

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Crofford: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to introduce to you and through you today a group of people from the Regina Open Door Society who are in the English as a second language program.

I'm going to be meeting with them at 11 a.m. for pictures and I'd like the Assembly to join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, three individuals that are seated in your gallery. They are Lisa Lavallee and Christine Watson from Chili for Children and Christine Smith from Aids Regina. These representatives are here this morning to receive a special presentation from the media and also from the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) hockey team.

We have over the past three weeks or so, raised some money for their benefits and we're going to make that presentation following question period, so please welcome these people to our Assembly this morning. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a friend and constituent from Regina North West, Marjorie Wiens.

Marjorie is a retired teacher. She's a member of the philharmonic choir and many other community organizations, and a very strong volunteer. And I'd ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming her today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Scott: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, my brother Bob Scott from St. Paul, Alberta, who's down here visiting for a few days.

And he has a couple of things going for him -- one, that he's not a politician, and the other one is he was smart enough to leave the farm. And I'm now farming his land, so he's down here to give me instructions for the coming year.

I'll ask members to join in welcoming him here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Highway Hockey League All Stars Champions

Mr. Flavel: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to pay tribute to another provincial title, in fact a hat trick that has taken place.

For the third year in a row the Highway Hockey League All Stars have won the SAHA (Saskatchewan Amateur Hockey Association) adult rec B provincial title with their win over a team from Hague. The team had quite a change in players this year, so the challenge was definitely there as to whether a provincial title was again possible.

In this category, players must be 25 years or older and can be from anywhere in Saskatchewan. They can't have played contact hockey after December 31 of the current season and a new regulation this season places this team in the B category if the slapshots are not allowed. In previous seasons this team would have been classified as A.

The team was coached by Gordon MacMurchy Jr., with assistant coach Barrie Peeke. Team manager was Norm Erickson.

I want to pass congratulations to the Highway Hockey League All Stars on another great year and for providing great entertainment for the area. It wasn't easy, as usual; with so many other commitments, the team sometimes showed up with only a handful of skaters, but they persevered and for that they have their third consecutive provincial championship. And all the best in the next years to them. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tribute to Wishart

Mr. Kluz: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I talked about how the type of communities is reflected by the presence of co-ops and credit unions and wheat pools. I talked about the community of Bankend which was influenced by the co-op and the origin of Sask Wheat Pool.

Today I want to talk about the neighbouring community of Wishart, which is influenced by the presence of their credit union. It is a small community whose assets grew in this credit union to over \$5 million and it took 50 years to do this, Mr. Speaker. They provided 50 years of service to this community and later on this summer they will be having their anniversary celebrations.

It is also important to know that this all started in 1944 and it's also an important year because of the Douglas election victory at this same period of time which saw the first social democratic government elected in North America.

Mr. Speaker, many good things happened in 1944 which made and continue to make Saskatchewan a better place to live. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hudson Bay Route Association Convention

Hon. Mr. Renaud: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Hudson Bay Route Association is holding its annual convention in Hudson Bay on April 10 to 12 this next week.

The history of the Hudson Bay route goes back a long way to the late 1800s when prairie farmers lobbied the federal government for a railroad to the bay, that would mean a shorter distance to port, and in turn lower freight rates. Approximately 30 years after feasibility reports were complete, in 1908 the branch line from Hudson Bay junction reached The Pas, Manitoba.

Due to the lack of progress and delays, the track from The Pas to mile 214 was constructed with public funds, Mr. Speaker. Progress on the line was stalled once again, and in 1924 the On-to-the-Bay Association was formed to keep the project on track.

Finally in the spring of 1929, the last spike was driven. The line was completed just as the Great Depression hit. But still westerners refused to abandon their ideals, and in 1944, Mr. Speaker, the On-to-the-Bay Association was transformed into the Hudson Bay Route Association. The association today continues to promote the ongoing and expanded use of the Port of Churchill for grain shipments from the west.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Regina Disabled Veterans' Association 60th Anniversary

Mr. Van Mulligen: -- Mr. Speaker, this weekend the Regina Disabled Veterans' Association will be celebrating its diamond anniversary -- 60 years of service to soldiers disabled in our country's wars and 60 years of service to the community at large.

As a recent article says about the association: their service did not end with the war. The DVA (Disabled Veterans' Association) was chartered in 1934 with the aim of providing services for veterans who had been wounded in war. Originally they lobbied government for disability pensions and increased food, shelter, and clothing allowances.

From that beginning, the association has expanded its activities to other areas of concern for veterans, and it has also extended its work into the community, as the Red Cross and Telemiracle will attest.

Mr. Speaker, as our nation's wars retreat more and more into the past, a fact for which we can all be grateful, it is easy for us to forget that there are still those who carry the scars of their service to us and to their country. The Disabled Veterans' Association is here to make sure we don't forget, and for their 60 years of determined work, I congratulate them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Stockholm Dinner Theatre

Mr. Knezacek: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's obviously a theatrical renaissance taking place in Saskatchewan as the statements by a number of members in the past few days would indicate.

I have further proof in my own constituency in the town of Stockholm. Stockholm has the population of approximately 500 men, women, and children. By the time the current dinner theatre production at Stockholm has finished its seventh sell-out performance, it will have played to over 830 people.

