a word, or was he fooling and toying with the farmers' affections and feelings and the situation? When he says there's a mutual agreement -- not an agreement to discuss, but a mutual agreement -- to solve these problems, two weeks later was there an agreement or was there not?

I want to know why this government and this Premier and the government in

Ottawa have not delivered on that \$500 million cash when they said that they would do so.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I think some very important and fundamental questions on farm policy have got to be asked by the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan. We have had this various set of issues and various changes to the budget and programs that I've talked about, Mr. Speaker, and you know what the result is -- \$800 million debt. We've had the Premier's television speech and we know what the result is -- still no \$500 million cash on the dash. No indication of that whatsoever.

Now we've got the initial prices being reduced as low as they have been, yesterday, taking by the way the bottom range, the bottom level of the range, and with this devastation and with Mr. Stevenson's letters. And I think some important questions have got to be asked on a political basis in this forum and in this legislature, and to be blunt about it, in Canada's parliament as well.

I want to know -- and the journalists should be pressing the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan -- was there a commitment or was there not? And if there wasn't, why did he use that word? I want to know, did the Premier of this province of Saskatchewan write, in advance of yesterday's initial prices, to Mazankowski and to Mulroney, urging them to make sure that the low end of the range would not be chosen, that the farmers in desperate needs needed the high range. Did he write or did he not? And if he wrote, I want to see copies of those letters that he wrote in order to confirm that he's fought for the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan.

I want to know whether or not the Premier of this province still supports the GST which is going to be an additional financial burden on the farmers, adding to the crisis of which we're talking about. I want to know whether the Premier still supports the selling off and the privatization of rural post offices which is still going to be an additional cost on the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan.

I want to know whether the Premier still supports the Government of Canada on all of the major initiatives on farming, on privatization, and on Meech Lake. I want to know whether or not the Premier still supports this federal government.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Because I say, Mr. Speaker, that the conclusion that has to, the conclusion, the conclusion . . . sorry.

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I can only regret and comment publicly that of my many years in this legislature I don't think I have ever seen a member of this House standing at the door, away from his chair, yelling from the door to another member, that that has ever happened before on an important

debate like this on agriculture. And I can only condemn the Conservatives opposite for paying such little attention to the issues here that is before us, and condemn that member.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Never. That's never happened, sir. That's never happened. There's been a lot of catcalling from our side and from all the sides in the debate; I understand that. But when a member gets up and leaves his or her chair and then just bellows across the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Not order. That's the situation. I object to that, sir, and I think the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan should object to that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to continue on with my remarks and I would invite the members opposite to join us in the debate. I'd invite the member opposite, if he doesn't like what I say, if I prompted him to leave the Chamber, to get up and to join the debate.

I want to continue with my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by saying that this is a critical issue because we have some fundamental policy differences on farming that we've got to sort out. This government, this Premier, and the DConservatives in Ottawa believe in what I say is the green paper on agriculture, which means the free market system decides. And I think they've implemented those changes to the budget with these disastrous consequences, and we don't on this side.

And it's about time we started calling a spade a spade, and let's put that difference of policy on the line. It's about time that the Premier of this province and the Prime Minister of this country simply said that they are going to bury their differences and understand that they're going to abandon the green paper, or if they're going to support it, at least get out there and support it -- but abandon the green paper and set into motion a set of permanent, long-term policies, policies that we're advocating, policies on long-term income stabilization, policies for long-term debt restructuring, policies with respect to intergenerational land transfer, and a whole host of other areas.

It's about time that the Conservatives came out from hiding and they either support those programs, or if they don't, then they draw a line on the fundamental policies, because the future of Saskatchewan's at stake.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's one other possibility as to why these programs have taken place. Maybe the possibility is that the Premier simply has no more credibility in Ottawa; that's the other option. It may be that the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan for six years now, having contented himself to singing the Hallelujah Chorus to Mr. Mulroney, is not taken seriously in Ottawa. That might be the other explanation.

It might be that after six years of saying, aye, aye, Mr. Prime Minister, to Meech Lake, to GST, to privatization, to these agricultural changes, to free trade, to the interest rate policy going up, it may be just that after six years nobody in Ottawa is taking this Premier and this government seriously any more. That may also be an explanation.

Because the government decided very early, the Premier decided very early, as a matter of tactical stance, that what he would do was to go down there and to try to negotiate through reason with the Prime Minister -- I do not object to that, by the way -- but pretty soon found himself trapped by the Prime Minister when they bailed this government out in the last provincial election campaign and gave it \$1 billion in 1986.

This government is lock, stock, and barrel bought and owned by the Progressive Conservatives in Ottawa, and that might be the reason for their silence right now.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- And I can't help but also remark, Mr. Speaker, in the context of this debate, that the government now on the eve of a provincial election, which is going to be a difficult election for all of us; it's going to be a toughly fought campaign -- one can only help but assume that the Premier of this province, now desperate, desperate for the lack of federal assistance, whether it's because they don't take him seriously or whether because he has supported those policies, my theory, for whatever reason, the provincial Premier and the government are so desperate now that their only option is to try to effect a change in public posture, to try to communicate to the farmers of Saskatchewan that all of a sudden there's a brand-new Premier who is standing up and fighting for the province of Saskatchewan, that he's standing up to his political master, the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Mulroney.

I tell you, Mr. Speaker, it won't wash. Rhetoric won't wash. Nobody believes this government any more. They don't believe them in Ottawa; they don't believe them in Eston; they don't believe them in Kindersley any more, Mr. Speaker. They don't because the farmers have realized that the stock and trade of this government has been to give hand-out, ad hoc agricultural programs at election time, and in between the election time privatize and fasten your belt to the free market system, resulting in the crisis that we have for rural Saskatchewan and farmers today.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I think there's one way in which this thing can be remedied a bit and that is to pass this motion with respect to the \$500 million and endorsing Mr. Stevenson's complaint and request and in effect getting this motion packaged and mailed down to Mr. Mulroney and to Mr. Mazankowski and saying that this is still the freely expressed will of all of the legislators in the Saskatchewan House -- all of them.

It's still not too late, even if we've got major philosophical differences on farming. They believe in Cargills and corporate and free market farming. We don't. But even with those differences we should be able to unite on this motion which is current by Mr. Stevenson's letter, which hooks on the \$500 million that they told us they had a commitment on but to which the farmers have not delivered yet.

And keep in mind before I close here, Mr. Speaker, in this question period I asked in the first question to the Premier, how are you making out on the \$500 million; can you make an announcement today that it's going to come? I didn't get an answer.

On the second question I asked was, is it true that the initial prices were at the bottom end of the grade? I didn't get an answer, I mean an answer yes or no, to those arguments or explanations, if you will; didn't get an answer. Got no answers at all except the politics which is always being played here by the Conservatives opposite, a politics of divide and conquer, a politics of playing rural Saskatchewan against urban Saskatchewan.

The Minister of Health laughs at my remarks; he's entitled to do that. But I want to tell the Minister of Health that he'd better get out to rural Saskatchewan pretty soon, and when he gets out to rural Saskatchewan he'll realize that the politics of division and hatred, country versus city, the politics that this PC government in Regina is practising, is the politics of the '80s and it's dead. The people want co-operation and action, that's what they want.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- And so, Mr. Speaker, we have differences, and I've tried to explain to you, sir, some of my differences. But notwithstanding those differences, notwithstanding the tactical positions that we take, this is a crisis of monumental proportions. I think it's here because of a combination of events over the last two or three years. That's my view.

None the less, whether you agree with it or not, sir, this House can send a powerful message and tell the wheat pool that we're on side with them, and send a powerful message to Ottawa if we endorse this resolution unanimously. Mr. Speaker, I urge the members of the House to do so. Mr. Speaker, no less than the future of Saskatchewan may be at stake. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move the resolution which you have in front of you, and it is that this Assembly condemns . . . Do I have to sign it again, Mr. Speaker? The one that I forwarded to the Speaker is signed, and by leave. Will Mr. Speaker accept that as the moving of the motion? Thank you very much, sir.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

(1515)

Mr. Upshall: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I enter this debate. I'm glad that the government accepted the debate because it's such an urgent, urgent problem facing the farmers of Saskatchewan.

