

May 9/90

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, allow me to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this Assembly, a group of grade 12 students from Wawota High, and also their principal, Mr. Harold Laich. This group of students and Mr. Laich has brought his students in on a number of occasions, not only to visit the Assembly, but as well to visit the provincial court.

I trust the students find their visit today to be informative and educational. I'd like to ask the members to join me in welcoming the students this afternoon.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly, another group of students from Weyburn Junior High School in Weyburn, from the grade 8 class, numbering some 63 in number in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker. Accompanying them today is their teachers, Janice Bernard and Sid Trepoff, as well as bus drivers Vance Peterson and Gary McKenzie.

This is the second contingent from Weyburn in the last two days, Mr. Speaker. And as I mentioned yesterday and I repeat again today, that the junior high and the teachers and the students there have a long-standing practice of coming to the legislature during their school year, and I commend the students, the parents, the board, and as well the teachers for making this part of their school year, Mr. Speaker.

I hope they find the proceedings interesting. I know they've had a tour of the legislature. And my colleague, the MLA for Regina Wascana, will be meeting with them after question period for refreshments and pictures and to answer their questions, since I cannot attend to that. And I would just ask all members of the legislature to join with me in welcoming these students here from Weyburn, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Meiklejohn: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you, and through you to other members of the Assembly, two guests from the province of Quebec, Jacques Beland and Anne Campeau, who are representatives from the Canadian youth education excellence program. They're seated in your gallery.

The youth education excellence program, Mr. Speaker, is a national forum promoting the personal, social, and cultural development of Canada's youth.

And the reason that these two individuals are in Regina is that each year the highlight of the program is to have a week whereby students from all across Canada, from the 10 provinces, come together to select the Canadian educator of the year. And the plan is that next spring here in Regina, this very special event will take place. And Jacques and Anne are here today making arrangements, meeting with the city of Regina and with other members of the educational family to make the preliminary plans in hosting this very special event next year.

And I would ask all members of the House to join with you and with me in welcoming these two guests with us this afternoon.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise on behalf of the member for Melville who is out of the province today and has asked me to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all members of the legislature, a group of students from Mr. Schmidt's constituency. This group of students is seated in the west gallery. We have 55 students, Mr. Speaker, in grades 3 to 7, from the Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School in Lebret.

Mr. Speaker, this group is accompanied by Jim Hartman, Tracey Shewchuk, Angie Smith, and as well they have their very capable bus driver, Lawrence Pinay. Mr. Speaker, these students are here visiting the legislature today. I do, on behalf of the member for Melville, want to welcome them here. I hope you have a wonderful visit here today on a nice spring day, in the legislature. I will, on behalf of the member for Melville, be meeting with you after question period on the steps of the legislature for a few pictures and perhaps a short discussion later.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join these fine young people from the Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School in Lebret.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister for Public Service Commission, it is again my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and to you other members of the House, some of our professional civil servants who are continuing on the tour process that we started some months ago.

This tour process, Mr. Speaker, includes members from various departments. The departments today are Public Service Commission, the Department of Health, Consumer and Commercial Affairs, Economic Diversification and Trade, and Department of Urban Affairs, Mr. Speaker, as well as Sandra Gardner from the Legislative Library and Nathalie Bellerose, Legislative Guide Services. And the process, Mr. Speaker, is really designed to give our professional civil servants an opportunity to see how some of the other areas of government work outside of their particular offices.

So, Mr. Speaker, would all the members, including the member from . . . all members in this House please welcome all our civil servants here today.

Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Aid for Farmers

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question today, Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture, the Premier, is to the Associate Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, farmers in the province of Saskatchewan are becoming increasingly confused and I would say angered by the statements and the actions, or perhaps more correctly stated, the inaction of the Tory governments in Regina and Ottawa when it comes to farm policy and farm aid.

And today we have yet more reason for the confusion. In the Star-Phoenix, Mr. Mazankowski of the federal PC government says he's now offering some form of loan program to the provincial government in order to get the \$500 million. And in the same story Mr. Mazankowski talks about yet an alternative approach where the \$500 million, which was promised by the Premier and the government opposite as cash on the dash, is now going to be used for some form of an export enhancement program.

My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Associate Minister of Agriculture is this: why is it that your government has permitted this kind of confusion, this kind of proliferation of possible farm aid programs, all the while the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan so desperately needing the \$500 million cash which you promised on or about March 19, 1990? How in the world does the political timetable of Tories in Regina and Ottawa swamp the day-to-day needs of farmers who needed that \$500 million, not today but two months ago?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out to you and to members opposite that there has been a discussion on an ongoing basis with various organizations throughout the province in dealing with exactly what this government should be doing. Those organizations include the farmers' union; they include stock growers; they include the Sask Wheat Pool; they include United Grain Growers; they include western Canada grain growers. A whole host of these have been discussing with us exactly how we should be handling our relationship with the federal government.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have had an opportunity to read a number of letters that we have received from various organization exactly expressing the same concern that the Premier has to the federal government. And I have a letter received yesterday from the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) where they said that the 299 municipalities were endorsing entirely the focus that the Premier was putting onto the discussion he was having with Mr. Mazankowski.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a new question to the Associate Minister of Agriculture who said in his response to my last question that the government was involved in an ongoing series of discussions, which is all well and good.

But, Mr. Speaker, I remind you, sir, and the Associate Minister of Agriculture that on March 19, 1990, right here in this legislature, in the Speech from the Throne -- and I've a copy of it in front of me -- the exact words of you, sir, and your government and your Premier were:

My government has received a commitment from the Government of Canada that financial assistance will be provided to farmers for spring seeding.

Note those words, Mr. Speaker -- a commitment from Ottawa for spring seeding. Now that's clear, and that's precise.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Associate Minister of Agriculture is this: did you have that commitment when you wrote that Speech from the Throne on March 19, 1990, yes or no? Give us a simple answer to that. And if you did have it, what was it? And if you had it, why was it derailed? What caused it to be derailed? And if you didn't have it, were you just fooling with the emotions and the financial plight of the farmers of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martens: -- Mr. Speaker, this government has never fooled with the plights of the farmers of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martens: -- Mr. Speaker, SARM, Sask Pork Producers, Saskatchewan livestock feeders, National Farmers Union, UGG (United Grain Growers Limited), western Canadian wheat growers, canola growers, the crop insurance board, the stock growers -- SARM made this observation to the Premier on May 8: "I wish to take this opportunity to commend you on the stand you and your fellow western premiers have taken on the matter relating to agriculture financing".

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I have a new question to the Associate Minister of Agriculture. He referred to the letter from SARM under date I believe of May 8, which was chronologically a couple of days after the Premier's television address to the province on May 5, but came before the March 19, 1990 commitment.

You say the commitment here is clearly stated from the Government of Canada for financial assistance. Now my question to the minister is this, Mr. Speaker: what was that commitment? Was it \$500 million cash on the dash? Was it \$250 million plus a provincial of Saskatchewan borrowing from Ottawa? Was it \$250 million cash only from Ottawa? Was it a 50-50 cost share? Or was it an export enhancement program?

Which one of those was the commitment that you were referring to on March 19, 1990? We want the specific answers, because I tell you, Mr. Minister, if you don't tell us, then we're going to conclude that the government never did have a commitment and you were playing politics with the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martens: -- Mr. Speaker, yesterday the city of Regina, through a resolution through their council, indicated to us that the Premier was taking the right and accurate steps in his relationship to the federal government.

I have a letter from Mr. Cholod who's the alderman from the city of Regina, who is the president of SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), indicating that the 500 communities which comprise the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association want to encourage the Premier in his stand against Ottawa and Mr. Mazankowski. As a matter of fact, right at this moment, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is meeting with Mr. Mazankowski and will be having supper later this evening with the Prime Minister.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Associate Minister of Agriculture. I'm pleased, I suppose, that the Premier is in Ottawa meeting with Mr. Mazankowski and Mr. Mulroney, although I suspect that the farmers of Saskatchewan don't have much cause for hope given previous many meetings between the Premier and the Prime Minister to no result.

My question, Mr. Speaker, relates to this, to the Associate Minister of Agriculture. I want to know what that commitment was that you promised the farmers on March 19, 1990. I want to know, did you have that commitment or did you not have that commitment? I want to know how it is that you can explain to this House and to the farmers of this province that we've now got at least five various possible options for the \$500 million, none of which yet of course is translated to money to the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Associate Minister of Agriculture is simply this. I think you blew it, and instead of phoney excuses and more meetings, meetings, meetings, and more inaction and more talk, when are the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan going to get a definitive statement from you that they're going to get this \$500 million cash as they were promised? When are you going to give it to them?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martens: -- Mr. Speaker, the Premier is meeting with the Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa today. He's meeting with the Prime Minister today. And he will outline exactly, as he has outlined in this House, all of the concerns in relation to agriculture that we have said in a resolution on a number of occasions already from this House that have had

unanimous consent from this House to deliver to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Agriculture.

We have stood behind the agriculture in this province all of the time we have been in power, and I can recall, Mr. Speaker, because I was a producer at that time when they were government and I am a producer today, when this government is in place. And I understand and I know it very well that the things that we do in agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan far exceed what they ever did.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a new question to the Associate Minister of Agriculture, and it's going to be very short, very simple but very important. My question to the Minister of Agriculture is simple but important, sir, and it's this. On March 19 -- and I read these words to you -- you said, your government said the following:

My government has received a commitment from the government of Canada that financial assistance will be provided to farmers for spring seeding.

End of quote, full stop, period. Will you tell me and tell this House and tell the farmers of Saskatchewan precisely what was that commitment? Tell us in simple, honest, straightforward terms, what was that commitment? Do you have one?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martens: -- We on the government side of this House, Mr. Speaker, are committed to serve the people of Saskatchewan and the farmers in Saskatchewan, and we will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker. One of the fundamental things that those people over there have found out when they were dealing with the Trudeau government, in the years that they dealt in government and dealing with the kinds of things that they did, they never got anywhere.

In the last five years, Mr. Speaker, we have put together \$6.6 billion in funding from the federal government. And who did it? The Premier of Saskatchewan, the member from Estevan.

And that, Mr. Speaker, was matched one to eight on our part in dealing with the kinds of programs that we could deliver to the people of Saskatchewan. We have fundamentally stood behind our farmers in this province, and we will continue to do that.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, a new question to the Associate Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, I asked you to stop evading the question. I asked you to stop reminiscing about past periods . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You can talk about it if you want.

I am asking you to give us a clear-cut answer to the farmers of the

province of Saskatchewan today in 1990. My question to you, sir, is: specifically, tell me what commitment you had from Ottawa for financial assistance for spring seeding that you put in your Speech from the Throne on March 19. Tell us. The farmers deserve to know, and if you don't give us an answer, then I say the only conclusion that can be made is that you didn't have one and you were fooling with their feelings and with their rightful economic position. What is it?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martens: -- The president of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association said this:

We will be encouraged by the strong message (he's talking about the Premier, Mr. Speaker) . . . be encouraged by the strong message you have sent to the Government of Canada about their responsibility to respond to the farm income crisis and other severe financial problems that we have in Saskatchewan.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the message that we are giving to the Prime Minister today; we're giving to the Minister of Agriculture today. In no uncertain terms, we are delivering that message as firmly and succinctly as we can.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Federal Funding for Seniors

Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of the Family, and I hope that he can be more effective in answering the questions than the previous minister was, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Minister, my New Democratic colleagues in Ottawa yesterday exposed your Conservative government's attempt, your secret attempt to once again attack the stability and the future of our senior citizens. New Horizons grants for Saskatchewan, which were used by hundreds of seniors' groups in this province, are to be cut by some 35 per cent this year, Mr. Minister.

Can the minister tell this House when he first heard of this situation and what steps he has taken to get the federal government to reverse this decision.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Mr. Speaker, I spoke today with officials in my office concerning the alleged . . . concerning the alleged information from Ottawa about New Horizons. The discussion has been, from Ottawa, New Horizons has alleged there may be a possibility of some holding back of some of the money to the senior citizens' grants for New Horizons projects.

Well we would be very concerned, Mr. Speaker, about any cuts from anywhere that would affect the senior citizens in this province. However, if the changes are involving with some accountability as to how this money is spent, Mr. Speaker, then I think it's worth while looking at.

However, Mr. Speaker, our officials in the Department of Seniors' Secretariat have been in touch with Ottawa. There's been a conference call going on virtually all day long on this, Mr. Speaker. And I would hope that perhaps even later today we may have an answer to this.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I'd like to speak about another project that was related to seniors as well . . .

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: -- Mr. Speaker, new question to the minister. Mr. Minister, your job is not to defend the rationale for Ottawa setting aside this money. Your job is to stand up for the interests of Saskatchewan senior citizens.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: -- Mr. Minister, this is just one more of the same from your federal cousins in Ottawa. They have launched a course of total abandonment of Saskatchewan and of our senior citizens and of the west. Saskatchewan seniors are outraged, as we heard on the radio this morning, at this most recent cut-back from Ottawa. And you sit placidly by, doing nothing about it, Mr. Minister. My question is: if it's your job to fight for seniors and cut-backs like this, if it's not your job to do that, what is your job?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity this morning to speak to in the neighbourhood of a hundred senior citizens in North Battleford about the very thing we're talking about here today, as well as all the other seniors' projects and seniors' initiatives that this government has brought forward since 1982.