Mr. Speaker, if the Globe Theatre in Regina or the Persephone Theatre in Saskatoon had a play that was proportionately successful, it would play to over 300,000 people.

This is truly a cooperative effort, entirely by local people. The play, entitled "Hill-billy Weddin", is written and performed by the 18 actors and one director. The actors are also the waiters, greeters, and servers of the dinner. The actors provide the service in costume and in character. As well, there are a number of people involved in all the very necessary backstage work needed to make the play a success.

And a success it is. They originally planned to perform one night; they have been held over seven times. Members may see me for the last few available tickets if they rush. My brokerage fee is a modest one, I might add.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Grain Marketing and Production Problems

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker. I think there was a subtle message in that. But anyway, Mr. Speaker, this morning I want to pursue a topic raised by my colleague a few days ago, the member from Morse, when he asked the Minister of Agriculture a very real concern regarding the lack of railcars in the grain transportation system and the effects that that is going to have on the cash flow of Saskatchewan farm families. Mr. Speaker, with spring seeding just around the corner, this particular situation could and will have disastrous effects.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring another concern to the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, the union representing nearly 2,000 Saskatchewan grain handlers has been holding strike votes over the last couple of weeks. Recently a union representative said that a strike is definitely possible despite the fact it would be disruptive to farmers' ability to move grain.

Mr. Minister, have you or your officials been in contact with either side of this dispute; and if so, have you made it abundantly clear to the union that a strike at this time would be disastrous to Saskatchewan farm families?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, the members may or may not be aware, the matter falls wholly within the jurisdiction of the federal government. We have made it crystal clear to the federal government -- as I hope members opposite do who may have some ties -- we have made it crystal clear to the federal government that this strike would be disastrous and that everything possible must be done to avert this.

The federal government at times has done that and at times have not. So I would hope that those members opposite who have some ties with the federal government would use their good offices to try to avoid this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Minister, I thank you for that answer and I wish you would have answered the question that I asked. I'm afraid you've got a hold of the wrong union here. You did not follow my question.

So, Mr. Minister, I will go on to my second question and give you some pause for reflection upon what you just said. Now the light goes on; I see the bulb flashing.

Mr. Minister, with railcar shortages and problems with unions on the west coast and in Saskatchewan, the movement of grain is becoming a very real concern. It is tough enough to grow the product first of all, given the cost of inputs and the market prices, but to have the marketing of that product threatened is just too much. Farmers want assurances from you, their elected representative, that you have their concerns as top priority. They want and they need your support. They already know that they have ours.

Mr. Minister, farmers cannot support their families nor the Saskatchewan economy if they cannot move their grain. What are you prepared to do to support farmers this year? Or will you just issue another report like *Agriculture 2000* or maybe introduce another one-man commission?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- We are prepared to do what I hope the opposition is prepared to do, and that is to use every effort to ensure the federal government uses their resources to head this off. These are matters coming within the jurisdiction of the federal government. Only they can resolve it and we are urging them to do so. We hope members opposite who have some direct ties with Ottawa are also using their resources to try to head this up.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr.

Speaker, Mr. Minister, then let me address an issue that you do have some control over, some direct control over, Mr. Minister, and that is the cash flow problem that farmers are facing. And that is something that your government does not apparently have the ability to understand or act on those concerns.

We have spring seeding simply a heartbeat away, Mr. Minister. And your government is sitting on a \$300 million surplus on GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) premiums -- money which could be put into growing this year's crop instead of growing dust in some government account.

Mr. Minister, do you agree that this money -- producers' money -- could be better used in the farm economy? Do you have any idea what you plan to do with that money; and if so, could you share that with us this morning?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: -- Thank you to the member for his question. In regards to the railcar shortages, Mr. Speaker, we certainly do share his concerns. It seems that some of the cars are moving to the main lines, leaving the branch lines short and local elevators plugged. And we realize that.

We also realize that the diversification that the Saskatchewan farmers have participated in have meant more specialty crops and a need for cars. The U.S. (United States) of course are using more cars this year than before, and therefore leaving us unable . . . or the rail companies not able to lease cars.

We've written to Mr. Goodale on several occasions. We've written to Mr. Young with our concerns about this program. As you are aware, grain transportation is under federal jurisdiction. And I would hope that the third party, who may have some influence with the federal government, would also do that. In fact I could give them Mr. Goodale's phone number because we used it several times.

You mentioned the possibility of a GRIP surplus. And as you know, Mr. Member, we will not know if there is a surplus or a deficit until the year end. So I hope that answers your question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I address my next question to the Premier, and I'm sure that he will want to answer this question.

Mr. Premier, the farm crisis in this province has certainly been underscored this morning when you read the newspapers and you find out the situation with our current Minister of Economic Development. I should preface my remarks, Mr. Premier, by first of all indicating that I certainly wish him all the best in resolving his farm debt problems. However I have to ask you one question as it relates to his position as a minister of the Crown.

Last year, when the former minister of Education was facing a farm debt restructuring process, she did a very honourable thing. She recognized that her position as a minister may put her in a real or a perceived conflict of interest situation, and to avoid this she withdrew from cabinet. In her words: "... so that my family and I can pursue these alternatives without any suggestion or even a perception that I might be in a conflict of interest situation."