There is a farm income crisis in Saskatchewan that has not been addressed,

Mr. Speaker, for many, many years. And possibly, just hopefully by emergency motions like this we can force this Government of Saskatchewan to deal with that crisis in a manner that will turn around the hard times that Saskatchewan farmers have faced.

There is a sharp drop in the initial grain prices. On top of all the other crises that we have in Saskatchewan, the drop in the initial grain prices is going to put an additional burden. In fact what it will do, Mr. Speaker, it will drive many people off the farms.

Five hundred million dollars is needed desperately in order to maintain the life-style that Saskatchewan farmers have, \$500 million that this government claims it had a commitment for agriculture for some money. And we've seen the political football going back and forth from this government to the federal government. And they give all their excuses and reasons why nothing's happening and they say they're negotiating. And the result is farmers in this province are facing devastation.

There are over 10,000 farmers with notices of foreclosure. There are farmers who are taking quitclaims on their land, just walking off because there is no solution provided by the government opposite.

Now as you know, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board puts forward a range of prices, then the government chooses a price of the grain for the coming year. Well there are a number of reasons, Mr. Speaker, as we saw last year, when the range was given to the government, the government chose to pick the range, the price at the bottom of the range.

And as the year progressed, it entitled them then to make an interim payment, to make them look like good guys that they were trying to do their best for farmers by giving them money as soon as possible. It was a charade because it was not necessary to drop the price way down and then give an interim payment.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what the process is going to be this year: try to make themselves look good by putting the price as low as they possibly can, and then giving an interim payment some time in the fall when it's around political opportunism, time of an election, possibly.

And another reason, Mr. Speaker, is that the federal government is so afraid now of the agreement that they signed with the United States, the free trade agreement. Because we have seen in the past when there was a deficit, after this agreement was signed when there was a deficit in one of the pools of grain, then the Americans say, well, that's an unfair subsidy, because the government has to pick up the difference if there's a deficit in the pooling system.

So what's the result of this wonderful free trade agreement? It's driving down the initial prices. And this Premier and this government supported that. And the result is that farmers are again burdened because of low initial grain prices.

This is a political move on the part of the government. The Canadian Wheat

Board is a very integral part of this whole system, Mr. Speaker. This government is attacking that Canadian Wheat Board. It's a position that they have taken over and over again, despite the fact they say they do not. Every instance, every move, weakens the Canadian Wheat Board. And the free trade agreement was one of the very major things, very major point that we made that we had to maintain that board.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that this motion will push this government. And we on this side of the House will continue to keep pushing this government into making an agreement, in order that Saskatchewan farmers can maintain their livelihoods.

In fact today we moved this rule 39 motion, and in Ottawa the member for Moose Jaw-Lake Centre, the MP Rod Laporte, also moved an emergency debate in Ottawa. Because we feel as New Democrats that the Government of Saskatchewan and the Government of Canada is simply dragging its feet and not doing their part to put forward immediate cash that the farmers need in their hands, and also, and as important, a long-term stability program. That is so important for the farmers of Saskatchewan and it is not coming forward.

The Premier has consistently apologized for Brian Mulroney and has consistently defended him. Year after year he talks about the Prime Minister, as indicated by the Tory Party. And here's a paper -- it's called Canada's Choice. It's a Tory paper; it's got a big picture of the Prime Minister on the front of it. And it says, "A political leader of strategic genius, a national leader of purpose and courage."

That's what the Tory Party is saying about the Prime Minister through their newspaper. But when it comes to the political advantage of the Premier, all of a sudden he puts on this phoney charade about attacking the federal government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it simply does not wash with the people of Saskatchewan, because they have seen time and time again where this Premier could have stood up and stopped the federal government from implementing changes to the system in agriculture that we have that would have saved farmers money. And my leader has gone over some of them, but I think it's necessary to repeat them.

This government stood idly by while we on this side of House were encouraging them to stop the process that we were going through with reference to the transportation increases. And this is a Tory government who has a formula in Ottawa for increasing the transportation rates. And if you can believe it, Mr. Speaker, the formula includes a projection of production for the coming year. So before the crop comes off, they're going to project it and write it into the formula to determine the cost the farmers have to pay to transport their grain.

And what happened last year? The national transportation authority had a projection and the western grain transportation authority had a projection, and the government chose to choose the higher production number, so that then the formula would enable them to charge more money to haul grain.

Where was this Premier when that process was going on? And the same process, we went through it again this year, and we see again an increase in the transportation rates. This is taking hundreds of thousands of dollars, in fact millions of dollars, out of Saskatchewan farmers' pockets.

This government, this Premier of this province stood idly by, and by his silence he was agreeing that that was okay.

The fuel rebates are another example, Mr. Speaker. This government cut the oil royalty rebate about \$17 million. The federal government cut their rebates by 4 cents a litre. And this Premier and the federal government worked hand in hand with that to increase the costs to farmers for their fuel. And as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, farmers now this year are paying 33 cents a gallon more for their diesel than they did last year.

And now he's standing up and hollering at the federal government saying they're doing it all wrong. Well he simply can't get away with that, Mr. Speaker.

There are other instances that I can quote. The interest-free cash advance, \$27 million a year, a cost to farmers. In fact if you look at the cash advance now, the interest rate on the cash advance is over 14 per cent. Some benefit! And where was this Premier when that was taking place. He was sitting there in his chair applauding Brian Mulroney, saying how great a guy he was, what a tremendous leader he was, and how much he was doing for Saskatchewan farmers, when he was taking money out of the pockets of Saskatchewan farmers.

They eliminated the two-price wheat system. Again this Premier and this government were sitting there saying nothing and endorsing the fact that the two-price wheat system which was going to remove \$147 million from Saskatchewan was going ahead. They said nothing about it. They agreed with the federal government.

Then there was the crop insurance, shifting the crop insurance. And I have a theory on the crop insurance shift from the federal to provincial coffers. I think that's a direct result of the 1988 drought program where the deal was made that Saskatchewan would get so much of a drought payment but the government had to take over 25 per cent share of the crop insurance costs. And again we saw the premiums go up last year, albeit the coverage went up, not proportionately mind you. And we are seeing premiums going to continue to go up because the provincial government is going to unload that share onto the backs of Saskatchewan farmers. So they were working very hand in hand with the federal government on that program.

And we see again, and this is a very recent development of the multi-year disaster program, whereby this government and this Premier actually worked out a formula to cut RMs out of the program. And I ask, why did they not go on a strictly individual basis, when the farmers were led to believe they were going to be paid on an individual basis.

They weren't given the regulations. In fact some of the literature was sent out along with the record of production papers that were sent out to

the Saskatchewan farmers. And if farmers didn't have any grain . . . or stored-grain reports, I'm sorry. If farmers didn't have any grain, then they weren't interested in the stored-grain report. So they probably didn't even see the letter. The thing is, it was very important information putting out and this government did not see fit to ensure that farmers got the message about the multi-year disaster program.

So they intentionally cut out areas to save money. Is that standing up for Saskatchewan farmers? And now they condemn the federal government. Well I think that is very, very phoney.

And there are other examples, Mr. Speaker. The high interest rate policy. Last year, there was a motion on the order paper all session, the longest session in the history of this province, all session, condemning the federal government for increasing interest rates. And they wouldn't bring it forward. This year they turned down another motion where we asked the federal government to . . . where we would want the unanimous consent of this House to ask Farm Credit Corporation to reduce their interest rates to 8 per cent and rewrite land values at current values. They turned that down, Mr. Speaker.