And the seniors of Saskatchewan -- this was the action committee of Saskatchewan, seniors' action committee I was meeting with, Mr. Speaker -- said that the seniors of today in Saskatchewan are better off now than they've ever been, Mr. Speaker, because of the support that this government's giving them.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Mr. Speaker, let me get back to the original question. My department is concerned about the possibility of a hold-back of New Horizons funds from Ottawa. But that's the case, Mr. Speaker, we would certainly strongly talk to Ottawa about that. And as I say, our officials are speaking to them today about that very thing, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. New question. Mr. Minister, your PC federal government tried a few years back to de-index

pensions. Seniors across Canada, joined by the New Democratic Party, fought that one to the ground, Mr. Minister, and seniors will never forget that. You people sat on the sidelines and did nothing.

In it's 1989 budget the federal government brought in a tax-back scheme for pensions which was a unique tax burden to seniors, Mr. Minister. Again seniors were outraged. We on this side of the House decried it and you as minister did absolutely nothing at that time when you could have done something about it.

Now my question is to you: how long are you going to stick up for the interests of Brian Mulroney rather than the interests of senior citizens in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Martin: -- Mr. Speaker, I will continue to stick up for the interests of the senior citizens of this province. I will continue to consult with them as I do on almost a daily basis, Mr. Speaker, and look after the interests of the senior citizens of this province as this government has done so well since 1982.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Tendering Process for WESTBRIDGE

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday notice was taken of five questions that were asked by the opposition with regard to WESTBRIDGE.

Mr. Speaker, first of all the question was the tendering policy. The tendering policy has been consistent since this government took office in 1982. And, Mr. Speaker, unlike under the NDP, SaskCOMP, Mr. Speaker, was changed into a corporation that had to compete for government contracts, Mr. Speaker -- a rather dramatic change from the past practice of the New Democratic Party. And WESTBRIDGE continues that practice of tendering for contracts.

Mr. Speaker, the next question dealt with the matter of the acquisition by WESTBRIDGE of the assets of the Mercury Group, that the NDP say were acquired for roughly twice the valuation of the firm, Mr. Speaker. Let me indicate that the statement made by the hon. member is totally false, and that documents were tabled in this House, Mr. Speaker, on June 22, 1989 -- and I say this to the press because I will have a response to them -- tabled, Mr. Speaker, in a volume that thick with all the valuations; public documents, Mr. Speaker, sent to the hon. member from Regina yesterday, Mr. Speaker, who asked questions yesterday. Included in that, Mr. Speaker, were the valuations and the valuations done by the independent evaluator, Richardson Greenshields, setting out, Mr. Speaker, what the valuations were and the valuations as set out by the independent evaluation or the amount for which the . . . were the amounts that were in fact paid.

So true value was paid for, not double as alleged by the NDP -- a false statement, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, they then made -- and this is the third question dealing with a valuation for Leasecorp Western -- and they went on to say, Mr. Speaker, that the assets were 59,000 and that the government or the people paid several million.

Mr. Speaker, again, in public documents tabled in this Assembly nearly one year ago, the valuations were specifically laid out and given to the opposition and to the public and to the press, Mr. Speaker. And those valuations made it clear that what was paid by WESTBRIDGE was the true valuation, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

There may have been 3, 4, 5, or even 10 questions, however, I cannot give an inordinate amount of time to ministers to answer questions that they have taken notice of. I have given you quite a lot of time, quite frankly, and I'm going to give you just a little bit more time, but I'm not going to be able to allow you to go on at any length in answering your questions. I'll give you just a little more time.

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that the opposition and the public has the truth, Mr. Speaker. The information on the merger requested yesterday again is in public documents and again in the prospectus.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP were comparing the prospectus amount of tangible assets opposed to the intangible assets, which are valued independently, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: -- Order. It seems that the hon. member is going to go on at great length. I must go to the next question.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- Order. The hon. member . . . order. The hon. member has engaged in the use of unparliamentary language and I ask him now to withdraw the remark and to apologize.

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the remark and apologize; I should have said deliberately misled.

The Speaker: -- Order, order. Now the hon. member who's been a member for . . . order, who's been a member here for a long time, knows that he is, quite frankly, playing with the rules. I ask him once more to withdraw and apologize and sit down without any further comment.

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Mr. Speaker, I again withdraw and apologize, and indicate to the Leader-Post that I want an . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- I'm going to ask the Minister of Justice . . . order. I'm going to ask the Minister of Justice for the final time, for the final time to rise in his place, to withdraw and apologize unequivocally.

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- I apologize, Mr. Speaker, I thought I had apologized unequivocally. I then made my remarks to the Leader-Post and their sloppy coverage, Mr. Speaker, and I want an apology. I do apologize . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The Speaker: -- Now the Minister of Justice well knows the rule of this House. And I'm just going to once more draw to his attention that if he does not comply with the request of the Speaker, which is now plainly that he rise and apologize and withdraw his statement, I will be forced to name him.

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- I have apologized unequivocally three times and I do it again, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, I want to address a question to the Minister responsible for WESTBRIDGE Computer Corporation, the Minister of Justice, and I want to say in my preamble that it's interesting how the minister grandstands and tries to cut off question period and cover up the very issue here of evaluations of corporations that were purchased by WESTBRIDGE.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Lingenfelter: -- Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is this. The appraisals that were done by the corporation and submitted to the exchange, the Toronto Stock Exchange, are here and were tabled. And they indicate very clearly that the valuation of these companies amounted to \$104,000. You paid, the WESTBRIDGE Corporation paid \$20.5 million for those assets -- 200 times the valuation quoted here in the appraisal, in the report that was done, the prospectus by WESTBRIDGE to the Toronto exchange.

I say to you, Mr. Minister, come clean, quit grandstanding and quit trying to cover up the facts in the Assembly and tell us why. Explain why you paid 20.5 million for assets worth and valued at \$104,000.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lane: -- Again, and I'm going to quote from the prospectus, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to quote from the same prospectus that this hon. member, with the collusion of some of the press yesterday, had these public documents. In fact the province received, at page 28, \$51 million not \$104,000 as stated by the NDP -- \$51 million, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the valuations that they're talking about are certain stated assets not the intangible assets; that is also made reference to in the prospectus, Mr. Speaker, in the valuations tabled. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, there are strong evidence in the valuations, Mr. Speaker, that in fact they were even valued higher. We got a better deal, Mr. Speaker, than what the NDP said.

Mr. Speaker, not \$104,000 as the NDP said, but 51 . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Motions for Interim Supply

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. I would ask the Minister of Finance to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my left is Art Wakabayashi, the deputy minister of Finance; behind him, Keith Laxdal, associate deputy minister of Finance; to his right, John Wright, associate deputy minister of Finance, and to my right, Bill Jones, assistant deputy minister of Finance. Be it:

Resolved that a sum not exceeding \$761,792,600 be granted to Her Majesty on account for the 12 months ending March 31, 1991.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I have a few questions directed to the Minister of Finance on a matter of urgent public importance, questions which I might say, Mr. Chairman, I'm sure you'll agree with me were not adequately answered in question period either today by the Associate Minister of Agriculture or in previous question periods by the various ministers of Agriculture that this government has installed in office.

And by way of backgrounder, Mr. Chairman, I want to paint the picture to the ministers opposite and the members of the committee, the situation with respect to the \$500 million cash promised for farmers in Saskatchewan made jointly and severally by the provincial government here in Regina and by the federal government in Ottawa, as it relates to the recent statements made by the federal Minister of Agriculture.

Now, Mr. Chairman, this matter all arose actually some time in late November 1989, when Mr. Garf Stevenson of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool took the leadership on behalf of the farm community and argued that there needed to be \$500 million cash injection into the farming community, given the economic plight of the farm community. Some some several weeks after that

a variety of political people, including the Premier, including myself, including the Liberal leader, including farm organizations, joined with Mr. Stevenson in calling for the \$500 million.

The next step chronologically, as I understand it, Mr. Chairman -- I'm sure the minister will correct me if I'm in error -- the next major chronological development is a television address on March 5, 1990 by the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture on this urgent matter of expenditure and farm aid policy, both on a federal and provincial basis.

I'm going to take the time of the House, Mr. Chairman, to read to you a somewhat lengthy excerpt of the Premier's television address, but I think it's important to cast into context the point that I want to make. I've read it many times, and unfortunately it doesn't get any better with the reading; it still remains the same.

So, Mr. Chairman, here's the part that I want to particularly refer to the Minister of Finance. The Premier said, amongst other things on March 5, the following, quote. This is the Premier speaking:

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 Canada needs a \$1 billion contingency fund to keep us from become casualties in subsidies wars.

He says . . . Mr. Devine says . . . Sorry. The Premier says:

Thousands of farmers have to have cash for spring seeding. There is no disputing this fact. We agreed to jointly fight the subsidy wars 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.

Continuing, the Premier said, quote:

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.

And then he ends up this portion of the address by saying, quote:

I came back from Ottawa with a mutual agreement to work out the farm financial crisis.

Now note in the March 5 address there are three or four crises identified. One is the grains war. But one, undoubtedly, is the \$500 million. And the conclusion of the statement by the Minister of Agriculture, Premier, is on March 5: "I came back from Ottawa with a mutual agreement to work out the farm financial crisis."

The next chronological event of importance, Mr. Speaker, is two weeks later, the opening of this legislature, March 19, 1990, and on page 4 of

the Speech from the Throne, which I have a copy here in front of me, Mr. Chairman, under the heading: "Protection for Saskatchewan farmers" the following paragraph is written and read in this House. I heard it, the following words:

My government has received a commitment from the Government of Canada that financial assistance will be provided to farmers for spring seeding. Ottawa has also agreed to establish a mechanism to help counteract the international grain subsidy wars. My ministers will press the federal government to fulfil these promises as soon as possible and in a way that ensures fairness and adequate assistance.

(1445)

Now you'll see why I read that, Mr. Chairman, because chronologically on March 5 he says, these are the issues and we agreed to sit down and talk about them.

On March 19 the Premier reports to the House as the government's agenda for this current session, that on one issue he has gotten a promise. In fact he uses the word "promise" and then he uses on another occasion the word "commitment." And I repeat the relevant words: "My government has received a commitment from the Government of Canada that financial assistance will be provided to farmers for spring seeding."

On the international wars there's a mechanism for monitoring and for inputting into that matter.

And as we know, there were subsequent resolutions by the House which were endorsed unanimously with respect to the \$500 million. There were subsequently a number of trips by the Prime Minister and the Premier meeting in Ottawa, all of which led, I think, a reasonable farmer and a person to conclude that shortly after March 19, 1990, the commitment to which this government said it had, the promise which was made by this government, by the Prime Minister to the Premier would be realized, that after a few trips the commitment and promise, those being very weighty, important words, would be realized and would be effected.

Today, on May 9, we don't have any hint of what assistance and what financial contribution, if any, might be coming from Regina with respect to that one vital issue of the \$500 million cash. Not at all, Mr. Chairman. Today we're considering interim supply and in the consideration of the next two-twelfths expenditure of money, we're going to be now considering whether or not any of that money has been earmarked to share on a provincial-federal basis the \$500 million cash or whether none of it is earmarked or what exactly the arrangements are with respect to this commitment.

Now, Mr. Chairman, in my question period remarks to the minister in charge, I said that the farmers were being . . . could conclude that they were being deceived by the government opposite. By virtue of the fact that nobody, at least the minister has not given me an answer specifically, as to what that word commitment meant, and so in order to ensure that no hasty

accusations which may be erroneous are made in this area, I think it's important for the minister to tell the House on a update, especially since it might have a financial implication for us of some moment, what it is exactly -- and I refer the Minister of Finance to March 19 -- what exactly was the nature of the commitment that you and your government had, exactly the nature of the commitment. And you might while you explain the commitment to me, tell me when it was to be paid out and how it was to be paid out. What was the exact nature of the commitment and the promise that you referred to as a result of the Premier's television address on March 5, and more importantly, or as importantly, the Speech from the Throne word where you told us, you gave us your word that these promises and commitments were here? What commitment was it, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, relative to assistance for Saskatchewan farmers and commitments from the Saskatchewan government, and more importantly from the federal government, to help Saskatchewan farmers and farm families in our rural communities, there is absolutely no question that our Premier has led the charge.

Not only has he led the charge, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, and members of this caucus and members of the opposition caucus, not only has our Premier led the charge on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers and farm families, but he has carried a tremendous, heavy weight, Mr. Chairman, because he too has led the charge on behalf of Manitoba farmers and Alberta farmers.

Indeed, Mr. Chairman, our Premier is the chief spokesperson, not only for Saskatchewan as it relates to agricultural issues, but indeed for all of western Canada, and I am proud of him because of that, Mr. Speaker. And I am proud of him because, Mr. Chairman, just as in the past, he has delivered. Whether it's been drought programs or livestock programs or crop insurance programs, he delivered for Saskatchewan farmers and western Canadian farmers again.

He is the chief spokesperson for this province, for western Canada, and indeed, Mr. Speaker -- and in a way this is a sad comment on the federal agricultural leadership -- our Premier has indeed become as well the chief national spokesperson for agriculture. When you look at the charge that he has led in dealing with Europe and the U.S.A. and the trade wars, he has been the chief spokesperson on the international stage as well to try and bring some sense into that international agri-food arena that defies logic, Mr. Chairman. This Premier got the commitment from Ottawa when others could not get it.

Yes, Mr. Chairman, the size of the commitment was somewhat less than we would have wished in terms of the spring seeding component -- \$500 million. We wanted \$500 million for Saskatchewan, not for western Canada. But having said that, I'm pleased that he got the \$500 million and that the federal government recognized that 90 per cent of that should go to the grains and oil-seeds sector because that's where the most hurt is. I'm happy that they acknowledged that.