Mr. Premier, has the Minister of Economic Development discussed this problem with you? Does his present situation involve any dealings with ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) or any government agency? And if so has he considered following a similar course of action as the former minister of Education?

Mr. Premier, I simply want to give you an opportunity to respond to the situation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: -- Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. I've been in telephone communication with the Minister of Economic Development this morning. He advises me that there is no ACS money involved and no FCC (Farm Credit Corporation) money, which is the federal agency, involved, in any direct or indirect fashion with respect to this matter.

This is a private situation involving the Shaunavon Credit Union and the minister or the minister's relations. Furthermore I'm advised by the minister that payment has been made in full with respect to this particular issue as reported in the paper and that should put the matter to rest at this stage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Unemployment Rate

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question this morning is to the Minister of Economic Development. Mr. Minister, today we see more proof that your government's dismal record of economic development and job creation is a failure.

The new job figures show that there were just 424,000 people working in Saskatchewan in March. We've lost 2,000 jobs in the past month, Mr. Speaker. There are 12,000 fewer working than there were in March of 1991 under the previous administration.

In fact since this government took over, Mr. Speaker, each family in this province faces \$2,300 more in tax burden; there's 12,000 fewer jobs; there's 81,000 people on welfare; and things simply get worse. Fewer taxpayers, Mr. Minister, more taxes.

When are you going to admit, Mr. Minister, that you're headed in the wrong direction? And when are you going to abandon the policies that have taken us to this place in time where the projections simply aren't coming true. When are you going to do that, Mr.

Minister?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of the minister, I'd be pleased to answer that question.

With respect to unemployment, are we concerned about unemployment levels? Of course we're concerned about unemployment levels. But I would point out to the members opposite, Saskatchewan still has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, and in fact it has declined from last year. Last year it was 9.6; this year it's 8.5.

Are we concerned about the number of people in the province on welfare? Of course we're concerned and we're working hard to reduce that number. But again, I will be releasing a table showing that Saskatchewan, relative to the size of its population, has the lowest number of people on welfare of any province in Canada.

Are we concerned about out-migration? Of course we're concerned, and we're doing everything we can to provide opportunities for young people in this province. But again here, that figure is levelling off.

I would make one final point. We have said that our strategy in terms of economic development is to diversify the economy -- for example, increase the number of people in manufacturing and processing, and in manufacturing and processing, there are 3,000 more people working in that area this year, relative to last year.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, we've said that trade is one of our priorities because we are a trading province. And I would say again, in this area there are 8,000 more people in Saskatchewan working in trade than last year. So we're concerned but there are also many positives in these numbers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I'm glad the minister responsible for a lot of the problem had the courage to stand up this morning.

Madam Minister, in your February budget you talked about 5,000 new jobs that were going to be created. You were going to bring the workforce up to 445,000.

Now, Madam Minister, I agree: you do have the lowest numbers in Canada because people simply flee this province now. It's either flee or go on welfare. There's no options because your government has such a dismal record. There are fewer jobs, Madam Minister, than last year when you came in with that grandiose prediction in your last budget.

Now your stated goal was 5,000 jobs, Madam Minister. You said it in the budget in February. You're nowhere near; it's going the other way. Are you going to tell the Assembly this morning that you will stand by that 5,000 job number that you predicted? Madam Minister, would you put your job on the line as the

Finance minister of this province and guarantee those 5,000 jobs? Would you do that?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: -- Mr. Speaker, I must say it is amusing that the members opposite would talk about putting their jobs on the line if they didn't meet their financial targets.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: -- They would have all been gone. They would have all been gone in the last administration.

But what we have to do in this province is we have to put our situation into perspective. And what I would like to point out is an example in another province, because I think it helps to put our situation in perspective. And I would choose New Brunswick. And I would choose New Brunswick for three reasons: because Frank McKenna gets very good press about his innovative ideas to develop the economy; because Frank McKenna gets very good press about his innovative ideas to get people off of welfare; and because Frank McKenna has been mentioned by the Liberal leader as her model.

What are the statistics in this province? And again, it's not that I wish any ill will to New Brunswick. New Brunswick lost 10,000 jobs over last year. Mr. Speaker, 10,000 jobs on a labour force of less than 300,000 -- a much smaller labour force. Our unemployment rate is now 8.5 per cent; New Brunswick's unemployment rate went from 14.6 per cent to 15.3 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, my point is this: jobs are a problem across Canada, not just in this province. We're concerned about it, it's our priority, but the biggest killer of jobs out there today are the federal Liberals' high interest rates.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister, Mr. Speaker, likes to ignore reality, and I'd remind her of what the **Star-Phoenix** said yesterday:

It seems that this has been said time and time again: this provincial government never seems to listen.

The image this government is projecting is one of being unable to keep its promises.

It does not bode well for anyone who has to do business with it.

Madam Minister, yesterday my colleague raised the spectre of 81,000 people on welfare. It seems the only place that you people have any economic decisions made is in the area of gaming, where you're going to encourage all the down-and-outs in this province, Madam Minister, to spend what money they have left on gambling.