So they can't stand in their place now and all of a sudden say, well the federal government are the bad guys; we know we're trying our best. Because over a period of years, they simply have not taken on the federal government head on and say no, you cannot do that. But what do they do? They stand in their place and they make a list of all the moneys sent out by the federal government. And that money was needed and that money was appreciated.

But my point here, Mr. Speaker, is that for every dollar the federal government put into the farmer's pocket, they also took a dollar out, and that's why there is no solution to the problem. There's no solution to the problem, Mr. Speaker, because there is no will to solve the problem.

If Devine had a . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that. If the Premier has opposed the federal government in each one of these instances; if he would have stood up on his hind feet and said, no, we cannot afford that, then he wouldn't be in the mess that he's in today, politically. But more importantly, the farmers of Saskatchewan wouldn't be in the great dilemma they're in now with cash flow problems.

It lies heavily on the shoulders of the Premier of this province to take the responsibility for the actions of his colleagues and his inaction on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Speaker, the Premier is good at writing letters. In 1985 he wrote a letter -- and I'm going to quote from this letter -- saying, and he says, and this is a letter to farmers:

Therefore, I have proposed a National Emergency Assistance program to provide greater protection against crop failures during multi-year

disasters. This would supplement the benefits available through crop insurance.

So he was talking about a long-term disaster program. And he goes on to say:

Negotiations are currently proceeding between the Government of Canada and the provinces in the attempt to have such a program in place as quickly as possible.

That was in 1985. Where is the program?

And again in 1990, another letter to Saskatchewan producers, a letter that is blatant advertising paid for by the Saskatchewan taxpayer, blatant, political advertising when he sends this type of a letter out to Saskatchewan farmers. And part of it reads, and I quote, a letter from the Premier to producers:

I have also supported a new long-term program to bring stability and predictability to Saskatchewan agriculture.

Well those are the words we heard in 1985. And he has done absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing to bring forward a long-term stability program except write farmers letters saying that he's going to do it. What credibility does he have left, Mr. Speaker?

We have promoted on our side of the House a long-term stability program, income stability whereby the first 8,000 -- using wheat as the example -- the first 8,000 bushels of wheat would be paid at the U.S. target price of some \$5.50 a bushel now I believe. At that time it was 5.28 a bushel.

Mr. Speaker, then there was a debt restructuring program where Farm Credit Corporation would have its interest rates pegged at 8 per cent over a long period of time, to provide stability and debt restructuring for Saskatchewan farmers. And also we're promoting a land transfer program, intergenerational transfer of land.

Those are the needs of Saskatchewan people. I know it; we know it, and the government knows it. And they have chosen not to; they have chosen not to react or respond to those types of programs.

But can you imagine a program of providing the first 8,000 bushels, if produced by a farmer, at a guaranteed rate of return? And when you work that program out, Mr. Speaker, it would cost you no more than the federal government is putting out today in their ad hoc programs, but it would provide long-term, predictable, stable income. And that's what's needed. I ask this government, this Premier, and these members who claim to be rural members, where's their long-term program? They don't even mention one.

(1530)

And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to end my portion of this debate on this

note. We see the Premier of Saskatchewan condemning the federal government for dropping the initial prices, for failing to come forward with \$500 million. As I have stated, that, I think, is as phoney as a \$3 bill, because all the while underlying everything that's happening in this country is what's called the green paper on agriculture which this government supports and which that member for Cut Knife-Lloyd, again standing on his feet yapping, supports.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that green paper in agriculture states basically that they're going to let the market decide what happens to the agricultural sector. The federal government is stating through that green paper that it is backing out of support for agriculture.

This Premier supports the green paper. He cannot now say that he's running down the federal government for their actions because the actions they are taking are the actions that he supported through the green paper, Mr. Speaker. That is cynical and hypocritical, and I say it is phoney and the farmers of Saskatchewan can see through that phoney Premier and that phoney government and they will turf them out as soon as they get a chance.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the members opposite, I ask them, the Premier and all the so-called rural members, where have you been for the last six years? Where is your long-term program that you talk about? Where is the stability for Saskatchewan agriculture and farm families that you talked about? Why do you continue ad hoc programs?

I'd like to ask the members opposite, what do they tell their constituents when they go out in rural Saskatchewan? What do they tell them? You know they blamed it . . . this is a sorry scene. They started blaming everything on the New Democrats, starting in 1982. All the problems in agriculture the New Democrats' fault. Then they started blaming the United States and the European Economic Community. And then they started blaming the weather. All the while taking no responsibility, all the while no actions.

And now when they're out of blaming people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what do they do? They turn their guns on their own people to save their political hide. And all they're trying to do is distance themselves between Brian Mulroney's sinking ship and they know it's a sinking ship, because I've been out in rural Saskatchewan and Tories are telling me, hard-core Tories who will never vote anything else but Tory -- but they may stay home -- are telling me that Brian Mulroney is doing a terrible job.

And that's the line that's coming out. That's the line that they're trying to use. So this government is trying to distance themselves from that. It doesn't work. Farmers in Saskatchewan can see the history of the legacy, the devastating legacy that these members opposite have left by supporting the federal government hand in hand. And they know that they cannot continue along that manner. They know that this is phoney boloney when it comes to the Premier of this province, trying to distance himself from the federal government.

Because as I said, and the key here, Mr. Speaker, is that this Premier, this government, supports that green paper on agriculture. That green paper says deregulation, getting out of the industry. So they cannot get away with saying that Brian Mulroney has a problem; they have no responsibility.

They have the responsibility. If they were a government who stood up for Saskatchewan farmers, they would go down to Ottawa and fight for Saskatchewan farmers. And they would have done that from 1982 to the present. But you don't wait eight years and then start saying all of a sudden, we're going to start fighting Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this motion and I just sincerely hope that these members opposite come to their senses, start telling the truth, stop being phoney, and think about Saskatchewan farmers ahead of their own political interests.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martens: -- Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege for me to get up and speak on behalf of agriculture in Saskatchewan again today, as I did yesterday. And I want to provide a number of items that will deal with the resolution as presented by the members opposite. And I will say that we will be supporting that motion with a very slight amendment. And the amendment I will read into the record at the conclusion of my remarks, and it will be dealing with sending the information to the Prime Minister and to the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa.

We will be supporting it in a general sense. And I just want to point out a number of additional things that I believe that we ought to be taking a look at as we review the focus that we take in dealing with an item as intense in Saskatchewan as this one is.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was talking about a very important fundamental issue that deals with why we have a problem in Saskatchewan today, and that fundamental issue, Mr. Speaker, is this.

When the Japanese farmer is getting six times the price of the world market for his rice; the European farmer is getting four or five times the price of the world market for his durum; the United States producer is getting export enhancement on his commodities that he markets internationally, we in Saskatchewan fundamentally believe that the responsibility rests with the federal government to defend the people of Saskatchewan and the farmers and rural people in the province of Saskatchewan. We fundamentally believe that is right.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Premier and I have been meeting with organizations from across this province and we have discussed those very issues with them in finding out what they think that we should be talking about. We met with Sask Wheat Pool, the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural

Municipalities), Saskatchewan pork producers, Saskatchewan livestock feeders, the National Farmers Union, United Grain Growers, the western Canadian wheat growers, canola growers, crop insurance board of directors, and Saskatchewan stock growers.

All of these people have said to us, this is not a Saskatchewan problem; it's a problem for Saskatchewan. It's a problem in Saskatchewan, but it rests with the federal government and their responsibility is to provide to the people of Saskatchewan some comfort in terms of the conditions that exist on the international market.

And those, Mr. Speaker, are the reasons why yesterday we initiated a response to the initial price of grain dropping, and the method that we did. We talked about it extensively yesterday. It is a dramatic decrease in the income for Saskatchewan producers who are already hard hit. Nineteen eighty-nine is expected and anticipated to have about a \$900 million income, net income return to Saskatchewan, and 1990 is expected to be around 100 million. Mr. Speaker, that is a significant drop to the people of Saskatchewan, and do you know what? When you calculate the volume of dollars that has to go to feed the people of rural Saskatchewan, the amount of dollars that goes out to support the debt load that they've got and all of the things that they need to exist on, a hundred million dollars does not go very far with 60,000 farm families.