The sum is lower than we would have wished. It's lower than this legislature in a joint resolution, one that was passed by members on this side of the House as well as the opposition members. And we appreciate their support and coming with our Premier to defend our Premier in Ottawa on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers, and we ask for their continued support.

Our Premier has had tremendous back-up and input and guidance from all of the producer groups across Saskatchewan -- all of them, Mr. Chairman. We have appreciated the support the NDP have given our Premier, and we hope they will stand behind him as we finish the negotiations.

Having said all of that, Mr. Chairman, no one single program is going to make all the challenges that face agriculture go away. In fact, Mr. Chairman, I tend to still be of the view that an inch of rain and good wheat prices will do more than any legislative program can ever do in this legislature or in any other legislature or parliament across Canada. And our farmers know that.

And I said in the budget speech, Mr. Speaker, I said in the budget speech that all our farmers want is a fair return based on quality of the product, not having to worry about the size of somebody else's treasury.

And I said in that same speech, Mr. Chairman, on March 29 that this government, the Saskatchewan government, has responded in a fair and reasonable way. We announced the spring seeding program to make sure the crop would get in the ground and to make sure that farmers would have the necessary cash to buy the farm inputs, and not only buy the farm inputs but to have that operating loan at a low rate of interest, ten and three-quarters per cent.

I said then that night, this government has responded in a fair and reasonable way; the federal government must also keep its commitment. We have since obtained the dollars, \$500 million. It's less than we would have liked. We will not stop there, because in this legislature we asked for more than that. Yes, we said, we need money to get the crop in the ground; we will need money to get the crop off. And as well, the federal government has an obligation to take the international trade wars head on.

This is not a fight between Saskatchewan and the United States. This is not a fight between Saskatchewan and France or Saskatchewan and Italy. This is a trade war fight between the U.S. and the members of the EEC (European Economic Community), and Saskatchewan and Canada is getting caught unfairly in the middle of that cross-fire, Mr. Chairman.

No one program will do it. We are thankful that they have put the money on the table. We would ask them to send the cheque as quickly as possible. And as the Associate Minister of Agriculture said earlier in question period today, our Premier is this very day meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister. And, Mr. Speaker, our Premier has a good track record. I'm not saying today that he'll come back with the cheque in his pocket, but certainly the money will be forthcoming.

The final point I would like to make here, Mr. Speaker, because really what

he is questioning is our Premier's credibility. I say to you absolutely, the member for Saskatoon South, I say to the member from Saskatoon South, he has credibility. He has delivered for Saskatchewan farmers in the past; he got the commitment this time. The money will be forthcoming. And I say that's a lot more credibility than we see from the NDP opposition leader when it comes to farm policy. How can you be credible as a farm leader, as a Leader of the Opposition when it comes to farm policy, when in the middle of March he sent to our Premier a letter saying, dear Mr. Premier, this is the NDP farm platform. Step number two says we should have a spring seeding loan guarantee program.

The Premier looked at that and I looked at that, and during our deliberations we were considering that very program. We fully expected on budget night, in conjunction with all the farm groups who had had their input, that this would be well received by the opposition. And what did we get from the opposition? No sooner had I sat down in my seat, Mr. Chairman, and the critic, the NDP opposition, stood up and said, no, the spring seeding program is no good. And it was almost identical to what the Leader of the Opposition had asked for two weeks earlier.

So I say to you, Mr. Chairman, I say to the members of the NDP opposition, look into your souls. Look into your souls. I question the credibility of the Leader of the Opposition when it comes to farm policy. How can you be credible when in the middle of March you say, bring in a spring seeding program, and when we bring it in, you say it is no good?

I'll tell you, there is only one person that the farmers in this province question when it comes to credibility in farm policy. There is only one person they question in this province, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to genuineness and sincerity and a real desire to help farmers rather than some kind of partisan showboating by the Roman god of Janus. There is only one person that the people in this province question when it comes to farm policy because of that cute-by-half politics that's merely looking to position themselves for farm votes. There is only one person's credibility in this province that is questioned when it comes to farm policy, and that's the Leader of the Opposition.

He should look into his soul, put behind him this politics. What the people of the province want and what the farmers of the province want is something else I addressed in this budget, Mr. Chairman.

When I said at the close of this speech, March 29, I said, I almost begged, Mr. Chairman, what the farmers want is farm policy, not farm politics. Can't we put this aside? Can't he put that aside and work with our Premier to get the best deal possible for Saskatchewan and western Canadian and indeed all Canadian farmers?

There is the man who has the crisis of credibility when it comes to farm policy. This caucus here, and I hope that Leader of the Opposition and that NDP caucus, I hope that they, along with all the farm groups of Saskatchewan, will stand behind our Premier. These are difficult times, Mr. Chairman. I ask you, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, put aside this cute-by-half partisan politics; join with our Premier; stand behind our

Premier on behalf of all of our farmers.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I don't what the Minister of Finance got his shirt in a knot tail for on a simple question about what the commitment was, because he obviously did, and in doing so, attempted to deflect the question. But I can assure him that he's not going to so easily or readily deflect the question.

And I don't say this by way of any animosity. But I tell you, Mr. Minister, we're going to be here for a very long time until we get some specific answers about what you, your Premier, and your government meant when you used the words in an official government document: commitment.

And I'm going to ask that question again in a moment. And I'm going to ask that question in the context of this March 19, 1990 throne from the speech address. And just to focus the minister's thinking a little more clearly, lest he fly off the handle again, I want you to look at page 4 of the printed text of the Speech from the Throne under the heading "Protection for Saskatchewan farmers" dated March 19, 1990, and I draw your attention to the following sentence:

My government has received a commitment from the Government of Canada that financial assistance will be provided to farmers for spring seeding.

I want you to tell me and the farmers now what that commitment was that you received from Ottawa for farmers, financial assistance for spring seeding. What was it on March 19, 1990?

(1500)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- As I said earlier, Mr. Chairman, our Premier has led the way in terms of getting help from Ottawa. The amount that Ottawa has laid on the table, at least to deal with the immediate cash problem, is half a million dollars. It's less than we would have liked, less than our farmers would have liked -- a half a billion dollars, sorry, Mr. Chairman. That was what we . . . we were of the view, other farmers were of the view that was what we needed for Saskatchewan, not for all of western Canada or indeed all of Canada. It's less than we would have liked.

Now we would like Ottawa to put that cheque in the mail to our Saskatchewan farmers so we can get on with step two, an equally important step, which is dealing with the international agri-food trade war and the crisis that that's creating on the price side, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Romanow: -- I again am referring the minister to this question and to the sentence. I would say, Mr. Chairman, and the minister should note, that the March 19, 1990 official government document does not say, my government is urging a commitment from the Government of Canada for financial assistance; it doesn't say, my government is asking or expects or hopes. It says, my government has received a commitment -- in the past tense -- received a commitment. It doesn't talk about leading the charge,

which your Premier is not doing, never did. It is being led by the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I don't care about my credibility; we'll let the voters decide about that. But I tell you Mr. Stevenson of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, weeks before any politician thought of this issue, raised it, not your Premier or not your Minister of Agriculture officials. And I'll give them the credit before I will the Premier. Leaving that as an aside . . .

An Hon. Member: -- That's typical of the problem, not the solution.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well typical of the problem is you people trying to put your Premier on some sort of a pedestal. He might be a good Minister of Agriculture or a bad Minister of Agriculture. I have my thoughts about that. But your statement is absolutely incredible. It lacks any kind of credibility and that is irrelevant to the issue.

I am saying to this question, Mr. Minister, the words in your Speech from the Throne say not that you're fighting, not that your mighty Premier is fighting, not that you hope, not that you anticipate, not that you expect. You say you have received a commitment -- in past tense, full stop, period.

And you're not satisfying me when I ask the question. You say you received the commitment. I asked the question, what was that commitment? You're not satisfying me by giving me a great big speech about the Premier leading the charge. If you want to give it to me again, go ahead, give it to me again. I am going to ask you again and again, what was the commitment that you and your Premier and your government received from Ottawa on this \$500 million, according to your own words?

So one more time, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I ask the minister with the greatest of respect, tell us what was the nature of the commitment you had on March 19, 1990 that obligated you to put in the Speech from the Throne the words, "My government has received a commitment . . ."? What was it?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, our Premier got the commitment. It is less than this legislature, less than he would have wished for, and less than the Saskatchewan farmers would have wished for, at least in so far as dealing with the immediate cash situation. We haven't dealt with export enhancement programs and those kinds of things.

Our Premier got the commitment. It's 500 million for across Canada, 90 per cent to the grains and oil-seed producers at least recognizes that that's the area of the most hurt. And I wish the Premier well in his further discussions with the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister that he's undertaking yet today.

And all I ask the Leader of the Opposition is when the Premier is looking for help, why can't he bring himself to help? Why can't he put his own political self-interest behind him and get to work with our Premier on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers?

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, the minister asked me a question and I'll answer. I can't get behind this Premier because I don't know where this Premier stands on this issue. The Premier tells us on March 19, he has a commitment. I get behind him on that, thinking full well there's a commitment. I endorsed the motion unanimously, thinking there's a commitment. I support Mr. Stevenson; I support the Premier. He says he's got a commitment, there's a commitment, and we think that's what the position of the government is. But here it is, two months later, and we find out that there is not commitment. We find out that there are variations of that commitment.

Now the minister came close to answering my question. He flirted around the edges of it, but he never of course answered it. I want to ask the minister, you said in response to my question that there was a commitment but it wasn't quite as high as had been expected. Are you telling me that on March 19 -- and note carefully the words that I use and the dates that I use -- are you telling me that on March 19, 1990, in the Speech from the Throne, the commitment that you referred to there was a commitment substantially less than \$500 million from Ottawa and that you knew the same?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, the Premier got the commitment. It's going to work out in the order of something around \$250 million for Saskatchewan farmers, based on 90 per cent of it going to the grains and oil-seeds sector. As I said earlier, it's less than we might have wished for, that part of the assistance that we think should be forthcoming from the federal government.

Mr. Romanow: -- So, Mr. Chairman, the minister is telling me we'll end this statement or question with a question mark. Is the minister telling the House, and telling me, that as of March 19, 1990 the commitment that the Premier and the government had was a commitment of \$250 million approximately from Ottawa, cash to the farmers? I understand the Minister says it was not enough, not quite hoped for, but that that is what the commitment was and the reference to the word "commitment" meant on March 19, 1990. Am I correct in that?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chairman, rather, the Premier has got the commitment from the federal government on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers and indeed other farmers across Canada. It was less than they would have hoped for. We are happy that they recognize that the grains and oil-seed sector had the most hurt and now we would hope that they would send the cheque to the Saskatchewan farmers so that they can use that to alleviate some of the cash flow problems that exist in that sector today, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I'm going to ask the Minister again for clarification. Is the commitment approximately \$250 million from Ottawa to Regina as of March 19, 1990? And if the answer is yes, because I think you said yes in the second to last question to me, my complementary question or supplementary question is, if it is \$250 million, why is it that in the Speech from the Throne, your government, your minister, your Premier of the province of Saskatchewan did not alert the farmers and this House that the

commitment which he received from Ottawa was insufficient, that it fell far short of the \$500 million which the president of the Wheat Pool led the charge on, which other farm leaders led the charge on, that the Premier supports?

Why was it that in the Speech from the Throne there was no identification that the \$250 million fell far short of the \$500 million that everybody expected and this government by implication promised? Why was that not the case?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, as I've said before, the Premier got the commitment, he has a very good track record when it comes, much to the dismay of the opposition leader, when it comes to dealing with Canada's government on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers.

He got the commitment, as I said earlier. It was less than we would have liked for this part of what we think has to be a multi-part package for farmers across Canada. We're happy that they at least acknowledged the grains and oil-seed sector has the most hurt. Based on our calculations and I think Ottawa's calculation, it looks like that should mean something in the order of 225 to \$250 million flowing into Saskatchewan farmers' pockets based on the discussions that have taken place on the basis of the commitment from the federal government to date.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman was the commitment that you refer to, Mr. Minister, \$250 million approximately from Ottawa payable to Saskatchewan on the condition that Saskatchewan would match that \$250 million on a dollar for dollar basis? Was that the commitment on or about March 19, 1990?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, as I said earlier, the Premier got the commitment from Ottawa. It turned out to be less than we would have expected; we're still grateful for that. Our Premier will continue to work at that and other issues facing the farm sector.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, again I guess we're going to have to settle in on this because we're talking about credibility. Forget about mine for the moment, we're talking about yours now.

And I'm just telling you, Mr. Minister, you're going to have to tell us what that commitment on or about March 19, 1990 was. I did not use the words: "My government has received a commitment from the Government of Canada". You did, your government did.

I'm asking you one more time, was the commitment that you refer to on March 19, 1990 a commitment of \$250 million from Ottawa, cash, contingent upon a dollar-for-dollar matching program from your treasury, the Minister of Finance, and the provincial Government of Saskatchewan. Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Our Premier, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers and indeed all farmers across Canada, got the commitment from the federal government to help out with the cash flow problems in that sector. The sum is less than we would have liked. At the same time it did recognize where the most hurt was and we're hopeful that the Premier will

be successful in convincing Ottawa to get those cheques in the mail as soon as possible, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I say the minister is being evasive and I'm going to pursue him. I want to ask the minister . . . and I'll wait until he and the Associate Minister of Health finish their conversation. It's okay, Mr. Chairman, I can wait if you can, sir, and the ministers can. I think it would be a good idea to hold cabinet meetings in the cabinet room and not in the Legislative Assembly. However, I'm thankful for any place where these cabinet ministers hold meetings. It's good to know they're consulting with each other. So I'll wait. This is a . . . There are a number of firsts, all right, in politics in this legislature, and this is got to be one of the first. But nevertheless as hard as it is for the minister to even give some measure of respect to the Leader of the Opposition, I'm going to try again.