You know, does Jack Messer have to go play your slot machines? Does Garf Stevenson have to spend his \$500 a day on your slot machines? No, because they are on the NDP (New Democratic Party) wheel of fortune. You know, if you're a patronage appointment in this province, you're doing quite well. The rest of the folks, Madam Minister, in this province have no jobs; they're on welfare. They're leaving the province because of the policies of your government, Madam Minister.

I ask you once again. Once again, you made a projection of 5,000 jobs more than there were last year. That's gone 2,000 the other way, according to the stats today. Madam Minister, do you stand behind that extra 5,000 jobs? Are you guaranteeing the people of this province are going to have the opportunity to work instead of flee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: -- Mr. Speaker, I am guaranteeing the people of this province that our highest priority as a government are jobs. But I do have to correct the member opposite when he talks about welfare. I said I would be releasing to the press a table which shows that relative to the size of our population, we have the fewest number of people on welfare in all of Canada. Are we concerned about it? Of course we're concerned that there are still people on welfare, but we have to have a broader perspective. Sometimes the members opposite suggest that these problems only exist in Saskatchewan.

But to go back to the jobs issue, the main thrust of the recent budget in this province was jobs. That's why we have increased spending on capital. That's why we have established the ag equity fund, directed at rural Saskatchewan, to help process our agricultural products here to ensure that there are more markets for farm products and more jobs for young people and better exports for the province.

He quotes the **Star-Phoenix**. I would quote back to him. The business editor of the **Star-Phoenix**, Paul Martin, who said at the end of the last year, the economic indicators in Saskatchewan for 1994 are better than they have looked in a long time.

Get on the bandwagon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Agriculture Strategy

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan has the highest percentage of its provincial economy generated by agriculture of any province in Canada. This should make us the leaders in setting the vision

for agriculture for the nation. Mr. Minister, it has been over two and a half years since your government was elected on a 23-page platform document which devoted only nine lines to the vision of agriculture.

While crops lay rotting in the fields in the north-east, your government is committed to trail-blazing labour legislation. While farmers wait and wait for a revised safety net program, your government, which has been in office for two and a half years, points fingers at Ottawa for not coming to you with solutions to Saskatchewan's problems.

Mr. Minister, when are you going to take a leadership role and put forward a credible agriculture strategy for the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a very interesting question coming from the member from Shaunavon who was elected on that platform and in fact promoted that platform.

I want to remind him again, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan has over 40 per cent of the arable land in the country of Canada, 3 per cent of the population, and he doesn't recognize, I guess, the things that the Saskatchewan government does for farmers in comparison to the federal government.

A six-year leaseback program, Mr. Speaker, that Farm Credit will not follow; an ag equity fund to help the farm community to diversity; Ag 2000, trying to get a farm program for farmers that is tax-friendly and farmer-friendly. And he sits there on one hand and demands more from the province; and on the other hand his federal counterparts take 5 per cent out of the transportation subsidy -- millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, right out of the farmer's pocket. I don't know where he's coming from.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again it's excuses instead of solutions. Mr. Minister, Saskatchewan's net farm income dropped by \$340 million in 1994 from the 1993 year. While your deputy minister talks of things looking better in Saskatchewan, farmers are scratching their heads wondering what planet you're living on.

It's a fact that canola prices are high, but very few farmers have canola to sell at those prices. It's also a fact that cereal grain prices are lower than they were last year. And it is definitely a fact that crops laying in the fields from last fall are not worth the fuel to get them picked up.

Saskatchewan's farm organizations believe that the federal Minister of Agriculture has been very receptive in discussing the concerns of Saskatchewan farmers, and seems very willing to sit down with you and talk about solutions that you have in mind for the problems your government has the responsibility for.

Mr. Minister, can you tell me what plan you have presented to the federal minister; what demands you have made; and whether you will share your plan and your proposed solutions for Saskatchewan agriculture with the rest of us?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to note that there's an article here in **The Western Producer** that says:

The federal government's farm policy rhetoric may be Liberal red, but the funding plans that should breathe life into rhetoric are Tory blue.

The Leader of the Third Party, in 1991 borrowed the agricultural policy from Mr. Mulroney. And today the federal Liberal government has borrowed the Mulroney agricultural policy again.

We continue to work with Mr. Goodale on many issues in the farm sector like grain transportation; like help for the farmers in the north-east. We continue to lobby. Where are you, Mr. Member from Shaunavon? Are you helping?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a very real possibility that we could experience higher interest rates in the short-term. I have concerns about that just as everyone else who owes money does. The federal government certainly will get pressure from us to address that.

But, Mr. Minister, what I want to know from you today is what concrete plans you have in place for farm safety net programs, crop insurance premiums that are affordable, and emergency relief. What representations are you making to Ottawa to set a Saskatchewan agenda for a made-in-Saskatchewan solution to our agriculture problems? And what efforts are you making to get other provinces onside with a solution that fits our needs right here?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I want to mention that Mr. Easter, I believe, is a member of the new Liberal federal government, and he's saying that the federal Liberal policy is the old Tory blue policy. I'll read the whole article for the member's information:

The government farm policy rhetoric may be Liberal red but the funding plans that should breathe life into rhetoric are Tory blue, an outspoken government back-bencher told agricultural minister Ralph Goodale last week. He also said that the new government appears to have simply accepted the spending plans that Agriculture Canada bureaucrats were preparing for the previous Conservative government.