And, Mr. Speaker, that clearly is the reason why we are supporting, not only this motion, but the one we did yesterday and the one we've done earlier, where we are pointing to the observation made by the members opposite and us today that we need to address this issue to the federal government.

We also want to point out that the federal government needs to become far more proactive in dealing with the international trade negotiations that are going on at this time. I fundamentally believe, Mr. Speaker, we are having a crisis in agriculture in the grain today more than at any other time for a number of reasons. One is the export enhancement and two is the trading negotiations that are going on now in Geneva with the countries across the world.

Those countries are negotiating, for the first time, agriculture. And what are they doing? They're having a hiccup in their system too. And when I read in the paper about farmers in France going on strike because of the anticipated lowering of the subsidies, and the Japanese saying they're not going to lower their subsidies, we say to the federal Government of Canada that it's time to seriously consider the value that agriculture has to Canada, and that based in Saskatchewan and western Canada. It is extremely important, in my opinion, that we believe that and that we tell the federal government.

And I want to say that the Premier did that this morning in his news interview and he did that today in question period. We did that yesterday and we are focusing on this. We will again focus on it when the premiers meet on the other end of the week, and we will be dealing with it from that area. We will be dealing with it at an agriculture ministers' conference

in Toronto in the middle of the month, and we'll be dealing with it again in August. But we fundamentally need, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the federal government to realize that they have a responsibility in this.

We saw the other day an increase again in the Farm Credit Corporation interest rates. Now this is going to affect those people that are needing to borrow again. It's going to affect those people who are dealing with their cash flow in terms of looking at other investments, and that is going to seriously . . . in fact, Mr. Speaker, it'll make a serious inroad into the kinds of things that farmers would like to do this year in purchasing land and dealing with their input costs.

We talked about yesterday some other issues dealing with interest rates. We dealt yesterday with the low prices on grain, and that's what the Pool letter indicated, that the Leader of the Opposition read. And, Mr. Speaker, we are going to support this motion with an amendment that reads like this:

That the following words be added after the word "plan":

And further be it resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent directly to the Prime Minister of Canada and the Deputy Prime Minister, the federal Minister of Agriculture.

I so move, seconded by the member for Thunder Creek.

Hon. Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will be very brief in my remarks this afternoon. I just wish to stand in the Assembly and support the member from Morse on the amendment which he has just made in the Chamber.

I think that the motion, as presented by the Leader of the Opposition, is a good motion. I believe that anything that we can do in this particular province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to enhance the position of agriculture is something that deserves the respect and the support of all members of this particular legislature.

We have sent, for two days in a row now, a very strong message to the federal government of this country, and I think the amendment as put forward by the member from Morse just makes this motion all that much stronger in driving that message home to this particular federal government. Any time that moves such as this, moves like the reduction which we have seen in the last two days in the initial prices of grain, when we know that the world is running out of food grains, means that people are abdicating their responsibility, not only to the farmer in this province, but to people all around the world who depend on food grains for that staple part of their diet.

As the Premier said in his remarks yesterday, said again in his press conference, and again in question period today, there is an abdication of responsibility by this particular move of the federal government.

The Canadian Wheat Board is an instrument of the federal prerogative in this country and as such takes direction from the federal government and its associated bodies. The Canadian government has actively been engaged in negotiations to bring food grains under the rule of GATT in the world economy. It is absolutely fundamental for the producer in this province and indeed in western Canada to have food grains inside the structure so that the market-place can work in the world economy today.

We have absolutely said to our competitors in the world grain market that we are not prepared to go to the wall and do with food grains what should have been done a long time ago. A move like this says that Canada is not prepared to go the extra mile to ensure that this rational move is made. Canada traditionally has always been a strong and reasonable voice in the world grain economy. We consume very little of our production, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We export the vast majority of it, and always have done. The world wheat agreement did not work back in the '60s and early '70s; two-price wheat system in Canada did not work during the 1970s.

We know that the place for food grains in the world today is under the GATT structure. And for the very reason alone, what happened yesterday means that a motion such as we saw yesterday, as moved by our Premier, and again today, as moved by the Leader of the Opposition, is absolutely fundamental so that the people in Ottawa get the message straight and clear from the legislature and from the people of this province that this is not the proper move to make at this time in the GATT negotiations when we are getting near the end of that particular round.

It is the time to stand firm, look them square in the eye, tell them they're cheating and it isn't right for the producer anywhere in the world and it certainly isn't right for the consumer, for those people around the world who depend on food grains to fill their bellies.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise and second this particular amendment. And I would ask that all members of the legislature vote for the amendment because I think it strengthens the main motion and that we send that motion united down to Ottawa. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to join in respect to the motion that has been put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, and being supported by the government members. I think all of us here at least realize and share the major crisis that is confronting Saskatchewan, and each and every one have stood up here and have indicated that. But the fact remains that while the crisis exists, the solutions are not put forward.

We had a Premier here who is now saying it has to be shifted completely and totally on the federal government. But in 1985, as the Leader of the Opposition indicated and as we indicated in the question period, all of the signs of the trouble that agriculture was encountering were present. And this government opposite and the federal government absolutely refused to

put into place a long-term agricultural policy.

And what is happening now is that the very existence of rural society as we knew it, have known it, is threatened today. I take a look, and I remember when we raised this a year ago. I take a look at The Western Producer: farms in financial trouble.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they show a map of Saskatchewan and they categorize the amount, percentage, of farmers in a particular category. And we'll find, Mr. Speaker, it indicated that over 10,000 farmers have either gone through the farm debt review or the provincial counterpart, or in fact have given their land back with a quitclaim.

Now 10,000 farmers are on their knees; 60,000 farmers in Saskatchewan are depending on the political whims of the two Tory governments that are playing politics with the lives of an industry that is vital to Saskatchewan. That's what's happening, my friend from Milestone-Bengough.

Ten thousand farmers have already gone through the debt review, and we stand in this House. In the federal budget not one single word was mentioned in respect to agriculture. That crisis was known or else this Premier here hasn't conveyed it to Ottawa. And the only reference that we have -- not the only reference, but the significant reference in the budget that was brought down provincially -- as has been pointed out, is that they had a commitment.

Well I say to the people of Saskatchewan that not only does the Premier apparently not have a clear, clear-cut commitment. What is happening, not only are we not getting this money that we need, but at the same time the federal government is carrying on an attack against the very farmers that are in trouble.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: -- As the president of the wheat pool indicated, that setting the initial price for grains at the level that has been proposed by the government will cost farmers in Saskatchewan between 500 and \$600 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is an amount that agriculture cannot support.

But let's take a look at what else is going on. At the very time that agriculture is under attack, we find the federal government -- what do they do with their Farm Credit Corporation? They have increased the farm credit loans to farmers four times in the last two months. That's helping farmers. And where is all these rural members opposite? Not a single complaint to the federal government.

And at the same time that agriculture is on its knees, what does the federal government do? They embark on a freight rate will cost more this year, very significantly more. And these are the practices that have been going on by the federal government, running exactly counter to what they should be doing.

I want to say that the human tragedy that is confronting rural people is

too serious to play politics with it, I agree. And we have come into this House; We have moved resolutions in respect to interest rates and has been refused by the government members. Today is the first motion that they allowed us to debate, and they had to because they're embarrassed.

And I say, what has happened is that the farmers are being deserted. I think that it's true that the Tories, both federally and provincially, have a plan, a new plan for rural Saskatchewan, and it doesn't take in what they call the marginal 40 per cent of the farmers as set out in the account by the Royal Bank, and as a consequence we have no programs.