And my question to the Minister of Agriculture is this . . . Minister of Finance: did you have on March 19, 1990, any dollar figures from Ottawa or any commitments with respect to dollars from Ottawa pertaining to spring seeding on or about March 19 at the time of the Speech from the Throne? If so, I want to know what that commitment was.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I can only say, Mr. Chairman, again, that our Premier got the commitment from Ottawa to help the Saskatchewan farmer -- Canadian farmers as it turned out. I think the other ministers of Agriculture from the adjoining provinces and their premiers appreciate the lead spokesperson role our Premier has taken on this issue. The Premier got the commitment.

As I said earlier, it was somewhat less than we would all have wished for. We're grateful for it. It's going to be targeted to the area with the biggest hard grains and oil-seed sector. And now we just wish they would send the cheque, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture, when did he receive, your Premier, this commitment of which you speak? Was it on or before March 19, 1990 or was it after March 1990? And if it was after March 1990, are you referring to the \$250 million from Ottawa on a cost-shared basis with the provinces as the commitment which you say is somewhat less?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- The Premier got the commitment from Ottawa. Subsequent negotiations with all ministers of Agriculture involved, I think, led to the announcement at the ministers of Agriculture meeting that the Premier was at. It led to Mr. Mazankowski then announcing that he would put a half a billion dollars on the table, and I said what our view is of that amount and how it's to be distributed earlier.

(1515)

Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, is the minister tell me that your government, Mr. Minister, you sitting around the provincial cabinet table writing this official government document, the Speech from the Throne, that

you put in the words, knowing full well that they were going to be publicized province-wide to the farmers and the farm communities of this province, that you put in the words, my government has received a commitment from the Government of Canada. Are you telling me that you put those words in on March 19, 1990 without having anything in your pocket except a vague, generalized statement of commitment by the Ottawa people, that there were no dollars attached to that? Is that the position you've taken?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- As I said earlier, our Premier got the commitment, the dollar figure at the end of the day, I suppose in what we might consider round one, was less than we would have wished. But having said that, at least it's targeted, at least a majority of that money, 90 per cent of it will be targeted at the right sector.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, when did the minister and the Premier get the commitment and would he table the correspondence from the federal people which describe that commitment?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I can only repeat, Mr. Chairman. The Premier, on behalf of not only this province but other provinces, got the commitment from the federal government. Having said that, we know the farmers don't have their cheque in the mail yet but we're hopeful that it's coming and coming shortly.

The dollar amount that Mr. Mazankowski was prepared apparently to put on the table for this for farmers across Canada was a half a billion. That announcement was made at the end of the ministers of Agriculture, joint federal-provincial meeting. I'm not sure of the date of that, but that is, if my memory serves me correctly, that's when Mazankowski made the announcement of the amount.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, the minister is being evasive, I repeat again, and I might add not very cleverly so. He says the federal government delivered a commitment. He does not tell me when that commitment was delivered. He refuses, or at least ignores, to answer my request for a tabling of the letter from Mazankowski and the federal people describing that letter; I will come back to that point.

How in the world can the minister stand in this House and say that he has a commitment when as of this date, Mr. Chairman, May 9, 1990, we have newspaper stories -- I have a copy here in front of me from the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix -- headline of which says, "Provinces offered farm aid deal." As of May 9 in this story there are two alternative "commitments" that Mr. Mazankowski's offering to you people here in Regina and to the farmers. One is \$250 million cash from Ottawa but only if you borrow from Ottawa the remaining \$250 million to make up for the grand total of 500 million.

The other option is the \$500 million export subsidy program if you don't follow this plan, where Ottawa will use the \$500 million for export subsidy. Now that's of May 9.

How in the world can the minister opposite, and will you please explain to

me, can you use the word commitment in the context in which you have, given the fact that as of this very moment as we speak, in fact as the question and answer period in question period revealed, your Premier is down in Ottawa looking at these various options and so-called "commitments"?

Look it, isn't the truth of the matter that you never had any kind of a commitment and you still don't have a commitment and it's being negotiated by the provincial government. The very thing that you're pleading with me to give some unanimity and support to your Premier, it's being negotiated right now. There is no commitment, isn't that the truth of the matter and there never was one on March 19, 1990.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- No, the hon. member is incorrect, Mr. Chairman. The Premier got the commitment. The dollars less than we would like. There's been discussion and negotiation with the Premier, with other provinces, other agriculture ministers, relative to some conditions that the federal government placed on that money, conditions that we disagree with.

All our Premier wants is what the Saskatchewan farmers want. We laid that out fairly clearly here in this legislature. I know the NDP had raised the resolution with our House Leader. We were of the view it was a bit too narrow; we expanded that to become a bit more comprehensive on all of the things that we thought need to be addressed in agriculture.

We were thankful for the opposition's support of that resolution and the unanimous support that resolution enjoyed. I think that sends a clear signal and did send a clear signal to Ottawa. We're hopeful that those negotiations will be concluded shortly and that the cheques will be in the mail, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I come back to this to the minister. Note the words very carefully, Mr. Chairman, of what the minister has said. He is trying to ride two horses at least, going in opposite directions and maybe more -- a very difficult job but only this Minister of Finance can accomplish that. I commend him for his dexterity . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, he says he's got his cowboy hat on right, but I think right now, if he walked anywhere with a cowboy hat in the province of Saskatchewan he probably would find that the farmers of Saskatchewan wouldn't support that view.

But let me ask the Minister of Finance this. Let me ask the Minister of Finance this. And just listen to the question for a moment, Mr. Minister. And I ask you because you're clever, by half, unfortunately for your government and for your side. Listen carefully to what you're saying to me, because I'm going to be using these transcript answers very carefully, Mr. Minister.

You said to me in the last answer that your Premier received a commitment but the dollars were less. I'll stop there. That's the effect of the answer.

And then you went on to describe that the dollars less of the \$250 million, the proposition that you describe, obviously that's the less part of what

the commitment was.

Clearly my conclusion is that you say you had a commitment from Ottawa for something more than \$250 million. You had, as I interpret your words, a commitment from Ottawa, thus you put it in the March 19 Speech from the Throne, a commitment of \$500 million, or some larger amount than 250 million in any event -- cash on the dash.

That being the case, are you saying that Mr. Mazankowski and Mr. Mulroney broke their word and broke their commitment, broke their deal with the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, as I said earlier, the Premier got a commitment, one that I think enjoyed the support not only of this House, but as well, of other prairie Agriculture ministers. It was less than we would have wished. And so in that regard I suppose one could say the federal government -- in fact I think it's safe to say we would say they're reneging on what should be their entire commitment.

Because as I said right at the outset, there's no one single program that's going to address all the challenges that farmers face. We saw this as part of a multi-part program. We were greatly disturbed when it comes to reneging on what we think was a great opportunity to take the second step, if you like. We were greatly disappointed when they announced, Mr. Mayer announced on behalf of the wheat board here a week or so ago, the lower initial grain prices.

We think that was a golden opportunity, as our Premier has said, to really show . . . Canada could have shown the Europeans and the U.S. that we're not going to be intimidated by this war, being caught up in this cross-fire; that they were prepared to stand up with their treasury against these other treasuries that are taking part in the international agri-food trade war.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, this is disturbing indeed to hear that the federal Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Mazankowski, and the Prime Minister of Canada . . . Leaving politics aside for the moment, people in responsible offices have made commitments which were reneged upon, made commitments to our Premier but reneged upon.

And of course we'll be very anxious to see if any Member of Parliament tomorrow or so soon thereafter in the House of Commons will inquire of the Prime Minister and Mr. Mazankowski why it was that they reneged on the \$500 million cash on the dash which you say was made to the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan. Because that indeed is a very, very damning indictment of people in responsibility who have offered and made a commitment, verbally or otherwise, but have gone back on their word, which is basically what you've said. And we'll be pursuing that in the next few days in advance.

But I want to come back to another question in this regard. Was this commitment which you had, to which the Prime Minister allegedly, and the Minister of Agriculture Canada, broke the deal, broke their words, was this

a written commitment forwarded in writing to the Minister of Agriculture or to you, sir, as Minister of Finance, or to the Premier in his capacity as Premier? Was it in a verbal form? What precisely was the form of that commitment?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well the details, written, verbal, or telex or facsimile or otherwise, those kinds of details would be better asked of the Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, again I really tell the House and you, sir, Mr. Chairman, we want to deal with business in a dispatchful proper way. And it's not my job -- I've got other things to do outside of this Legislative Assembly this afternoon -- not my job to prolong the services here. But I tell you this is a major issue.

And we are talking about credibility and I would suspect that if the minister opposite is going to protect the credibility of his Premier and his minister, the easiest way to do that would be to table the documentation which would support the statements which he makes in defence of what the provincial government has done. There's nothing to fear, nothing to hide. If Ottawa has made a commitment and has reneged on that commitment, a revelation of the relevant documents would only buttress the Premier's position, I'm sure, and probably would get us more inclined to be charitable to the current machinations and the current thrashing about which is going on all the way from Portage la Prairie to Ottawa.

So I say to the Minister of Finance, in the interests of preserving the credibility of the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan, and given the fact that you, sir, are a very senior minister in the government and given the fact, sir, that the debate about potential provincial funds be forced to be paid by Regina to Ottawa and therefore this has a very big dollar component to you, I want you to table those documents now which will verify the fact that Ottawa, the Prime Minister, and Mr. Mazankowski have gone back on their word, and the commitment was something, in your words, less than had been expected.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, I have tabled in this House what I've had to say on this, and I'll reread it and reiterate it for the hon. member. On March 29 I said in this House:

Saskatchewan cannot take on the treasuries of the United States or the European Economic Community by itself -- we cannot go alone . . . (This government has) responded in . . . a fair and reasonable way . . .

. . . The federal government must also keep its commitment. The Government of Canada has a responsibility to our farmers. All members of this Assembly have called upon the federal government to assist farmers with the cost of spring seeding and to provide compensation for current unfair prices. We fully expect the federal government to honour its commitment to Saskatchewan farmers and provide assistance.

That's what I said in this House, and I stand by that, Mr. Chairman. And when it comes to the question of credibility and tabling documents that he,

who's a long-standing member of this House, would think that I might have between the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture and the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture for Canada, I say to you, Mr. Chairman, that is a prime example of petty politics.

That member has been in this House long enough to know -- and he can correct me if I'm wrong, I challenge him to correct me if I'm wrong in fact -- you've been in this House, you've been in this committee several times . . . and I think I've hit a nerve. I think I've hit a nerve, Mr.

DChairman, I've hit a nerve amongst some of the members of the NDP caucus because they know I'm right. They know that this is nothing more than simple, petty politics suggesting to the members of the committee that I would likely come to the House with a truck load of the Premier's correspondence that probably goes out in any given week.

You know, Mr. Chairman, and I know that that is as shallow as that member's credibility. When it comes to credibility, I reiterate, what kind of a credible spokesperson for the farm community would stand up in mid-March and say, we need a spring seeding program, Mr. Premier. And I'll table that letter if you want. I'll find that one. I'll table that letter that says, the platform of the New Democratic Party of Saskatchewan and the Leader of the Opposition says as part of that platform, short term and long term, we should have a spring seeding program.

Now if that's the case, I ask the Leader of the Opposition, why did your Finance critic, the hon. member for Regina Centre, why did the member for Regina Centre, why is he still the Finance critic if he denounced your own policy two weeks later? Could you explain that lapse of credibility on behalf of your party as its leader? Could you explain that lapse of credibility to Saskatchewan farmers?

(1530)

And while I'm talking about credibility, could you explain that other lapse of your credibility when a year and a half ago the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, the now member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, campaigning, and a letter from you, under your signature, went to all constituents saying if you elect a member, the PC member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, all the hospitals in that riding will shut down. What about that lapse of credibility I ask the hon. member about? So we don't need your hectoring and your lecturing about credibility.

The crisis of credibility when it comes to the farm sector, and quite frankly many other sectors, should weigh heavily on your shoulders. And I say to you, look into your soul when it comes to this issue. Get rid of the petty politics -- get rid of the petty politics. Let's get rid of, well what day did the letter go and what time did the letter go and did he send a facsimile or was it a telex? What day and what hour was the telephone call made? Let's get to some bloody issues in this House!

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, those are awfully scary words by that tough

Minister of Finance. Boy it's got me shaking in my boots I want to tell the Minister of Finance. But I think we're going to give it another try. We're going to give it another try. And I'll make, first of all, an observation, Mr. Chairman, about the New Democratic Party policy on agriculture and . . .

Mr. Chairman: -- Order, order. I'd ask members to discontinue the debate across the floor and allow the Leader of the Opposition to put his question.

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Although I don't mind hearing the Conservative back-benchers even from a seated position speaking; it's about the only time we hear them. So we'd just as soon hear them even from the heckling position.

Mr. Chairman, I want to explain for the moment, for the sixth time. Now, Mr. Chairman, I'll take any heckling from a seated member but I will not take any heckling from a member standing at the door outside of the debating Chamber -- none whatsoever. And I ask you to call him to order.