I ask you, Mr. Member from Shaunavon, to join with us in lobbying Mr. Goodale to look at realistic solutions to the farm policy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's apparent why people feel a sense of frustration in rural Saskatchewan. The Minister and the Associate

Minister of Agriculture seem absolutely incapable of either understanding a question or answering the question.

Can the minister tell me if he believes that there is any obligation on his shoulders to provide leadership for the agriculture industry of this province, or is he content to sit back and follow the lead of other provinces with far less risk while he points fingers at Ottawa and shirks his responsibility to provide leadership?

Mr. Minister, for the final time today, will you give us some sense of what you have in store for farmers with respect to farm safety net proposals, crop insurance premiums, and assistance for the north-east? Can you try to answer the question without using the words federal government, Ottawa, or Liberal?

Can you tell us what you, the NDP Minister of Agriculture for Saskatchewan, will do to take responsibility . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. The preambles to questions are getting much, much too long and I ask members in the future to please cut down on the preambles of the questions and get to the question.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know when you have a Liberal federal government, it could be a Tory government; it's like Tory-Liberal, Liberal-Tory. I know the member from Shaunavon is a little embarrassed by the colour in his face but . . . and I wish he would join with us -- we offer you Mr. Goodale's phone number -- join with us. You're sitting in the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan; join with us in telling the federal Agriculture minister the concerns of the farmers in Saskatchewan. We are doing it. Where are you?

They take five per cent of the transportation subsidy, they take it away from farm families in Saskatchewan and you have not mentioned that in this House once.

Mr. Goodale says, interest-free cash advances. Yes, the farmers need it, and they do need it. Have you made one presentation to Mr. Goodale on interest-free cash advances? I don't believe you have.

And also in this article, Mr. Goodale can see . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order, order.

Corporation Taxes in Arrears

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to provide the answer to the oral question of which I took notice on March 28.

The question was posed by the member from Morse on behalf of Mr. Arthur Bird from Porcupine Plain. Mr. Bird wished to know the dollar amount of provincial taxes owed to the Saskatchewan government by Canadian and multinational corporations combined and what measures are being taken to collect these taxes.

The total amount of corporation taxes and charges in arrears to the province is estimated at between 5 and \$6 million at any given time. Only a very small part of this is eventually written off as uncollectible. As a proportion of total government revenues, estimated at \$4.8 billion for '94-95, the amount in arrears is relatively insignificant.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 53 -- An Act to amend The Health Districts Act

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move the first reading of An Act to amend The Health Districts Act.

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

PRIORITY OF DEBATE

Eviction of Farm Family From Their Land

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 15 a major lending institution moved to evict a Saskatchewan farm family from their land based on the February 22, 1994 decision of *Mulatz v. the Toronto Dominion Bank* in which leaseback rights became the property of the trustee.

The bank cited this as a cause to end its leaseback obligations with the family and put their land up for sale days ago, after giving the family three weeks notice to vacate the land.

Mr. Speaker, the Farm Tenure Arbitration Board had ordered the bank to remove a clause from the lease with the farmer in question which would put his leaseback rights in jeopardy in the event of bankruptcy. The bank has appealed this order by the Farm Tenure Arbitration Board and is now moving to sell the land without waiting for the court to appeal the decision. This directly contravenes the order of the Farm Tenure Arbitration Board which remains law until such time as it is overturned by the courts.

Mr. Speaker, the trustee to whom the leaseback rights were assigned by the bank has ruled that the rights have no value to him as a trustee, and as of yesterday has turned them back to the farmer. The bank however is still proceeding with its action to sell the land.

Mr. Speaker, given that this has grave implications for almost 200 farmers in bankruptcy proceedings, and given that the order of the Farm Tenure Arbitration Board has been ignored due to a deficiency in The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act, and given that this has grave and immediate implications for all farmers who are currently involved in leaseback programs, and considering the declaration of bankruptcy as well as for farmers who may be petitioned into bankruptcy

by their lending institutions, and given that this puts the status of the entire leaseback program at immediate risk, the only recourse to protect farm families trying to rebuild their farms is to immediately amend The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act before a precedent is set.

Mr. Speaker, given the fact that there is under the normal process of House business no opportunity to debate this urgent situation, I therefore move, Mr. Speaker:

That the Assembly cause the government to immediately amend The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act in order to protect the rights of Saskatchewan farm families who currently face bankruptcy proceedings and those involved in leasebacks who must consider bankruptcy as an option to contend with onerous farm debt.

Seconded by the member from Greystone.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, and I shall be quite brief, I would make the argument to Mr. Speaker that it is apparent that this matter arose out of a court case which occurred some time ago. It is not a new issue, nor is it capable of a resolution he urges, the government to pass a Bill. It strikes . . . I think it's fairly obvious there are other opportunities to raise this; the member could move a private Bill; he could deal with it on Tuesday.

So I would suggest this is not an appropriate matter for this sort of a motion. There are lots of other opportunities to deal with it; it's apparent from within the motion itself.

The Speaker: -- I received notice of this request under rule 17 to debate an urgent public importance . . . was received in the Clerk's office at 7:50 a.m. this morning, for which I want to thank the hon. member.