Where was the Premier, the Premier of Saskatchewan, the Minister of Agriculture? In 1985 he said he was going to work with the federal government to get a long-term agricultural plan. Where is it?

And now the members opposite get up and say, well, we are not going to get into a bidding war protecting farmers. Well what do you expect? You say you can't afford to take on the U.S. or the Common Market. How can the farmers on their own defend themselves?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: -- What we need is action, both provincially and federally -- not a vacillation and an excuse that each of you are standing up and giving today.

I'll tell you, if you've got millions of dollars for Cargill, you'd better have millions of dollars for the farmers across Saskatchewan because they're saying, they're saying to us, we can't trust the Tories in Ottawa and we can no longer trust the Premier of this province to act in our interests. That's where it's at.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: -- People across rural Saskatchewan have two questions. They say, when is the next election? That's what they're asking. They have absolutely given up in respect to getting an agricultural policy which will address the crisis in Saskatchewan.

I want to tell you, we have put forward our agricultural program as was released, Saskatchewan Agriculture: the Case for Government Action. And we set out, and what we have asked for and farmers across this province, they want to be able to have some income stability in their operation. Farmers cannot go on with ad hoc programs because there is no way in which they can plan their affairs.

And what you have done -- you're not interested in the welfare of the farmers. Your policies are designed for one purpose, and that is for re-election of the Tory party. That's the criteria that you use in addressing agriculture, and I say that you've been found out, my friends. And the Saskatchewan farmers, they don't want your ad hoc welfare programs. What they want is a sound, long-term agricultural policy that's predictable and that they can manage their affairs.

Can you feature the magnitude of the crisis that we have in Saskatchewan today, and here we're sitting, May 2, asking whether or not we can get some assistance from Ottawa. That is absolute disgrace. And it's a disgrace because the Premier led the people of Saskatchewan to believe that we had a commitment, and every indication was that it was \$500 million.

Now he says the criteria for it is that you have to match dollar for dollar. That's what Mazankowski is asking for. Well I say to you, because I represent a rural Saskatchewan and I have a tremendous respect for the farmers and their families out in rural Saskatchewan and I have a tremendous respect for the way of life that they practised in the past, and I'll tell you I am going to do everything possible, and our party is, that tens and thousands of farmers are not going to be driven off the land by the inaction of both the provincial and the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: -- And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, the member from Weyburn is chirping. But I'll tell you, Mr. Minister of Finance, if you had priorities that respected the wishes of the people of Saskatchewan, we wouldn't be in the mess that we have.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: -- That's the problem. Your priorities are screwed up just like those in Ottawa. You play for the big boys and not for the ordinary citizens of Saskatchewan, and that's where the problem is.

There's no doubt throughout Saskatchewan, as I'm talking to farmers, what they have asked for is an income stabilizing program where there's predictability. And I'll tell you that we have set out that agricultural policy in the last federal election. We have endorsed that and we have gone to the farmers in respect to it. And there is a program whereby we could guarantee to individual farmers up to 8,000 bushels, using wheat as an example, setting it at the U.S. price at \$6 a bushel, and every farmer in Saskatchewan would be guaranteed of a basic income, instead of waiting for the hand-outs of the Tories opposite. That's the problem.

(1600)

I say, Mr. Minister of Health, we'll get to you in due time. I'm speaking to the farmers of Saskatchewan and I'll speak as long as it takes to get my point across. Because obviously over on that side they don't want to talk agriculture any longer, about two minutes by each of the speakers on this important matter.

And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that there's no time for delay, absolutely not. And if we had a premier and an associate premier and if we had a minister of Finance, I'll tell you they would be sitting on the doors of Brian Mulroney's doorstep until he came across and provided money for Saskatchewan people.

But the truth of the matter is that the Premier of this province, he owes a debt to Brian Mulroney, and he can no longer go down to Ottawa and demand any more. Because you know when he got into trouble in the last provincial election, he had to phone in the middle of the night and say, Brian, give me a million dollars, I'm losing this election. It had nothing to do with helping farmers or stabilizing the agricultural industry, it was totally political.

And what do we have now, Mr. Speaker? We have a rerun of 1985-86 going into the election. What do the Government of Saskatchewan do? Well they don't give a production loan of \$25 an acre, what they do is cut it in half, twelve and a half. It's not \$25 at 6 per cent, it's twelve and a half dollars at ten and three-quarters per cent, and they can have it for six months. The cost of that is 31 cents an acre. That's about what the Premier of this province says his aid is to Saskatchewan -- 31 cents an acre; that's the subsidization.

I want to conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, and say that I'm pleased that we have been able to join in a request to the federal government for some aid. I'm going to say to you here, sir, that \$500 million is not going to address the problem and the magnitude of the problem that's out there. We do need, beyond that, a comprehensive agricultural policy. We have to have an income stabilization program; we have to have debt restructuring; we have to have intergenerational transfer system. Those are the things that we need.

And I say, only will that happen when we change the government of Ottawa and the government here. And I say that the people of Saskatchewan and the people of Canada are prepared to do that, but in the meantime, we will continue to fight on for the best possible help to the farmers of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Swan: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on this motion that has been introduced by the Leader of the Opposition.

This particular motion is going, to some extent, in the right direction, Mr. Speaker. Our government has, over the past number of weeks, been speaking about agriculture and been requesting funding from Ottawa. We have put in a joint resolution by this legislature on two different occasions, one yesterday and one about a month ago. Those resolutions are both calling for assistance from Ottawa to provide funding for our farmers to continue to operate and be able to seed this year's crop.

I think it's important for us to realize that not all of the troubles that have occurred in agriculture have occurred in the last week or in the last month but rather have occurred over a long period of time. Much of the difficulty that has occurred in the farming community started back in 1980 and it continued on through. And once the farmers experienced the extremely high interest rates of 1981, they got into financial difficulty. And for many of them they were not able to recover from that financial

shock that occurred at that time.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked with the federal government to try, through the last eight years, to put in place programs that will assist agriculture to survive. That has been extremely difficult to achieve in the tight economic times that Saskatchewan and Canada have been going through.

I was pleased, Mr. Speaker, to see assistance come from Ottawa from 1985 to now in the quantities of about \$7 billion. Those \$7 billion have come in a variety of programs and have been of a lot of assistance to Saskatchewan agriculture. But as grain prices have dropped and the dollar value has dropped in Canada and across the world, it has placed considerably more stress on our agricultural industry than has ever been experienced before. Our government this year has again put in place a half a billion dollars worth of seeding loans that will assist at subsidized interest rates for farmers to buy the necessity of seeding this crop.

We realize that that is not enough, and yet the treasury of Saskatchewan is stretched pretty much to its limit. It's very difficult for us to go beyond what we have, in order to provide assistance. And I believe that the people in Saskatchewan realize that.

So we have asked the federal government to put in 500 million now with additional payments later in the year. We have seen the federal government announce that they had \$250 million, which is certainly not enough, and that 250, they say, must be matched equally by Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there's never been a time that federal programs have been matched dollar for dollar by provinces. That's simply not the way the system works. Much of the difficulty that we face is because of the subsidy programs that are in place in other parts of the world; and the United States, putting in very major subsidies to its producers, is now selling grain to Russia and other markets that Canada has traditionally been able to sell to. And the United States are selling below the cost of production in most cases where they have made grain sales in the last two years.

When we look at the European Economic Community, they as well have had considerable grain subsidies over the last number of years, and their farmers are realizing upwards of \$10 Canadian per bushel for wheat sold to their customers within their own community.

Mr. Speaker, these were not issues that were raised by Saskatchewan or problems that were caused by Saskatchewan farmers. We have some of the best agricultural producers anywhere in the world. We can be proud of our agriculture industry, but it cannot fight the treasuries of the European Economic Community, the United States of America, and Japan, single-handedly.

Our farmers need some assistance, and for that reason the resolution that is here today, I believe, is worth supporting. It really only repeats what we have said to the federal government a number of times, but it's one more time that we say it, and I believe that's valuable.