Mr. Chairman: -- Order, order. The member that was heckling was the member from Wilkie who was in his seat.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I'm going to ask you, sir, to get the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster who was standing in the doorway known to you, sir, and heard by you, sir, hollering at you and me, sir . . .

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. Is the member challenging the Chair, saying that I was not looking at the member who was doing the heckling? You're casting aspersions on the Chair by saying that I wasn't watching and knowing what was going on? The member from Wilkie was in his seat, and he was heckling the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I say that the member from Lloydminster-Cut Knife, as is his habit, was standing in the doorway yelling at me. I say that that was heard by everybody here. I ask you to consider whether or not you heard it, and if you did to take the member to task for doing so. Everybody knows it, including him and . . .

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. We are going to continue these estimates, or I will put the question.

Mr. Romanow: -- You refuse, do you, to take this member's complaint, the Leader of the Opposition's complaint, about that member to heart? Is that what you're telling me?

Mr. Chairman: -- The member is not to debate with the Chair.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I am not debating with the Chair. I will observe to the members of the House that the way the members opposite in decorum have conducted themselves in this committee, especially the member from Lloydminster-Cut Knife, is a disgrace.

I don't ask you to make a comment on it. You apparently haven't heard it.

Mr. Chairman: -- Order, order. The Chair will be the judge of the decorum in the House, not members. The Chair will make that decision.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I wish again to return to the main issue, albeit the threat that the hon. member from Lloydminster-Cut Knife is again moving to his secret alcove for debate, with the encouragement of the Minister of Finance I might add, and the avid support of all of those people in the back, I shall now pursue once again . . . I don't mind the member from Wilkie from a seated position, I say, take part in the debate, because it's welcome to hear you at all.

But I say, Mr. Chairman, I say to the Chair . . . (inaudible interjection)
. . .

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. I've asked the member from Wilkie to allow the member from Saskatoon Riversdale to put his questions to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Romanow: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I was in the process of saying the following with respect to the New Democratic Party's policy on spring loan seeding before I was rudely interrupted, the following, and I repeat this to the Minister of Finance so that he can take note of it.

I have the document and I can mail it to him. The document which we released on February 26, 1990 was very clear. It said: first, \$500 million cash payment; second and thereafter, a spring seeding loan guarantee; and third, a moratorium to July 1, 1990.

We did not advocate a spring seeding loan guarantee in the absence of a \$500 million cash pay-out. We advocated the \$500 million cash payment based on what the president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool argued. And what you people were telling us in the House or before the House in the public at large, was the objective of the \$500 million. That is the policy. To move with the spring seeding plan only in the absence of the \$500 million cash, the \$500 million cash needed to absorb a lot of that red ink out there, of course is throwing an anchor, as has been described before, to a drowning farmer.

That is what we criticize you about. It's a policy of three points that need to be raised. I'm not going to convince you because you're going to continue to use your argument. That's neither here nor there but at least I get a chance to put on the record, and for those people who might be watching this debate on television, what the true facts are with respect to the document, and we remain on that.

But I want to come back to the issue here with respect to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Pardon me?

An Hon. Member: -- As the World Turns I think is probably getting more viewers than you and I.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well maybe so, maybe so. But I'll tell you one thing, how many there are, there're too many for you people because every time the proceedings are aired you lose more support. So it doesn't much matter how many there are.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- But I want to come back to the question of credibility. And I suspect that it will . . .

An Hon. Member: -- Capital C.

Mr. Romanow: -- Yes, capital C. You spell it out, Mr. Minister, in your usually arrogant fashion. Continue on and we'll, as I say, we'll just pursue this until we get some answers.

I am asking you, sir, not to come in with truck loads of documents. I'm not asking that. I don't expect you to come here with truck loads of documents. I don't ask that.

I just simply ask you -- you've got several officials behind you; you've got your political people watching this matter on television -- I ask you to have somebody from your office make the phone call to the Premier's office right now and say, look, the Minister of Finance has said that the Premier received a commitment on March 19, 1990. You said a commitment. You made that statement. What is that commitment? You said it was in writing; you said it was from the federal government; you said it was for more than \$250 million. You say that the Ottawa government broke that commitment.

I want to know what that original commitment was -- simple, pure and simple. Because I tell you if Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Mazankowski had \$500 million in a commitment to this Premier -- PC or otherwise, I don't care -- I think it's an obligation for the people of this province, in opposition and in farm, to say to the Prime Minister, you've done wrong, you've broken your word. We need the money; the farmers need the money.

But I can't take that position based on your statements, especially your answers which, if I may say so again, are evasive to put it mildly. But I can say those statements if I've been given some documentary proof that the commitment was made so that we could at least assess where the blame falls. Right now, sir, don't you see what's happening? In the minds of fair-minded people a lot of the blame falls on your shoulders. Maybe unfairly as you see it, but the way to dispel the unfairness is to be able to show what the documentation reveals, to tell the track record. That's what I'm getting at in this questioning and I'm not succeeding.

So one more time, Mr. Minister. Tell us when this commitment was received. Tell us what the commitment was. Produce a document or documents in due course, in the next hour, showing what that commitment was and then mount the argument that it was less than what you had been received and assured by the Prime Minister and Mr. Mazankowski, that it was considerably less,

upon which then at least we can make some progress to determine who really was telling the truth with respect to this commitment. I ask you again, what's so unreasonable about that?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I think we now see what the hon. member is truly looking for, Mr. Chairman. And it was in the statement when he said, you see, Mr. Minister, fair-minded people would say that the blame is really on the Premier's shoulders. You see what I say, Mr. Chairman, is, fair-minded people would also say that our Premier is the one who got the commitment. It's our Premier who has worked hard to get assistance from the federal government. It's our Premier who has worked with the farm groups to get that commitment. It is our Premier who has worked with farm groups to tailor the response of this government in a right and proper fashion.

You see, Mr. Chairman, what he would really like, what he would really like is to be able to lay the blame on the Premier's shoulders for his own purely political partisan purposes. It's got nothing to do, it's got not one iota, not one iota of anything to do with getting support for Saskatchewan farmers from Ottawa. It's nothing more than him trying to politically position himself as somehow the Premier is the bad guy; he is the good guy. It won't work. The people see through it because the issue is just as you have said -- credibility. Just as you have said.

Mr. Romanow: -- I'm trying to hold my tongue, but I must say that the answer of the minister is pathetic. I could say more but I'm not going to because I'm still hopeful that we're going to make some progress here.

Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chairman, I did not write the words:

My government has received a commitment from the Government of Canada that financial assistance will be provided to farmers for spring seeding.

I did not do that. You, sir, did that. You did that. And you, the member from Wilkie, you did that. This Speech from the Throne was taken to the caucus and to the cabinet and you approved it. Was not the member from . . . maybe he could get involved in this committee deliberation.

I want to ask the minister, the member from Wilkie, did you know that this sentence was in the Speech from the Throne? And if you do, did you not get up in caucus and ask what was the commitment?

You see, Mr. Chairman, what I'm getting at. I did not write these words. A farmer who sees these words interprets that there is money or a commitment. In fact later on it says, a promise. The word used is promises. Now we've gotten the minister to at least admit that there is some money which was promised by Ottawa which was less than what the Premier wanted.

He says, trust me, the Premier had that commitment. I'm saying I wish I could trust you but I can't because of previous record. I am saying to the minister, the thing that you've got to do is to show the Legislative Assembly what that commitment was in writing. You have nothing to fear. If I am here to embarrass the Premier as you allege -- and I assure you

that I am not here to embarrass the Premier -- if I am here to embarrass the Premier as you allege -- and I repeat again that it's not my objective -- the easy rebuttal to that embarrassment attempt would be surely some form of documentary proof of what you say. Why not? What's so difficult? Why would that be the impossible task to achieve as far as you and the officials are concerned? I don't see it whatsoever.

(1545)

And I think, Mr. Minister, that you owe it, given the urgency of the issue, given the delay in receiving the money, given the confusion about whether or not any money is going to be forthcoming based on today's newspaper reports, you have an obligation, sir, to table it, not for my sake.

If you want to enhance your Premier, I don't care. Just give us the documentation showing what that commitment was so that the farmers and the farm organizations can judge for themselves where the log-jam is, who's at fault, where the difficulties are, and why that money which is badly needed is not forthcoming. Again, Mr. Chairman, I ask the minister, on those arguments, will you not reconsider and table documentation as is appropriate here?

DHon. Mr. Hepworth: -- As I've said before, Mr. Chairman, the Premier received the commitment. We would have liked to -- this phase if you like -- to have been more than 500 million. In fact, we would've wanted 500 million for Saskatchewan alone. In so far as details relative to letters and faxes and whatever else, I'll have to refer the hon. member to the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I clearly am being stonewalled here, and totally unsatisfactory responses. I want to shift therefore, given the adamancy of the minister, to ask: if he will not give me paper, will he give me a relatively concise verbal description of what that commitment was on or about March 19, of 1990 that I refer to in the Speech from the Throne.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, once again as I said, our Premier has led the charge on this issue through a series of meetings with farm leaders, other ministers of Agriculture from across western Canada. He enjoyed wide-spread support on this multifaceted approach, which included cash for spring input costs. That commitment was culminated by announcement by Mr. Mazankowski at the ministers of Agriculture meeting, if my memory serves me correctly, at the ministers of Agriculture meeting. I think the Associate Minister of Agriculture would back me up on that.

Five hundred million dollars was what he was prepared to lay on the table as that part of the commitment. It's not as much as we would like. I've already expressed on behalf of the Premier and Minister of Agriculture the disappointment that we had last week when they dropped the initial grain price because we thought that would be an excellent place for them to address the international agri-food trade war export enhancement program offset that we also addressed, not only that our Premiers had addressed, but this House addressed, but hopefully that too yet can be resolved, Mr.

Chairman.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, the minister again, I think one has to now conclude after an hour of questioning, really has no commitment, had no commitment on March 19, 1990. The Premier had no commitment, and they misled the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan. The simple answer would have been to tell me the details of that commitment on March 19 or, in the alternative, some documentation from the federal government. I think we're rapidly coming to the conclusion that there is a misleading by the government opposite, the Premier and the Minister of Finance, on this question of the \$500 million cash on the dash.

An Hon. Member: -- Is that parliamentary?

DMr. Romanow: -- The member is asking whether it's parliamentary. I did not accuse the member of deliberately misleading, which is unparliamentary, at least I haven't made that accusation yet. But I make the accusation that it was misleading. But I do make the accusation, I think, subject to your answers, that it's misleading.

But I want to ask the Minister of Finance again . . . I want to ask the Minister of Finance again in what I think is a serious set of questions -- the minister obviously doesn't want to treat it with the same gravity that I think it deserves -- but I'll ask this question from the Minister of Finance. Is it the position of your government that no provincial money will be forthcoming to complement or match any federal special financing with respect to this aspect of the farm aid program?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, in so far as our expectation, and we hope the opposition's expectation, was laid out in a resolution that enjoyed the unanimous support of this House, and I hope that it still does enjoy the unanimous support of this House, when our Premier and the Minister of Agriculture moved under rule 39 a very comprehensive six-part resolution or motion relative to help for Saskatchewan farmers, I think that fairly clearly laid out our position then, which was March 20, and it does today, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Romanow: -- So the answer the minister is giving me is that under no circumstances will the Minister of Finance pony up, if I may put it that way, any provincial Government of Saskatchewan, province of Saskatchewan money with respect to anything which might be ongoing by way of discussions between Mr. Mazankowski and the Premier in Ottawa, and that the Minister of Finance seems to be pretty dug in on that.

I want to ask another question, and that is this. Would the provincial government be willing to make a loan . . . effect a loan from Ottawa as offered by Mr. Mazankowski under today's date of May 9, 1990 in order to match the \$250 million unconditional from Ottawa, thereby totalling the \$500 million and thereby get this much-needed cash on the dash for the farmers? Is that an option that is open to you?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Our view is that we . . . and it's a view shared by our neighbours to the east and west of us, their ministers of Agriculture

and their premiers, is: we're not about to blink. Five hundred million, less than we would have wished for, but they've put on the table. Our view is, now send the cheques out to the farmers.

Our commitment, as other provinces would say as well . . . their commitments were in their budgets for the farmers. It's I think a very reasonable commitment, given the times we live in -- substantive new dollars to agriculture, substantive increase in some areas relative to some of the ongoing programs, tax relief and spending to the farm sector, rural Saskatchewan, totalling over \$400 million in this budget -- our cash on the table. Federal government now needs to send their money to Saskatchewan farmers.

Mr. Romanow: -- So the answer is that the Minister of Finance has dug in. There will be no request for Ottawa to lend to the province of Saskatchewan \$250 million so that we can resolve the impasse in that way. That's another option which is removed.

Will the Minister of Finance tell me whether or not in this interim supply that we're discussing and voting, whether or not there is any contingency or reserve set aside from which \$250 million could be found by the province of Saskatchewan if it changed its mind -- I understand that you won't change your mind -- as negotiations might unfold.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Romanow: -- So the situation is the Government of Saskatchewan will not match the federal offer. The Government of Saskatchewan will not borrow from Ottawa in order to get the \$500 million. The Government of Saskatchewan does not have any contingency fund for the \$250 million provincial commitment in order to match the Ottawa, so we don't have money in that regard either. The doors, Mr. Chairman, are being shut pretty clearly to many of the options.