As I understand it, the case made by the member from Shaunavon is that a particular farmer's situation currently taking place has highlighted the need for amendments to The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act to prevent one of the important purposes of the Act and the Farm Tenure Arbitration Board from being circumvented.

In dealing with issues raised under rule 17, the Speaker must consider whether the matter is within the administrative competence of the government and whether there is no other reasonable opportunity for debate.

(1045)

I agree with the hon. member that the matter raised is of public importance and falls within the jurisdiction of the provincial government. The key question that the Chair must determine, pursuant to rule 17(5), is whether there is a probability of the matter being brought before the House within reasonable time by other means.

From the information presented by the member, I find that it is not evident that the situation would change appreciably if the Assembly had been given the normal two days notice to have this debate. Concerns about The Farm Security Act have been ongoing for some time, as raised by the Leader of the Third Party in question period on March 11, 1994, page 817 of the *Debates and Proceedings*.

And even this particular case, as raised by the member for Shaunavon, has been at issue since March 15. There have been and continue to be other ordinary parliamentary opportunities to debate this matter. The member may submit notice today for a private member's resolution under rule 16(1) to be debated next Tuesday; or the member may ask for leave, under rule 42, to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity before orders of the day.

On these grounds I find that the matter raised does not fulfil the conditions necessary to gain priority of debate over the normal order of business for today.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: -- Why is the member on his feet?

MOTION UNDER RULE 42

Crisis Facing Saskatchewan Farmers

Mr. Neudorf: -- Before orders of the day, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Assembly for leave to make a motion pursuant to rule 42.

The Speaker: -- The member may state his motion.

An Hon. Member: -- Or ask for leave.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Mr. Speaker, I believe first of all I'll explain the rationale behind it, then make the motion, and then ask for leave -- which is the normal procedure, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I ask leave of the Assembly pursuant to rule 42 to debate a motion dealing with a matter of urgent and pressing necessity. And while the member from Shaunavon's motion was denied because there was no sense of imminency proven, I think it is imperative however, Mr. Speaker, that this Assembly alert the governments to the crisis facing Saskatchewan farmers today in an effort to exact action to alleviate the problem, Mr. Speaker.

To prove my case, Mr. Speaker, in the north-east alone, Mr. Speaker, one-third of between 900,000 to 1 million acres of farm land was not harvested last fall, placing those farmers in that area in dire straits, Mr. Speaker. Between 50 and 90 Farm Credit Corporation accounts -- Farm Credit Corporation accounts -- are in arrears in this region and 50 to 60 per cent of ACS corporation accounts are in arrears.

To date, Mr. Speaker, no special consideration has been granted to farmers in that area of the province. And, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan leads the country in

farm bankruptcies. According to the federal Consumer and Corporate Affairs department, a total of 166 farmers declared bankruptcy last year accounting for 48 per cent of the Canadian total of 349.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan had twice as many as Alberta and almost . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order, order. Order, order. I think the member knows full well that under rule 42 he must very succinctly state the problem that he wishes to ask for leave and not debate the issue. The member is now debating the issues and I want him to state the point and then ask for leave.

Mr. Neudorf: -- I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The main point and the gist of our motion would be twofold. First of all, that the Canadian Wheat Board has a battle against the farmer. The Canadian Wheat Board should be an ally of farmers, not an enemy of farmers, and there is something that this government can do and that resolves around -- or revolves, pardon me -- around the issue of the \$300 million left in the GRIP fund.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is undoubtedly a farm crisis that we have here and it must be addressed by all levels of government, Mr. Speaker. And so therefore, I move, seconded by the member from Moosomin:

That this Assembly urge the government to immediately takes steps to address the agricultural crisis in Saskatchewan, particularly in the north-east where early frost and wet seasons have caused crop failure for two consecutive years, and where 50 to 60 per cent of Agriculture Credit Corporation accounts are in arrears and between 500 and 700 Saskatchewan producers are in desperate circumstances, and further urge the government to support the SGTC's (that's the Senior Grain Transportation Commission) recommendation to allow private grain cars into western rail fleets because the current railcar shortage is costing prairie farmers millions of dollars in demurrage and lost sales, and further urge the government to consider using the \$300 million surplus in the revenue insurance program to help alleviate those problems.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank all members of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing that indeed there is a farm crisis in Saskatchewan in particular and indeed across all of Canada. And there are of course . . .

The Speaker: -- Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Flavel: -- Mr. Speaker, with respect to the speaker, to ask leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Flavel: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to the Legislative Assembly and ask the members to give a warm welcome to a former member of the Legislative Assembly and to a former minister of Agriculture behind the bar. Mr. Gordon MacMurchy is with us. And I ask members to please make him welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MOTION UNDER RULE 42

Crisis Facing Saskatchewan Farmers (continued)

Mr. Neudorf: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I too would like to welcome the previous minister of Agriculture. He has a very . . . His timing is obviously still very impeccable and so therefore I welcome him to listen to the debate. I remember him more as the minister of Education in times past, but also his significance to the farming scene is well known.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying before the introduction, crisis in agriculture is here. It is rampant upon all farmers of this province of Saskatchewan. In my motion, Mr. Speaker, I specifically stated the situation in the north-eastern portion of this province where indeed we have a multiplicity of farmers experiencing grave difficulties through no failing of their own. It was simply a matter of a problem that was compounded by mother nature in that area where indeed as many as 1 million acres, Mr. Speaker, were just simply not able to be harvested. And the farmers are facing the dire consequences of that.