We have over the past few days had some shocks to the agriculture industry that I think need to be mentioned, and one of them is that the credit corporation, the Farm Credit Corporation of Canada, has increased its lending rates to farmers four times since the beginning of January of this year. And at the present time the rate has risen to fourteen and a half per cent. Now you cannot afford to borrow for capital land purchases at fourteen and a half per cent and have grain prices drop to the level that they dropped to yesterday.

That drop in grain prices yesterday has brought the price of wheat in Saskatchewan at about \$3.15 a bushel. That, Mr. Speaker, is far below the cost of production of a bushel of wheat in today's markets. For this to happen, it has really cut the heart out of farmers just at the time when it's time to seed a new crop. There isn't really a crop that we can seed today that is going to bring enough in income to pay the cost of operation for this year.

So Saskatchewan is going to have to see some assistance from the federal government if our farms are going to be able to survive. It's a very, very difficult time for agriculture, and a time when I think that all political parties in all parts of Canada need to get together to work out solutions over the long period that will place our agriculture on a stable base.

Now there may be some who think that agriculture is out there and fighting this issue alone, and that's not the case. When agriculture suffers in Saskatchewan and across the prairie provinces of Canada, all of the businesses and the rural communities suffer at the same time, because agriculture is still the very base of our society.

When I talk to people in my constituency, which is mainly an agricultural constituency and a very high-producing constituency, most of them tell me that they cannot encourage their young people to stay on the farm because there simply isn't enough money being made on the farm that young people are interested in staying. So they are looking at other opportunities to get out and to earn a living in other forms of labour or industry.

Mr. Speaker, that cuts down the population of rural Saskatchewan. And as that happens, it makes it more and more difficult for us to deliver services to that part of our province. As those services cut back, the small towns suffer, the businesses in those small towns suffer, and indeed all of us suffer.

I think the health care report that came in yesterday indicates much of the same concern that I am expressing, in that as the population moves out of rural Saskatchewan, it is more and more difficult to deliver health services, education, and services to the agriculture industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that this particular motion is here. It's a repeat, as I mentioned earlier, of the motion that has been put through to the federal government, but I believe this will reinforce again the very severe need that we have in Saskatchewan.

And the cut-back in farm prices that we saw yesterday took out about another half billion dollars out of the income of our Saskatchewan farmers. I think the first 500 million that we're asking for is needed immediately, but we will need much more than that in order for agriculture to survive in the future.

With those comments I will be supporting the motion that is before us, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Amendment agreed to.

The division bells rang from 4:15 p.m. until 4:20 p.m.

Motion agreed to nemine contradicente on the following recorded division.

Yeas

Muller	Gleim t
Schmidt	Britton t
McLeod	Gardner t
Lane	Saxinger t
Hepworth	Romanow t
Maxwell	Prebble t
Hardy	Rolfes t
Martens	Koskie t
Meiklejohn	Thompson t
Martin	Brockelbank t
Hopfner	Mitchell t
Swenson	Upshall t
Gerich	Simard t
Klein	Kowalsky t
Pickering	Atkinson t
Toth	Anguish t
Duncan	Hagel t
Petersen	Calvert t
Wolfe	Lautermilch t
Swan	Trew t
Johnson t	

-- 41 R

Nays

-- 00 R

ORDERS OF THE DAY

QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, as relates to the questions put by members, items 1 through 7, I would ask that all of those items, nos. 1 through 7 inclusive, be converted into motions for return (debatable).

The Speaker: -- Items 1 to 7 are converted into motions for returns (debatable).

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Not Debatable)

Hon. Mr. McLeod: -- Mr. Speaker, as it relates to these motions for returns, I would ask that the motions for return no. 3, items 3, 4, and 7, that those could be ordered, and that all the other motions for returns (not debatable), being 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 be converted to motions for returns (debatable).

The Speaker: -- Items 3, 4, 7, are ordered for return. Items 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 are converted to motions for returns (debatable).

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Education
Ordinary Expenditure -- Vote 5

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Rolfes: -- Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, last day when we did the estimates on post-secondary education, I had asked for some information to be made available for us today. I was wondering whether you could send that information over to us today.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Yes, Mr. Chairman, I have, as I'd indicated last time we were in estimates, the interim report of the private vocational schools. And the member opposite had asked for the regulations, but since they are not completed at this point -- they are in drafting -- I'll give you the report.

Also you had asked for clarification on the two different sets of numbers with regard to letters that had been written to you, and I had indicated the other night, looking at the two different years. And I have that for you as well.

You had also asked for a copy of recommendations made by the Government of Saskatchewan to the federal government regarding changes to the Canada student loan program. And this one, Mr. Chairman, the member opposite had asked what percentage of students have loans over \$20,000 and over \$25,000.

And I would indicate that as of February 1990, that 2.11 per cent of all consolidated loans, in other words in repayment or repaid, were in excess of \$20,000, and 0.5 per cent were over \$25,000. This represents total indebtedness under both the federal and provincial loan programs. Seventy-eight per cent owe less than \$10,000 in combined federal and provincial assistance. The average loan last year for university students was about \$4,200. So I will send the member a copy of that as well.

I believe that was all that you had requested.

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question or two to the minister in respect to the issue dealing with governance, French school governance, and the announcement made by the government on or about April 23, 1990 to the effect that they were postponing, as I understand it, a unanimously agreed course of action, agreed upon course of action, as represented by the Gallant report.

The minister's stated reason was that there are complex legal and constitutional issues. I realize that my colleague, the critic for educational matters, the member from Saskatoon Nutana, has asked some questions in this regard and I've had the opportunity of reading the transcript of the answers given, but I must confess that I am somewhat unclear as to what those complex constitutional and legal reasons are that the government has identified, notwithstanding the reading of the transcript.

Would the minister care to take another run at it and to provide to the members of the House and to the francophone community and others, specifically what the complex constitutional and legal concerns are that your department has spotted.

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I again point out it's quite interesting that the Leader of the Opposition has, you know, finally at this late date been even interested in the francophone governance. Not one question asked in this House during question period.

But I would indicate to him what the concerns are. And these are also being communicated with the various groups that are involved with the francophone governance. We have already met with the secretariat; we will be meeting with the parents and also with the task force to explain in detail why in fact it was necessary to delay the legislation.

In the first case, Mr. Chairman, the Wimmer judgement in Saskatchewan established a certain right for management and control of Fransaskois schools by francophones, but the Wimmer judgement specified neither the type nor the extent of the management control required.

Now our legislation was fairly well along, Mr. Chairman, but with the bringing down of the Supreme Court decision, the Mahe pé decision, in the province of Alberta on the 15th of March; and when a copy of that judgement was finally received here in Saskatchewan, it necessitated taking more time to take a look at the legislation as it was being developed here.

And some of the specific concerns were this, Mr. Chairman: that the recent Mahe pé judgement from Alberta goes further than the Wimmer judgement in suggesting a particular type of French governance based on a sliding scale, where student numbers might warrant either complete governance, partial governance, or simply representative participation. The proposed legislation did not take these considerations into account. Neither did the Gallant report.

A third issue, and I think this is one that is of more serious concern insofar as the francophones in Saskatchewan are concerned, and that's a problem that was identified in terms of section 29 of our specific legislation. And the implications of this section is that some of the parents that qualify under section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to hold office on the conseil scolaire are denied this right under section 29 of the proposed legislation.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I'm sure that the francophone people within the province of Saskatchewan would not want to see legislation being put forward that is in fact, in some cases, going to disenfranchise them.

So since this is the first really clear definition of section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that has come down in Canada, it's the feeling of the people here in the province of Saskatchewan and particularly in Justice and Education that more time should be taken to study this particular document, which is a significant document, in that we do ensure that our legislation is in fact going to meet the needs of the francophone people and will quite clearly spell out the specific types of direction that they want to go within the province of Saskatchewan.