Let me explore a fourth option. Is it the position of the Minister of Agriculture, or the Minister of Finance more particularly, that the export subsidy usage of the \$500 million that Mr. Mazankowski threatens as of today's date, May 9, is it your position that is unacceptable too? Or what is your position in that regard?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Our position is that we will not allow the federal government to shirk its international responsibilities to our Saskatchewan farmers. Not only is that our position, that's the position of all of these who have written the Associate Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier, urging not to back down on this position, Mr. Chairman. Whether, as the Associate Minister of Agriculture said in question period, whether it's the canola growers, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, the Western Canadian Wheat Growers, the wheat pool, the United Grain Growers, whoever it is, they are standing behind our Premier, urging him on, telling Ottawa send out the money, support our farmers in the international agri-food trade war.

That's the position of the farmers. The farmers are behind the Premier. And I just ask this and this simple thing of the opposition and the opposition leader particularly; I ask him to get behind our Premier on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, again the minister says that I get behind the Premier. Pretty hard to know how to get behind the Premier, since his position changes so much and so often and so frequently; ranging all the way from a commitment which turns out to be a phantom commitment, there was no commitment -- how we can back that, I don't know -- now to at least four different options which have arisen, each one of them having arisen just today. And yet we are to get behind the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan.

It's little wonder the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan are very angered with this government and the government in Ottawa. This is not the first time this has happened. There have been promises in 1988 of drought assistance, 10 days before the federal election, which money of course after the election they scrambled together to try to advance and no one quite knew the formula for the drought pay-outs -- the massive confusion that took place there. And I suspect this is the same situation, sadly as far as the farmers are concerned, which we are facing here.

But none the less, I notice in today's Star-Phoenix of May 9, 1990, in an article by Vern Greenshields and a head-line which says: "Provinces offered farm aid deal," a quotation from Mr. Mazankowski, and I'll put the whole quotation into context by reading it, and then preface the quotation, then give you a question.

Mazankowski said he would be flexible to the point of paying both his share and the province's immediately if the provinces would repay Ottawa.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I'll stop from the quotation there. Note the words of Mazankowski. He is going to make that \$500 million available immediately, cash on the dash to the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan, if the provinces would repay, some time down the road, Ottawa. We know the farmers need the money very desperately. They needed it two months ago, three months ago, and even more than that. Here is a prospect of getting it immediately if the provinces would repay.

Is the minister taking the position that that is simply not on and therefore the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan must wait whilst the dispute between Tories in Ottawa and Tories in Regina is resolved?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well we're taking the position, as are other western provinces, premiers and ministers of Agriculture, that we have put our cash on the table. It is up to the federal government to respond.

And why would we let the federal government off the hook? Is that your view? Is that your policy? That certainly isn't our view. And the hon. member suggests that because the Premier and other western premiers are taking that approach, that somehow the farmers of Saskatchewan -- to use his words -- are angry at the Premier. I doubt that, Mr. Chairman. That

pile of letters I had here and showed you just moments ago, that doesn't look like a bunch of angry farmers or farm group leaders to me. What that is, is a bunch of farmers and farm groups who believe in the position our Premier has taken and want to support him.

This cuts again at that very issue we talked about -- credibility. There is no credibility in that statement to say that the farmers of Saskatchewan are mad. The farmers of Saskatchewan, I would suggest, would be mad at you if you don't stand behind the Premier and help him with these discussions on these several issues that need to be resolved relative to federal-provincial relations in agriculture in the international agri-food trade wars.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, did the provincial government put any provincial money into the drought payment of 1988 and, if so, how much? And, Mr. Chairman, while the minister is considering, why would the provincial government do that on the principle that this is a federal responsibility presumably, as in this instance?

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, relative to federal-provincial cost-sharing of programs, ad hoc and/or otherwise over the last few years, and these dates and numbers are rough, but I think they make the point that I want to make relative to cost-sharing which I think is where the hon. member was coming from on one specific program.

What I can tell him is over the years -- and I think this would go back to something in the order of '84-85 -- the historical ratio has been this roughly: for every \$1 we have provided to Saskatchewan farmers, farm families, rural Saskatchewan, the federal government has provided \$8. Obviously they're a much larger treasury. And in real numbers it's something in the order of . . . we've put up \$800 million and the federal government, through that same rough time period -- and I stand to be corrected on the time period -- was \$6.6 billion. And that's the point we're making with them on this round of negotiations. And they ought not to hold Saskatchewan farmers hostage by suggesting that the ratio should be otherwise.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I asked about the drought program and I guess I'd like those numbers. But what I'm getting at is I'd like to know the rationale of the government. If you're holding the federal government, as you say you are, to this \$500 million straight from Ottawa and there should be no provincial money for this, why is it that the provincial government opposite agreed to cost share the -- as I understand they did -- the drought payment in 1988? What made the principle capable of violation then but not capable of violation now, given the gravity of the crisis in rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well there's a couple of points I would make here, and I think the hon. member might be missing the key one, is that we have in this budget as I said, in one way or another, expenditure side or tax relief side, provided farms, rural Saskatchewan, with something in excess

of \$400 million as our part of our commitment to farmers in rural Saskatchewan.

We have put our cash on the table and it's out there for Saskatchewan farmers. Our view is that the federal government should do the same thing. The idea that it should be 50-50 cost shared, as I said, we've rebutted that argument by showing quite clearly that the historical ratio has been 1:8.

Thirdly, if they're looking for new money, if that's what they think they need to see, there's lots of that in this budget -- \$525 million appropriated for a spring seeding program, not to mention the other various programs.

But the very key point and I think one that the opposition leader should be made aware of as well as the critic for Agriculture and other members of the caucus, because this is really the key component to the Premier and the other premiers' and farmers' arguments, is that why we need the help is because of the international agri-food trade wars.

The North Dakota legislature and the North Dakota farmer isn't expected to pony up to take on the international trade war. The Saskatchewan farmer shouldn't be expected to either, and that is the key fundamental impacting on our thinking here and, indeed the thinking of other farmers across western Canada. This is an international issue, not an interprovincial issue, and that is why it should be and, indeed, we make the case for the federal government's help to Saskatchewan and other Canadian farmers.

Mr. Romanow: -- The argument the minister makes with respect to the treasuries of Canada being better equipped to support Saskatchewan and Canadian farmers in the international wars is a good point. There's no doubt about that, that the amount of money that Ottawa has vis-a-vis subsidies compared to what Saskatchewan has, especially given the mess, the financial mess which you people have sunk the province into since 1982, clearly there's a strong argument for Ottawa's involvement.

But how does the minister propose to explain the situation that we find ourselves in? Ottawa is not coming up with the money, albeit there are some good reasons for it. You're not coming up with the money, although you've done it in the past with drought and you've done it on other projects. I don't want to get you flying high again, but I'll mention the word Cargill.

What happens to the farmer in this circumstance? You say that the farmer shouldn't carry on his or her shoulders the international grains wars. I agree. But don't you think that the farmer should similarly not carry on his or her shoulders the Regina-Ottawa wars, phoney or otherwise, as some observers have made? Where are they left in this whole situation?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Quite simply, Mr. Chairman, he asks where is the farmer in all of this. I'll tell you where the farmer is in all this. He's four-square behind the Premier, that's where he is. We've got a stack of letters this thick, and typical of those letters is one to the Premier,

May 8:

Dear Mr. Premier: (and it's from the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) I wish to take this opportunity to commend you on the stand you and your fellow western premiers have taken on the matter of obtaining assistance for western grain producers. Further, I wish to commend you personally on your initiative in travelling to Ottawa to personally present the case to the Hon. Don Mazankowski.

That's where Saskatchewan farmers and farm groups stand. That's just typical of the kinds of letters the Premier's had in support of his discussions with Ottawa, and I only wish that the hon. member would get behind him. Don't capitulate. Our Premier, other premiers, our farmers, and our farm groups stand behind him, and I ask you to do the same, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, that's all well and good for the SARM people, good for them. But the fact of the matter is, the fact of the matter is that two months after you promised them that you had a commitment there's not a penny on-the-dash cash for the farmers. That's the fact. Two months later into the crisis and there's still no money, and farmers are losing their farms; the crisis is getting tighter; small towns and villages are being hurt -- that is also the fact.

And your prescription is that they should continue to suffer until the wrangling between PC governments in Regina and Ottawa is resolved. That's what you say. I want to know what in the world has changed in your relationships between you people, Conservatives in Regina and Conservatives in Ottawa, from 1986. All that it took in 1986 was an urgent, baleful, pleaful, call at 5 o'clock in the morning and there was a billion dollars. Why isn't that same kind of rapport and clout available in 1990?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well the hon. member speaks about our Premier's track record. Yes, he has and still does enjoy a very good track record in terms of getting Ottawa's attention and getting help for whatever sector. And I think our society as whole, in particular the farm sector in rural Saskatchewan, appreciates that. He's been the chief spokesperson again for western Canada. He got the commitment, a little less on phase one than we would have liked, but nevertheless he got the commitment, and we're hopeful that those cheques will soon be out in the mail, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't believe the Premier has any commitment -- never had one on March 19 and he doesn't have one now. He does not have now. And he has no credibility and neither do you, sir, because if he had the commitment, you of all the people in the front bench would be so eager to demonstrate that, to show us in black and white, right here in the legislature -- you of all the ministers. You won't do it. You know why you won't do it? Because you haven't got it, pure and simple, you have not got it. You're not telling me the truth; you're not telling the farmers the truth; you're not telling the members of this Assembly the truth. You haven't got it. If you had it you'd table it. Make no mistake about that.

Mr. Chairman, we have a situation here . . . And if you've got it, I'm still prepared to receive it at this late stage -- it would have saved a lot of time in the committee if you could have tabled it earlier. If you've still got it, I'd be pleased to see it. I'd be pleased to see it and we'll make a reversal of our position if that's that case. But based on what I have now, absolutely nothing and evasive answers, I say you have no commitment whatsoever.

I notice in today's Star-Phoenix, the minister federally of Agriculture, Mr. Mazankowski, is quoted as saying the following:

I am somewhat saddened that they (the western premiers) would rather play politics than really help the farmers.

Is the quotation he's got. That's a quotation from your confre père, your political mentor, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Agriculture. He says that western premiers are playing politics. How do you credibly, with facts, rebut that allegation from, not me, but from your colleague, the Minister of Agriculture Canada, in the absence of evidence that there was a commitment in writing from Ottawa upon which they reneged.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well I think the only one that's been playing politics and doing a little political two-step here has been the hon. member. Certainly he has every right to ask the questions: what was the hour, the day, the date, the facts, all of that. That detail he'll have to get from the Premier.

I mean, there are some larger issues here facing the Saskatchewan farmer and the farm economy that go beyond that kind of picayune questioning, Mr. Chairman. It surprises me, because the very article he quotes from speaks to the point I've been making. This Premier led the charge. He has the support of the western premiers that we have all done our part relative to the farm sector and now Ottawa must get their cheques out. They're all of that view. There is one voice and the Premier has been leading that charge. He has been successful at getting the commitment. It's a little less in dollars than we would like, and now our Premier is saying, get the cheques in the mail.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, again the minister has not answered the comment of the Minister of Agriculture Canada about the Premier's playing politics, was the words used by the Hon. Mr. Mazankowski.

This is a serious situation, Mr. Chairman, because here we have the Minister of Finance and the government of the province of Saskatchewan alleging that Ottawa has reneged on a commitment. They didn't use the words in this exchange this afternoon yet, but the effect of that is that Ottawa's been playing politics.

On the other hand, the Minister of Agriculture Canada, Mr. Mazankowski, alleges that this Premier and this government and Minister of Finance, that they've been playing politics. Somebody is telling the truth and somebody isn't telling the truth. Or maybe both have been playing politics. Maybe the conclusion that can be made is that all of this is a pillow-fight

between a Tory in Regina and a Tory in Ottawa, letting people believe that somehow a Tory in Regina is different than a Tory in Ottawa.

And I want to tell you, Mr. Chairman, that given the evasive answers and given the mutually accusatory statements made by two Conservatives, and given the facts and the knowledge that farmers have of the province of Saskatchewan, they understand that a Tory in Regina is like a Tory in Ottawa, because a Tory is a Tory is a Tory everywhere -- everywhere.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Romanow: -- A Tory in Regina, be he a premier or minister of Agriculture, believes in the same free market principles. A Tory in Regina is like a Tory in Ottawa, quick to make promises like the commitment that was stated on March 19, 1990, and not able to deliver. A Tory premier in Regina or a Tory premier in Ottawa are the same in announcing the spring seeding program and then waiting several weeks to flesh out the details of this. My goodness, what kind of a way to develop an agricultural policy!

A Tory government in Regina or in Ottawa is the same when it comes to free trade, when it comes to privatization of post offices, when it comes to the question of farm aid for the people of the province of Saskatchewan. When it comes to this kind of an issue with respect to freight rates, with the crop insurance premiums, with interest-free cash advances, all of which those people opposite were absolutely deathly silent. In fact their silence was deafening. You could hear it all over the province of Saskatchewan because a Tory in Regina is the same as a Tory in Ottawa, because a Tory is a Tory is a Tory.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

(1615)

Mr. Romanow: -- So there are only two or three options which are possible. Either the premiers have been playing politics and there is no commitment, and there is no commitment and this statement of March 19 was a patent untruth, and therefore Mr. Mazankowski is correct in which case the farmers should know that these kinds of commitments are made but not honoured.

Or in the alternative, there was a commitment but Mr. Mazankowski reneged and Mr. Mulroney reneged, in which case the farmers should also know and they refuse to table the documents. Or as a third option, there is a phoney pillow-fight going on over this \$500 million -- a phoney pillow-fight designed to make the money available to the farmers when it suits the political timetable and agenda of the Premier and the government opposite, which is the third option.