But all of these factors are compounded by what I would consider certainly not farmers' initiatives that have created the problem, but quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, the problems have been created by politicians. I think politicians are to be blamed for most of the problems facing agriculture, whether it be ideologies or whether it be financial constraints; that by myopic vision we are not able as politicians to see the long-term implications, the long-term strategies, and quite frankly again, Mr. Speaker, the long-term fallout -- the long-term fallout of short-term problems.

Now I want to hold the feet to the fire of both levels of government, and that is the provincial government as well as the federal government. There are things that our provincial government could be doing to alleviate the situation, because many of the situations that we are facing right now, Mr. Speaker, are as a direct result of provincial government strategy.

And I don't have to point out the situation that exists as a result of the abrogation of responsibilities in the GRIP program. And I don't want to spend time

necessarily rehashing the developments in the GRIP program and what this provincial government did to farmers as a result of that. But I don't buy for one moment the argument that \$300 million lying in a bank account, a government bank account, gathering and growing dust, could not be better spent, Mr. Speaker, growing crops.

That is the fundamental premiss, I think, that this government has to recognize. There is the ability and there is the mechanism and the wherewithal to address many of the problems facing our provincial farmers, Mr. Speaker.

We found out in question period . . . in question period I stated that the biggest investment that this province goes through on an annual basis is but a heartbeat away, Mr. Speaker, a heartbeat away -- the spring seeding program of Saskatchewan is being planned and is being formulated and is almost coming to fruition. And farmers, on a constant basis, are coming to me and saying: I don't know how I'm going to put the crop in the ground; I'm having trouble with my bankers; I'm having trouble with my financiers; I don't know if I will have the wherewithal to put the crop in the ground.

And, Mr. Speaker, then we hear the Minister of Agriculture and we hear the Minister of Finance get up and say: well, but it's all because of increased and better-than-expected commodity supplies; the farmers got too much for their grain last year. That's what they're saying: the farmers got too much for their grain last year; that's why there's a surplus in the account. We are saying that the prices were higher than anticipated, we'll grant you that, but any time there is a surplus of \$300 million, let's return it to whom it is due -- the farmers; the premiums that these folks have paid. Let's do that, Mr. Speaker. That's one point, a very salient point that I want to stress.

Other points are to get on with producing a long-term safety net that will be there when it is needed. And I say to members opposite, again it is not good enough to say that we had a happy little commission wandering around the province and they happened to come up with some suggestions. And we think that some of these suggestions have some merit.

So what does the government say that they're going to be doing on the issue? The government is saying right now, well we plan to hold meetings; we plan to hold meetings with these people to determine what we're going to be doing. That's what the Minister of Agriculture says. We have a plan; it's called **Agriculture 2000**.

And we question sincerely sometimes, Mr. Speaker, whether that means the 2000 farmers that are going to be left, or indeed whether they are planning for the year 2000. And it's open for debate and open for question I would suspect, Mr. Speaker, as to what is really the significance of that type of statement.

But it's not good enough to say that we're going to be sitting down with producers and we're going to come

up with some kind of plan some time in the future.

Mr. Speaker, bankers will not sign under that premiss. And farmers have the right to know what to expect from this government. And they are getting on a daily basis, evidence of what to expect. And it is not, Mr. Speaker, reassuring to them.

Now I want to take a look at some of the statistics that I have in front of me from the Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food. These are the stat facts, Mr. Speaker, and they deal with 1993 farm bankruptcies, different bankruptcies. And on the surface . . . and I'll point out some things here, Mr. Speaker.

The Consumer and Corporate Affairs reports that 166 Saskatchewan farmers filed for bankruptcy during 1993 -- 166. Now an interesting addendum to that is that this is a decrease of 13 per cent from 1992. So it seems, Mr. Speaker, that farmers are catching their breath, that there actually has been a decrease in the numbers of bankruptcies. And I believe that.

But I guess what we have to look at, Mr. Speaker, is the reason for the bankruptcies. And I have always believed as we approached this farm crisis in the mid-'80s and on, that we had different levels of expertise, we had different levels of abilities, and we had different levels of farm support within the farming community itself. And what we found first of all was that many of the farmers that were in trouble exited early in this farm crisis that has been plaguing Saskatchewan and indeed all of Canada over the last number of years.

(1100)

The poor doers, the farmers perhaps lacking expertise, lacking financial backing, were the first ones to go, Mr. Speaker. They are no longer with us. They are history; they are gone. And then, Mr. Speaker, a second level of farmers, the ones that had more wherewithal, that had perhaps more expertise, more management capabilities, hung on for a number of years. But subsequent to that, Mr. Speaker, we find that even that level was no longer good enough. And they, as the term goes, bit the dust and they are no longer with us.

Mr. Speaker, the apprehensible and the disconcerting component of this whole procedure and this whole process, is that we are always going higher and higher into the level of expertise and competence of the farmers that are now finding themselves in financial difficulty, Mr. Speaker.

We saw an evidence of that in this morning's paper. People that we least expect and least suspect of having some financial difficulties in the farming community suddenly crop up as the main focus of attention. And I'm not only referring to the issue brought up this morning in question period, I'm referring to my own community.