So because of the significance of the Supreme Court decision, it resulted then in our delaying our legislation going forward. And I'm sure that as the hon. member opposite knows, it takes a fair bit of time to draft legislation. And because of the time line that is needed to get teachers in place, to get school boards in place, to get facilities and all of those other arrangements that have to be made, it would be necessary to have this legislation in place, pass through this House by the end of May. Mr. Chairman, that is just not possible because of the time that is needed to study the document out of the province of Alberta.

This does not take away from the commitment that we have to the constitution or to the court case that came down here in 1988.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, the minister might be surprised that members on this side of the House have not asked questions in question period in this area.

Frankly, I'll tell the minister it comes as no surprise to me that this government is not able to manage anything, including this project, which obviously seems to be the case given the decision and the announcement that you make and the explanations that you make.

So you can express surprise about what we ask, but I'll tell you I have no surprise about your incompetence. This matter of the Mahe pé decision, you keep on referring to as a Supreme Court decision. Now surely, Mr. Minister, you understand the Supreme Court of Alberta is no different than the Queen's Bench of the province of Saskatchewan. You're surely not misrepresenting this to mean the Supreme Court of Canada decision? Let me just ask that question and sit down.

You understand that these are parallel courts. Wimmer and the Mahe pé decision are parallel courts, one not ruling over the other.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition is the lawyer. And it was my understanding that the decision of the Supreme Court supersedes the Queen's Bench here in Saskatchewan. Now in fact that's the understanding I have. The point remains that it has caused some concerns within Saskatchewan with regard to the legislation here that was pretty well along, in that we want to ensure that this is in fact going to be done right.

And the francophone people that I have talked to understand this, and they do not want to be having legislation that is going to come in that is in fact going to disenfranchise them or not allow them to have some of the rights that they feel need to be addressed. So for those reasons, we do feel that we need more time with it.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, unless I am corrected by you, sir -- and you have a spate of officials behind you advising you, so this should be easily correctable -- the Supreme Court of Alberta is just a different name for the Queen's Bench of Saskatchewan. They are the same courts at the same level. They do not have any supervisory or superior powers one to the other.

Now unless you're telling me that Mahe pé was a Supreme Court of Canada decision, in which case then your argument is valid, my question to you is, am I correct in saying that the Alberta decision, Supreme Court of Alberta decision comes from a judge of the same footing and level as Wimmer of the Court of Queen's Bench in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, the information that I have on the document here indicates that clearly that it is the Supreme Court of Canada, not the Supreme Court of Alberta.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, the minister is referring to a document which he says is clearly indicative that it's the Supreme Court of Canada, and if that is the case, I grant the minister has an important point. However, I would like him to table that document, and I'm assuming that it's a decision of the . . . the actual decision. Would you be kind enough to indicate if you'll table the document and exactly what the title on the document is.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Yes, I'd be happy to table the document. And the title of the document is Jean-Claude Mahe pé, Angeline Martel, Paul Dube pé, and l'Association de l'E pécole Georges et Julia Bugnet versus Her Majesty the Queen in right of the province of Alberta and the Attorney General of Canada. And it lists a few others there as well. So I'd be happy to table that.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased the minister will table the report, the document in any event. We'll take a look at that.

What I want to ask the minister is this: why was it that the Government of Saskatchewan didn't intervene in the Mahe pé case before, as it seems now the Supreme Court of Canada?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, I am informed that the reason that the province here would not be involved is that we do not have any jurisdiction in that this was an appeal of a decision that came down from the Queen's Bench in Alberta.

Mr. Romanow: -- But, Mr. Chairman, as I understand it, this is a decision which involves section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, amongst other provisions, which as the minister knows, is a key aspect of the Canadian constitution. And in a constitution case of this nature, which will impact on the province of Saskatchewan and what we propose to do or not propose to do with respect to francophone governance, one would have thought that the provincial government would have had a say or an interest to advance before the Supreme Court of Canada on the interpretation or the issues before it.

Now that is done quite frequently and in many cases, and I'd like to know why it is that in this instance on this constitutional case, there was no intervention.

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, there would not be any opportunity for the province of Saskatchewan to intervene in this case, as I understand it. We have to keep in mind that the responsibility of education is a responsibility of the province. Therefore this was a decision that was taking place in the province of Alberta and there would not be the opportunity for the province of Saskatchewan to be involved in it.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I find that answer a little bit puzzling, and I must say to the minister, with the greatest of respect, I don't think I can accept it. But for the time being I'm going to move on and ask another question.

And I say I find it puzzling because I don't see what impediment there is -- I shall use that word -- for a provincial government not to intervene in a matter which is of constitutional importance affecting a provincial government. Section 23's interpretation by the Supreme Court with respect to francophone governance clearly is affecting Alberta as we see by the Mahe pé decision and clearly is going to be affecting the province of Saskatchewan by virtue of your decision. And how it is or why it is that a government, a responsible government fully knowledgeable of these matters, would not be present at the court hearing before the Supreme Court to articulate a point of view as to how section 23 should be interpreted, in the light of the Gallant report, in the light of the province's objectives, is, as I say, to my mind rather confusing to put it mildly, puzzling to put it mildly.

But let's leave that aside for the moment. Since Mahe pé apparently worked its way up through the various levels of the courts in the province of Alberta and essentially deals with 23, section 23 in French governance, and the various arguments pro and con including the decisions taken there were done by the various courts at the various stages, why is it that the Government of Saskatchewan here did not spot earlier the dangers that were inherent and bring those to the attention of the francophone community?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well let's keep in mind, Mr. Chairman, that the Wimmer decision did not address some of the issues as they were addressed in the province of Alberta. This is the first time that there really has been a case where there has been a clear definition put forward as to how section 23 applies to the francophone rights. So I mean let's keep that in mind.

And when you consider the implications of that decision that came down, and with the comparison made with the legislation that we were putting forward, and when you've got a section that is clearly out of step with section 23 . . . I mean, it's the lawyers that are designing this thing. And as the member opposite should understand, that it's obviously a concern when you've got a section in our legislation which appears to be really at odds with section 23, which in fact could result in francophones being disenfranchised.

But until there was something such as the Mahe pé decision, which is now clearly a guide that can be used in this province in helping us to design the legislation, the feeling is that we need to take a little bit more time to draft this properly. So the plan is that since it couldn't be introduced in this session, that we would want to introduce it during the next session of the legislature.

Mr. Romanow: -- But my question to you, Mr. Minister, is this. Realizing fully that a definitive interpretation would have to be rendered by the Supreme Court of Canada, as it apparently turns out to be the case, and understanding that, your department and your government surely would have been aware of the issues as they came before and rose through the courts, as they come before ultimately the Supreme Court of Canada.

At some point prior to the Supreme Court's rendering a verdict, the question of the possible interpretation on a sliding scale or the questions of whether or not our potential section 29 conflicts with 23, would have been well addressed then before the lawyers and the courts, well before the judgement of the Supreme Court of Canada. Now your officials must surely have kept pace. Justice must have kept pace.

And my question is, on the assumption that my understanding of how these things work is correct, why is it that the department, your department, was not on top of the arguments and why was it that you did not take the action that you took, if I may put it that way, or at least alert the francophone community of a possible outcome of the decision in Mahe pé, as it ultimately worked out? And more importantly, why weren't you there before the Supreme Court?

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition can wonder about some of the things that were happening within the Department of Education. I guess that I would wonder about the fact that the Leader of the Opposition was not even aware of the fact that this was indeed the Supreme Court of Canada that was involved in the case.

But I would also point out that there has been very close communication and co-operation with the francophone community. There was close communication with them in the drafting of our Bill. And when you stop and consider that we were working on the decision that came down, the Wimmer decision, and that we were looking not so much at numbers with regard to what we were going to be putting here in the province of Saskatchewan.