And so one accuses them of being political; the other one accuses of being political. They go into some sort of a fight that they would have us believe is real. Don't kid yourself, Mr. Chairman. Don't kid yourself. These people are all of the same belief. They're all birds of the same flock. They're all birds of the same feather.

They fly together and they act together and they believe together. And in the meantime the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan, promised since now early 1990, since the Premier's dramatic address on March 5 that they would be getting much needed cash, have again been left holding the bag -- again left holding the bag while Tories are involved in some sort of political machinations and some sort of political statements which of course leave them out in limbo.

An Hon. Member: -- They're hemorrhaging.

Mr. Romanow: -- They're hemorrhaging, my colleague says. That's the least that can be described about the situation. It is in fact a critical one for agriculture. And we are told that the farmers should not fight the European-American subsidy wars out of their treasuries. I agree.

And we're told that the farmers shouldn't be asked to subsidize the battle between Ottawa and Regina. That's my position, to which they do not agree. They say they're going to continue this battle going on. In the mean time, what happens to farmers? In the mean time, the farmers continue on until Tories go through this political gamesmanship and political games playing, notwithstanding the resolutions that we've tabled here.

I can only make the plea to the Minister of Finance. For goodness sake, Mr. Minister of Finance, stop the games playing. Stop the political charade. Stop trying to distance yourself from an unpopular federal government. It is incredible politically that, leaving politics aside for the moment, it is hurtful and harmful to the resolution of the situation.

Tell the people whether or not this was a truthful statement or an inaccurate statement in the Speech from the Throne. Tell us if that money is going to be expected and when. But above all, let's get on with the job of getting that money to the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan who . . . even you, sir, as the chairman, know they desperately need.

I say to the Minister of Finance, as I withdraw from this debate and let other colleagues get into it, that the performance by the minister this afternoon has been dismal. And I expect more from the minister who I say on a personal basis has an intellect and an ability which really should permit him to answer effectively and more simplistically in a sense of honesty than he has today.

And I can only conclude the minister has been caught -- caught in a squeeze between a situation which has amounted to basically a fundamental untruth in this Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Swan: -- Mr. Chairman, I just heard the Leader of the Opposition involving the Chair in the debate. And I think that that is unparliamentary and I would ask you to bring him back to a correction.

Mr. Chairman: -- Order, order. The point of order is well taken. The Chair is not to be involved in the debate, but I would ask . . . I would

just caution members not to do that in the future.

Mr. Romanow: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I accept your ruling. I would say the reference I made was to the fact that I felt that even the Chair would be aware of the point that I was making.

Mr. Chairman: -- Any reflection to the Chair is not to be used in debate. I'd ask the member to refrain from that.

Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Chairman, I want to close my intervention this session. I accept your decision. I am going to close by saying that the Minister of Finance, who comes to seek more supply, grievance before supply -- this is what we're raising -- grievance, farm grievance, before supply.

I would have thought that he would have been more prepared, knowing full well this is a major issue, more prepared to come back with answers on this issue. Instead it's a question of obfuscation. It's a question of ignorance -- I don't have the documents. It's a question of contradictory positions with respect to commitment.

You people never did have a commitment and you misled the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan at a critical time. You did so, cruelly and callously, and I say you're going to pay a big price for it, Mr. Chairman. Pay a big price.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, we have heard you for the last almost two hours now evading answers to questions that are very important to the rural Saskatchewan farm community.

Mr. Minister, earlier this year the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool came out and put forward a proposal that said \$500 million was necessary to help the farmers of Saskatchewan. You and the Premier of this province endorsed that. You led people to believe that you too agreed that the \$500 million was absolutely necessary. And now we find out from you and the Premier that really, even though you said you had a commitment, you don't have a commitment.

All the while the whole point here, Mr. Minister, is the fact that farmers in rural Saskatchewan are suffering because of your total lack of competence in arranging an agricultural policy with Ottawa that comes through on behalf of farmers and gives them the support they so badly need.

This reminds me of the whole process that we have gone through since 1986. Mr. Chairman, if the minister would care to return to seat and give me the . . .

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. Members are not to make reference to ministers' or members' absence or presence. Order, order.

Mr. Upshall: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All I was referring to is courtesy when I'm asking a question for the minister to remain . . .

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. If the member wants to challenge the Chair, there's a way of doing that without making reference in his debate. If he wants to carry on with his questioning, he certainly has the chance to.

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Brockelbank: -- The point of order being this, Mr. Chairman. This is the Committee of Finance on interim supply. It's important that the Minister of Finance, the person in charge of that, be here to answer, respond to questions.

Now if the minister wants to leave, that's up to the minister. You can call a halt to the committee, Mr. Chairman, but don't ask us to continue this committee when the Minister of Finance leaves.

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. The Chair has no power to say which minister will answer the questions. The minister can put someone in to . . .

An Hon. Member: -- On interim supply?

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. The Chair has no power to force the minister to stay in his seat.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister . . . Mr. Chairman, when we are in interim supply and the minister has removed himself from a seat and is sitting in another seat, I don't think just because he can't take the heat on the Department of Agriculture questions that we're asking . . . I would simply ask you, Mr. Chairman, if it is . . . I will not ask the minister . . .

Mr. Chairman: -- Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: -- State your point of order.

Hon. Mr. Hodgins: -- Mr. Chairman, the member opposite, contrary to what the rules of this legislature would carry, has referred to the presence or the absence of a certain minister. I believe that that is directly contrary to the rules.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, I would like to make the point of collective responsibility of cabinet ministers, a principle and a premise on which a cabinet of any government is directed. And, Mr. Chairman, I make that point that is well known to anyone who has any familiarity whatsoever with respect to government.

Mr. Chairman: -- Order, order. The Chair has already ruled on that point. I ask the members: if they want to rise and report progress, that's fine, or if they want to continue on interim supply?

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Mr. Chairman, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. It has to deal with some superannuation plans. I see that the

minister has returned to his chair, so . . .

Mr. Chairman: -- Order. The Chair has already ruled that members are not to make reference to absence or presence of members in the House.

Mr. Kowalsky: -- I see, Mr. Chairman, that the minister is prepared to proceed with the estimates now, so I will defer to my colleague, the member from Humboldt and then I will ask my question in a few minutes.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well if the minister got the little breather that he needs, we can continue now. I understand that he is under some severe pressure because there are a lot of people in the rural communities who hold you and your government accountable for making promises and then breaking promises.

And that's what we're talking about here, Mr. Minister. We've seen in 1986 when a midnight phone call, and you were so proud of . . . it was as simple as that. We saw in 1988 in a drought payment, when your Premier, the Premier of this province, was going around telling people there's going to be \$40 an acre payment. And I'll tell you, farmers didn't receive half of that for the most part. That's the kind of credibility we're talking about.

And now in 1990 we have a commitment written, given by you in the throne speech, given by the Premier on television, saying that there was a commitment and now we are finding there is no commitment. And while you're playing your phoney charade with Ottawa, we are seeing thousands of farm families suffering; we are seeing foreclosures every day. I'll tell you, Mr. Minister, that lies on your shoulders. That's on your back. And that is why your credibility is waning greatly in the eyes of Saskatchewan farmers.

Mr. Minister, I ask you this question. Am I right to assume that this interim supply motion will take the supply up until June 30?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, this second interim supply is to provide for two-twelfths, with the following exceptions, which will be in excess of two-twelfths: Education, school operating grants, \$90,069,600; grants to libraries, \$1,397,700; Health has two-twelfths with the following exceptions, where it will be in excess of two-twelfths by \$1.1 million; Legislation, which will be in excess of two-twelfths by \$3,137,600.

So the total to be voted by the committee in excess of two-twelfths is \$95,704,900, and it's made up of those three areas, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee.

Mr. Upshall: -- So, Mr. Minister, do you have allocated anywhere in there any payments corresponding with the delivery of moneys to farmers in conjunction with an agreement with the federal government to supply the loan that they're asking for, the grant that they're asking for for spring seeding that would hopefully total \$500 million. Do you have anything allocated in this interim supply?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- The two-twelfths that's in there for agriculture would be just that, two-twelfths of the total to be voted in the budget.

We're not about, as I said earlier, we are not, the other western premiers are not about to blink and be held hostage to the federal government or to let the federal government off the hook. That might be your view; that might be your choice. It isn't the choice of Saskatchewan farm groups and farm leaders, or of the western premiers.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, you said earlier that the ratio that you would accept would be 1:8. So what I'm asking you is then: when can we expect a settlement so that you would be putting in your portion and the federal government would be putting in their portion? Even if it may be on your terms, let's assume that, when would you expect to allocate moneys to a program that would deliver to farmers the sum of \$500 million?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- A point of clarification for the hon. member. I did not say that we are purporting . . . or proposing a 1:8 ratio. I said historically that has been the ratio over the last few years.

We would just restate that we have put our cash on the table; so has Mr. Mazankowski in terms of stage one. And now we're just saying to him, get the cheques in the mail to the farmers.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well, Mr. Minister, it's very easy for you to say, get the cheques in the mail to farmers. The point here is that you misled the farmers of Saskatchewan. You and the federal government misled them together into believing that you supported the call for \$500 million and that you had a commitment that the money was going to be there.

And the point, Mr. Minister, is this: spring seeding is here. In fact in the southern part of this province many farmers have completed their seeding. You and Ottawa are playing your silly charade at the expense of these people. Mr. Minister, you are playing the silly charade at the expense of the lives of farm communities. You have a duty to deliver programs to rural Saskatchewan. When you say there was a commitment . . . and now we can talk here all day about when the commitment was or what it was or how you're going to negotiate or what your stand is or what the federal government's stand is.

The point is, Mr. Minister, there's nothing happening. All you're doing is that you found out that your June window of election has closed, so now you are biding time until the next possible window of October for an election. And so in the meantime that you have to find something to do. So what do you find to do? You say, well, Mr. Mazankowski, we better do something, so we'll have this little charade.

But the point is, Mr. Minister, the farmers of this province and you know -- and I've been into that constituency of Weyburn -- and they know that it is incumbent upon you and your federal counterparts not to be discussing this issue now when it's too late for many farmers. In fact how many farmers, Mr. Minister, have gone under foreclosure because you have not

delivered that money? How many farmers are suffering? You are the one who is saying that there has to be a commitment . . . or has been a commitment.

What I'm saying to you, Mr. Minister, is that you have failed to deliver. You should have been discussing this with the federal government last year, last fall. If you were interested in delivering a program in the best interests of Saskatchewan farmers, Mr. Minister, you know that would have been completed so that in your budget you could have had whatever portion that was needed, and farmers would have known, the federal government would have known what the actual program was.

But no, you chose not to do that. You chose to drag out this process, to drag out this process and look at your June window of opportunity for election, and when that closed, you're now looking at October.

And I would suggest to you, Mr. Minister, that you're probably going to escalate this phoney war in whatever measure that you might think, whether it be fighting on the delivery of the money, or fighting with Ottawa on something else, because that's the only route that you have left to follow as far as your political gamesmanship goes with the federal government.

Mr. Minister, I want to ask you specifically, when you said in the throne speech that there was a commitment, what was the dollar figure attached to that commitment?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I think the Leader of the Opposition went through this in some detail for an hour or an hour and a half, Mr. Chairman, but certainly the hon. member has the right to re-ask the question. And the answer hasn't changed.

Our Premier got the commitment when the ministers of Agriculture met. He announced that it would be \$500 million; 90 per cent would go to the grains and oil-seed sector. That's less than we would have wished for Saskatchewan, and now we would just ask they send the cheques out, please.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, at what point did you find out that it would not be \$500 million coming from Ottawa?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- As I said earlier, the announcement was made, if memory serves me correctly, at the ministers' of Agriculture federal-provincial meeting, and I'm just not sure on the date on that meeting, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, do you agree that you and your Premier led people to believe that there was a commitment of \$500 million that was going to be delivered?

The farmers of Saskatchewan do not care where it comes from. All they know is they have a government in Regina and a government in Ottawa who is responsible for the delivery of programs in order to support the lives and livelihoods of farmers in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, can you tell me whether or not you believe that the farmers

of Saskatchewan, whether or not they think that your Premier, the Premier and Minister of Agriculture, was telling them that they were going to be delivered \$500 million before the spring seeding?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I can only reiterate again, Mr. Chairman, the Premier got the commitment, 500 million; send the cheques as soon as possible, Mr. Mulroney.

Mr. Upshall: -- That is simply not good enough and you know it's not good enough. We have a crisis in rural Saskatchewan where over 10,000 farmers have notices of foreclosure, where we are losing businesses out of rural communities, where many farmers had to reduce the amount of . . . their seeding intentions simply because they do not have the cash, the cash to plant the crops that they wanted to plant in order to hopefully get a return this fall.

Mr. Minister, I think that you know that what you're doing is totally wrong. I think that you know that this charade between you and Ottawa is putting even greater desperation on the backs of Saskatchewan farmers.

And for the life of me, Mr. Minister, I can't understand why you and your Tory friends in Ottawa use farm families as pawns in your political games. I'll tell you, we've seen election after election where every announcement of an ad hoc program delivering cash to Saskatchewan farm families has been arranged around political opportunism by you, your government, and the government in Ottawa. Whether it be 1986 with the production loan program or the deficiency payment, whether it be 1988 with the drought payment. Every time it comes to delivering an ad hoc program, you gear it around your election fortunes. And that is why, Mr. Minister, and members opposite, that you are so low in the eyes of Saskatchewan farmers now.

I mean, I talk to a lot of farmers out there. I talk to Tories and Liberals and New Democrats. And there's one common theme that runs through every farmer that I talk to, that you, your government, and the government in Ottawa is playing politics with agriculture.

Mr. Chairman: -- Order, order. I'd ask the member for The Battlefords to rise and apologize to this House for saying that the member from Qu'Appelle-Lumsden lied. I'd ask him to rise now and apologize to the House.

Mr. Anguish: -- Sorry.

Mr. Koskie: -- I just want to ask a couple of questions of the minister. You have been indicating that there's \$500 million and the majority going to the grains. Out of that \$500 million that the federal government is putting up, I want to ask you what proportion of that has been committed to Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, as I said, of the \$500 million, my understanding is that 90 per cent of that money would be earmarked for the grains and oil-seed sector. And that roughly translates into 225 to \$250 million for Saskatchewan farmers, is our best understanding of that, Mr.

Chairman.

Mr. Koskie: -- And I want to ask the minister whether there has been any give by the federal government in respect to them disbursing the 225 or 250 million to Saskatchewan farmers who desperately needed it, and whether you have any commitment from them in respect to a timetable when they'll proceed with that.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- In terms of timing, Mr. Chairman, I think what our Premier and other western premiers and the farmers have been working on and the farm groups, is once the federal government announced that they had a half a billion dollars available, albeit less than we would all have liked, negotiations were and had been under way relative to the formula that should be used to pay it out.

I think that there's been sufficient negotiation and discussion there, and now we would just like to see the cheques out. And I guess our view, we would like to have seen them out two or three weeks ago. There's no reason for the further delay. If somehow the federal government needs to have us on our knees and crawl to Ottawa to get the money, I think the farmers are hardly well served by that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Koskie: -- My question to you though is, have you any reason to believe that the federal government is going to yield to the position of the four western premiers, three western premiers at least, in respect to matching dollars from the provinces? Have you any progress in respect to that and can you relate it to the House and to the farmers of Saskatchewan, when they are intending to proceed?

Have you any information that the federal government is prepared then, therefore since they have the four western premiers indicating that they will not in fact match the dollars, have you any indication from the federal government, Mulroney, or the Minister of Agriculture, Don Mazankowski, whether or not they are going to proceed with the payment on their own.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- I can't speak precisely for . . . or at all in fact, for the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister. I can say our Premier is down there again today meeting with them. I think he carries the additional weight, if you like, of just having come from the western premiers' meeting, who backed the Premier. And as I said earlier, the Premier's been the chief spokesperson.

So hopefully any delay that exists relative to making the pay-outs is and can be and has been resolved, and that those cheques will be forthcoming shortly.

Mr. Koskie: -- You're indicating to the House are you, Mr. Minister, that the difficulties have been resolved and that the cheques will be forthcoming very shortly? Is that the position that you're putting forward here?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well I hope those difficulties have been . . . or any

delays or whatever the reason the delays were, have been or will be resolved shortly. As I said earlier, our view would have been we'd like to have seen them resolved some long time ago.

Mr. Koskie: -- Mr. Minister, what were the reasons for the delay, and the prospects now of immediate pay-out or very soon in the future? What were the problems and have they been resolved? Have you any indication that they've been resolved?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well I am obviously very optimistic, and I'm optimistic for these reasons. Number one is the Premier wanted a commitment and got a commitment. The commitment took the form of a half a billion dollars, less than we would have liked. And now the next step is to devise the formula to have a fair and equitable pay-out of that. I think there's been significant and enough discussion relative to that. And now hopefully we can see those cheques in the mail and see them in the mail shortly.

Mr. Koskie: -- Now I know you can hope and we all hope that it'll be resolved, but that's not the question I asked. The question is, do you have any concrete evidence indicating that because of the representation of the Premier, that the federal government are now reversing their stand that you have to . . . for every dollar they put up, that it has to be matched provincially? Have you any evidence that the federal government is in fact reversing
Dtheir position?

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- We have no intention of blinking or reversing our position or capitulating. The farm groups are behind the Premier; other western premiers are behind the Premier. We have responded; other governments provincially have responded. It is now up to the federal government to do likewise, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Koskie: -- Then the final analysis is then that the farmers are . . . although the Premier has been asking and the wheat pool has been asking for a minimum of \$500 paid out prior to seeding, number one, that it's late, we didn't get it prior to seeding; and number two, that the amount that is going to come forward, at best, at the best that can come forward is 225 million or 250 million. That's exactly what you're saying.

Now I want to ask you another question. Since you're saying that the cheques should be out in the mail very shortly, have you . . . your government worked out any of the details in respect to the formula under which it would be paid out? Is there any agreement in respect to the formula? Because the farmers of Saskatchewan like to know.

They don't want politics and goofiness from the Minister of Finance; they want action and they want indeed answers that they can rely on. That's where we're at, Mr. Minister. And come forward with these details, if in fact the details have been worked out.

What is the position of the provincial government and their dealings? What is the formula that they're asking the federal government in fact to use in respect to the distribution of half the amount that they are going to get in accordance with what was promised by the Premier?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well the formula as I understand it, and I may not have the most recent information and would defer you to the Premier for particular details on this agricultural issue, but as I understand it, 90 per cent of the federal payment was to go to the grains and oil-seed sector, and that would translate into about 200 to \$250 million for Saskatchewan. And in terms of how that would be paid out in the formula to individual farmers, I don't have that . . . I'm not privy to that kind of detail, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Koskie: -- Well are you saying that on this important issue of getting some assistance, that no details . . . and you are not privy to any of the details, that in fact if they get the federal money, do we have to wait then, Mr. Minister, to start working out the details? That's the question. What formula has been advocated by your government? What formula has been presented to your government from farm organizations? That's the question and the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know.

Are these payments in fact going to be channelled to those people who are in the most need and financial trouble? Is it going to be a universal program? Is it going to be on a seeded acreage program? Do you know any of the details? Surely if you're getting a commitment and you're working towards getting the money, you would also be working towards getting some of the details as to the formula of the pay-out. That's all we're asking.

I mean, you surely must have discussed that among yourselves, and surely the Minister of Finance would be able to provide to the people of Saskatchewan what formula may be used. Is it going to be targeted? That's the question we want to know.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, all of those are good and fair and reasonable questions. As I said, I'm not privy to those kinds of details. Federal agriculture officials, I suppose, would be the best source of answers there. It may well be that our Premier, the Minister of Agriculture, is aware of those kinds of details. Certainly I am not but those are all reasonable kinds of questions.

I know the Premier, the Associate Minister of Agriculture have been in discussion with farm groups. It may well be that they've had some particular discussion as to design and program pay-out, but I don't have those kinds of details, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Koskie: -- In respecting to matching dollars which the federal government had been requesting from the provinces, has there been any agreement as to what moneys that you have within the current agricultural budget which would be considered to be matching dollars in respect to the federal government?

Recently I understand that the spring seeding program, that some \$20

million they would consider as being matching money. I understand that they are looking at the rebate to the farmers, putting them back in the same position as they were in 1982 -- the equivalent to the purple gas, the rebate on the tax. I want to ask you that, Mr. Minister, indeed.

So I ask you, Mr. Minister, have any of the matching expenditures been defined and agreed upon in respect to getting federal dollars?

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- As I said earlier, our view is that it's federal government's responsibility. If they think they needed to see some cash from us, it's in there and it's in the budget clearly. And I talked about the over \$400 million commitment to rural Saskatchewan on March 29. That's the position we've always taken. There's more than enough, but that's the approach they're going to use, not that we are. If that's the approach they're going to use, that they want to see our cash, it's there, and it's there in spades, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Koskie: -- That's not the question. The question I asked you, whether you have any knowledge as to what expenditures within your agricultural budget would be considered matching dollars by the province in order to trigger off the payment of the amount that they have set aside for Saskatchewan. That's the question I ask you. Simple question; I should be able to get a straightforward answer.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- If they're looking for something to be matched, we would offer up the 400 and whatever -- 12 million I think it is. As far as we're concerned the matching debate shouldn't be a debate. This is an international situation. The federal treasury should pony up. We have done our part. We've done our part to the tune of over \$400 million, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Koskie: -- I want to ask the minister, you have indicated here and tried to deny that you used a couple hundred million dollars in respect that you raised in respect to the potash corporation, and you have indicated that you haven't spent it in current expenditures.

I want to ask the minister whether any of the money is available, if push came to shove, and you're required to put up in order to trigger any federal money, I want to ask you whether you have any reserve money from the privatization in reserve which could be used in respect to helping the hard-pressed farmers, if indeed you have to match.

Hon. Mr. Hepworth: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, that's a fairly incredible question when you think about it. He's saying if push comes to shove, will you take some money from here or from there or will you find some new money or re-earmark some money to bail out the feds because they won't pony up the full amount.

Now that is really an incredible question. First of all, we have no intention of blinking because the farm groups and the farmers and the western premiers are united behind our Premier in not blinking in the face of Ottawa's delaying tactics.

Now why would I, in the face of a question like this, why would I say, yes we do when clearly we are not about to blink. If I was to say something like that it would be irresponsible of me, Mr. Chairman. Give away somehow a strategy and let the feds off the hook? That might be some kind of NDP logic but certainly isn't the logic or the view or the approach that this government here, on this side of the House is taking, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Koskie: -- Mr. Minister, the point I'm making is that you have disposed of much of the assets of this province. Secondly, you have shown or indicated priorities that you could in fact find \$370 million for Cargill. And all that you could come up with in new programs this spring will cost your treasury \$20 million. That's the credit that the federal government is prepared to say in new money in the seed loan program -- \$20 million is what you put in.

But you got millions of dollars for Cargills. You got millions of dollars for Pocklington. You got millions of dollars for Chuck Childers. But you can't take on this here crisis that exists in agriculture.

I want to ask you, Mr. Minister, you say you're not going to blink. Well I'll tell you what's happening across this province is that if you read The Western Producer, they have a map of the seriousness of the crisis in agriculture, and they indicate that 10,000 farmers in this province have received foreclosure notices or have quitclaimed their land.

This is the major, major crisis, Mr. Minister, and I'm not saying that you don't realize that it is. But what I am saying to you here is that your priorities are not proper. You promised, your government promised a long-term agricultural program. You broke that promise. You broke that promise to the farmers of Saskatchewan -- no long-term program.

Now in the heat of an election again, exactly the same scenario you are using, Mr. Minister, as was used in 1986, '85-86 -- production loan. This time we get a seeding loan: half the amount, twice the interest rate. And what do we get from the federal government? Half the amount to try to bail you out of a political mess that you're in.

I'll tell you, Mr. Minister, as the Leader of the Opposition indicated, you said you had a commitment from the Government of Saskatchewan. You deceived the people of Saskatchewan because you indicated that they had \$500 million as was being advocated by the wheat pool and other farm organizations. You didn't have that. You're going to at best get 225 to \$250 million.

And I say to you, Mr. Minister, that that's not good enough. The crisis today is twice, three times, four times worse than it is in 1985-86. No doubt about it. And the revenues of farmers have taken a drastic fall. And I'll tell you, you do have some responsibility, not in fighting the international war, but I'll tell you you do have responsibility that you didn't live up to, and that is putting in place a long-term agricultural policy that would assure the farmers of some reasonable income rather than drive them off the land as is happening today.

That's the Tory legacy. So-called friends of the farmers, and most of you people are from the rural. And we have a crisis today and the most that you could put up in your budget of new money, was \$20 million. I think that's disgraceful. I think that . . . You talk about restructuring debt, restructuring debt, and you haven't moved on it, Mr. Minister. And you have no intentions of moving on it because if you did you would have it in before the 10,000 farmers were driven off the land.

And worse still, what a commitment to those that are suffering most. You deny your seed loan program to those who need it most. That's the reality of it, Mr. Chairman. This provincial government has not lived up to its responsibility. The federal government is not living up to its responsibility.

The problem that we got is a Tory government in Ottawa, a Tory government here in Regina. That's the problem that we have, and until we get rid of the cause of the problem, I'll say to the farmers of Saskatchewan, there will not be a solution to the crisis in agriculture, not by a Tory in Ottawa, not by a Tory in Saskatchewan.

(1700)

And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, there is money for Tory priorities, but there is no money for the hard-pressed farmers that built this province. And this Minister of Finance tries to defend that he is meeting his responsibilities in agriculture. Well I'll tell you, you ask the farmers. And I'll tell you, they don't agree with you. And one thing is sure, farmers in Saskatchewan are saying today, they're playing politics again. That's what they're saying. That is the decision reached by the farmers of Saskatchewan, and that decision, I say, Mr. Chairman, is accurate.

I want to ask the minister also, why would a Department of Finance with the agricultural crisis of the nature that you have, why would you launch off into subsidizing a multinational corporation which certainly has the financial resources to build a fertilizer plant if it's viable? Why would you in fact choose, choose to put that money into a multinational corporation project rather than alleviating some of the crisis there, and that is some restructuring of farm debt? And why haven't you been in fact going that direction rather than the misguided ad hoc program designed only for political benefits, not designed to benefit the farmers of Saskatchewan?

That's the questions that has to be asked, Mr. Chairman. And they haven't been answered by this government, and we don't expect to get them because they don't have an answer. They're deceiving the farmers. They're playing politics with the farmers. A Tory, as my leader said, is a Tory is a Tory, and we can't expect any difference from a provincial Tory government than we can from a federal Tory government.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:03 p.m.