And the Wimmer decision, of course, that's something that you're going back a couple of years. There's been a fair bit of discussion with regard to that. But at the same time, this decision in Alberta only came down on March 15, so the information on the report from that decision has not been available for all that long a period of time.

So we have been in contact with the francophones. They were involved in helping to draft the legislation. So I can suggest to you, sir, that it was some surprise when you would find that our section 29 in our Act would not be saying the same thing as what would be said in section 23.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, this may surprise you, but I do not have . . . I'm not the fountain of knowledge that some of your members obviously think I am. And it may also surprise you but I don't have 15 officials sitting behind me, as you do, and with another 15 sitting right behind me in the galleries.

And so I'm asking you for the questions and I'm asking you to give your government's answers. If you want me to explain our position, wait a few months and, if you're in this House, you'll have a chance to ask us about our position.

Obviously I'm not going to get anywhere, to get the answer, to the question which I'm seeking to have answered, namely: why is it that there was not some earlier warning to the francophone communities or to the community in the province of Saskatchewan prior to the decision of Mahe pé about these potential dangers? But you keep on insisting that this is an educational matter, a number of other answers which you've given. I'll leave that aside for the moment.

My question to the minister is this, therefore, moving on from their topic. Are you saying that the francophone communities therefore endorse your decision, taken on April 23 or thereabouts, that this matter should be held in abeyance until these complex legal and constitutional issues are solved?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, I would point out that we have been in contact with one of the groups; we will be meeting with all of the other groups that are involved with francophone governance of education here in the province of Saskatchewan.

But on April 23 when the announcement was made, I certainly understand the disappointment that many of the francophone people in Saskatchewan had, because they had been looking forward to having control of their own schools come September 1 of this year.

So I'm not suggesting that for any minute that they were all happy with the decision. I know that they were disappointed. But we are working with them; we will be meeting with them to explain further the reason for the delay and going into things in detail. This is a very complex situation. We fully understand that, and we want to work with them in the months ahead to ensure that as the legislation is prepared and put forward, that in fact it is going to meet the wishes and concerns that they have and the aspirations that they have for control over their own school system.

So, Mr. Chairman, we will continue doing that. The task force will still be involved. There are still issues that have to be dealt with and concerns that have to be worked out. The secretariat is still going to be involved because there are things that they have to do, and we will be in continuous contact with the parents as well to ensure that when we come out with the new legislation, that in fact it is going to do what everyone wants it to do.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well that's all very fine and dandy, Mr. Chairman. It sounds nice in any event, even from a nice sounding, nice looking minister, but the bottom line of it is that the francophone groups obviously don't share your, at least initially, I'll put it that way, have not shared your assessment of what the Mahe pé decision means with respect to Saskatchewan French governance, and you in effect have admitted as much.

I guess my question to you, Mr. Chairman, to you, Mr. Minister, through the Chair, is this. You will have, no doubt, within your department the appropriate legal briefings or analysis of the Mahe pé decision which identify where it potentially conflicts with the proposals of the Saskatchewan government. I would appreciate if you would table that for the House, for me, so that we can take a look at your advisors' legal concerns. And I'm sure that you will make it available to francophone communities to satisfy them of their concerns.

Could we have the analysis tabled to take a look at the issues that you raise and satisfy ourselves that this matter, in fact, requires more time and more consideration?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that we will be sharing all of that information with the francophone groups, and we will be pleased to provide you with a copy of it just as soon as we have everything finalized, and as we go through our estimates we will be happy to provide that.

Mr. Romanow: -- Just on this point. You say, as we go through our estimates; I don't think we'll finish before 5 p.m. We might not even finish tomorrow, but . . . And I don't want to press you; I understand that there are some legitimate concerns here. But how soon can we get this? How soon are you meeting with the francophone groups to discuss this issue with them? Or putting it bluntly, perhaps the question you might answer is: what is your schedule for meetings with the francophone groups, say the ACFC (Association Culturelle Franco-Canadienne) is one?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, we will be meeting with all of the

remaining groups within the next two weeks. And as soon as Justice has the information that the member has asked for, we will be happy to provide it. But we will be providing that information to the other groups as we meet with them over the next two weeks.

Mr. Romanow: -- And the issues are, as you tell me, two issues: one, a sliding scale on the interpretation of where numbers warrant; and number two, a potential conflict on the draft section 29 with the section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Are there any other "complex legal and constitutional issues" here?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Those are the two major issues, Mr. Chairman. There may well be other issues that will be raised by Justice, but that will be included in the information that we give to you.

Mr. Romanow: -- Have the francophone communities forwarded to you written submissions as a result of the Mahe pé decision and their interpretation of it with respect to the proposed legislation? And while I'm on my feet, how about tabling a copy of the proposed Bill?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- In answer to the first question, Mr. Chairman, we have not had any such responses from the francophone community, and we do not have a copy of the proposed Bill here today.

Mr. Romanow: -- I realize you may not have it today. Can we get a copy of it at some time in the very near future, perhaps during the consideration of the estimates?

You realize why we're asking these questions. You say that section 29 of the proposed Bill conflicts with section 23 in light of the Mahe pé decision. You give us other interpretations with respect to sliding numbers on the interpretation of where numbers warrant. These, I think, are important considerations all right, but wouldn't it be fair to give to the opposition the necessary documentation in order for us to read your interpretations of those documents, to see whether or not the conclusion that you arrive at is the one that we also can arrive at. So can we get the draft Bill tabled?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, we will not be providing a copy of the draft Bill.

Mr. Romanow: -- I'm sorry. The minister said, will not be? And why?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, I would believe that we would be following the same practice as other governments have in the past, that it's not the practice of putting forward copies of draft Bills where there's still discussion going on, where a Bill is not totally complete. So we are not going to be providing a partial Bill to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Romanow: -- But you see, Mr. Chairman, in this instance, that my problem is that he says, the minister says that section 29 of the proposed Bill conflicts with the interpretation of section 23 in the Mahe pé

decision. That's what he says and he invites us to accept his interpretation and his word.

I think under normal circumstances that might be sufficient. But this being such a very important and sensitive issue, I think a good argument can be made that that isn't sufficient. I think we should see what section 29 of the Bill proposed says, and then take a look at the Mahe pé judgement, and then we can conclude whether or not the interpretation of the department and the minister is correct. I don't see how that would be dangerous to him or undesirable.

It might very well be that we'll end up with the same interpretation that you end up, and wouldn't that be of an assist, if I may put it that way, to your proposition? So will you reconsider the request that I make?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, I'm not going to be giving the Leader of the Opposition a Bill that is at the drafting stage. That's not been the practice of this House and that's certainly not going to be the practice now. As I indicated to him earlier, the Bill was still at the draft stage; it was not in the final form. And so there's really not going to be any partial Bill that is going to be put forward.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I have another question which is very brief here. Again, I haven't looked at this Supreme Court judgement quite obviously, and I may be misreading it again. But I see on page 3, a list of the interveners for the Attorney General of Saskatchewan, Robert G. Richards. So apparently you did intervene. Can I ask whether or not you would table a copy of the intervention and the supporting documentation?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- As I understand it, Mr. Chairman, the representative that was there was there as an observer from the Department of Justice, not from the Department of Education.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well I just have a couple of more questions in light of the House Leader's desire to adjourn the House for today. You will know there is no difference with respect to the Government of Saskatchewan, whether it's the Justice minister or the Minister of Education. The Attorney General for Saskatchewan is legal officer for the cabinet and the government of the province of Saskatchewan. If he intervened on behalf of the government, he intervened on your behalf.

And I'd like to know, why can't we get a copy of the intervention, the submission taken by the Minister of Justice? To be quite frank with you, we'd get it by going to the court-house, I suppose, in Ottawa and getting a copy of it. But in order to save time and money, why not just give us a copy of it? I mean what could be the problem there?

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Mr. Chairman, the representative that was there was there as an observer, not there to intervene, and it was through his observations at the court hearing that we were made aware of some of the concerns that were being raised.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:01 p.m.