And I think every one of us in this House can look at their neighbours, every member in this House who's a

farming member can look at some of their neighbours and they have experienced the same thing. Farmers with the best yards, best machinery, all well painted and seemingly doing very well, suddenly find themselves . . . well it's not suddenly but it's suddenly as far as the public is concerned. They are exposed now as being the victims of the current situation.

Sometimes, admittedly because of their perhaps overzealousness in acquiring land, in acquiring perhaps machinery, and perhaps taking extended vacations and so on. But I would suggest to you and members of this House and the public that those are the exceptions rather than the rule. Very often we have competent people, competent farmers being caught up in the mix and paying a price, as it were. Paying a price, I submit to you, mainly because of decisions made by politicians. I come back to my major premiss -- decisions made by politicians.

I'm not necessarily getting after the current member, Minister of Agriculture now, nor the one necessarily when we were in power, nor perhaps even the federal Agriculture minister, but I'll have some things to say about him in a little while, nor even . . . It's a global problem and it's being recognized as such, and it's being addressed as such through GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) negotiations and some of the issues that have been going on.

But, Mr. Speaker, the thing that I wanted to point out on the 166 Saskatchewan farmers filing for bankruptcy is that 62 per cent of those farmers were field-crop farmers -- field-crop farmers. The number of livestock farms which filed for bankruptcy were 3 -- 3 of those farmers were livestock farmers.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have this government that says to make sure that we have a healthy farming sector we must diversify. The minister is fond of getting up and saying the livestock industry is the basis of our survival. And I can see why he says that. The statistics prove him right. And I applaud that.

And when he says we must diversify, we must get into the red meat industry, we must get into hogs, we must get into livestock, we must protect the supply-managed industries like the dairy and the chickens and the eggs, I agree with all of that. And it's a laudable comment to make. The sad aspect of it is, Mr. Minister, having said that, all the props, all the supports, are taken out from under the farmers.

And I can get into -- and I won't -- we can get into some of the details about the FeedGAP (feed grain adjustment program) program or the interim red meat stabilization program or the cash advance program. Other issues that the farmers were relying upon that have been in place, that were in place, to support agriculture have been taken away in one fell swoop and the minister says, expand, diversify, get into livestock.

And there's an inconsistency there. And that inconsistency is further aggravated by the counter-productivity of this government and so many

of their initiatives. And I specifically refer to this latest back-door tax grab of 3.8 per cent in power. That's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, and it's totally uncalled for. But as a livestock producer, that impacts directly upon me because it's an accumulative effect of 4 per cent that we've experienced just a little while ago.

And the Minister of Finance gets up and says, well folks in Saskatchewan, we have to keep our promises, and we promised the folks that they would have regular small increases. And so therefore it was time to keep our promise and that's why we have another 3.8 per cent increase. Don't keep some of your promises, we say to members opposite.

But this was compounded on top of a nine and a half per cent energy cost in SaskEnergy. Again the livestock industry needs a lot of power. Why would you do a back-door stab with the very same motion saying, expand into agriculture livestock sector. And you take not only the supports away -- that would be bad enough -- but you go around the back door yet and take more money out of their pockets from farmers that are trying to survive.

Now that was my little contribution, Mr. Speaker, in so far as the provincial government is concerned. And I have certainly I believe indicated some primary aspects that they should turn their attention to. But to me right now, for a larger portion of the farmers and for immediate impact, is the situation as it relates to the federal government. And that's part of my motion, Mr. Speaker, and it cannot be ignored.

We are finding now, Mr. Speaker, a federal government that seems to be distanced and immune from the realities of the western grain farmer. The western grain farmer has, over the years, experienced dire, dire problems and has suffered the consequences of those.

But again, why would we have politicians creating more of a mess, creating more impediments to the economic survival of the grain farmers of the prairie provinces, and particularly Saskatchewan, because we have almost half of the farm land in Canada. We've got 50 million acres of productive arable land. And that, Mr. Speaker, grows a whole heck of a lot of crops.

But those crops are no good to us in the elevators. Those crops are no good to us in the bins, Mr. Speaker. Those crops must be brought to market. They must be sold. Well heavens, how can we sell those crops if we haven't got a means of bringing them to market?

And that's the sad part about it. If we don't have strikes somewhere along the line, whether it is in the Pool system, or whether it is the grain handlers on the coast, or whether it's the railroads themselves, we don't have enough problems. But then when things seem to be moving slowly and there's no reason for grain not to be moving to market, we find that, whoops, there's a shortage of railcars. Right now, Mr. Speaker, on a monthly basis we are short 5,000 grain cars -- 5,000 grain cars. And they're not going to market. The grain

is not going to market.

Our overseas customers are saying to the Canadian Wheat Board, to the Canadian farmer, why should we buy grain from you if you're not reliable? Why should we make contracts with you to buy your wheat, to buy your barley, if we don't know for sure whether we are going to get it? Oh yes, we like your quality; you've got excellent grain; we would love to buy it; we'll pay you a premium for it. But then we shoot ourselves in the foot by not allowing that grain to go to market.

And what's the reason for that? Is that some ideological reason why the federal Minister of Agriculture says no, I know that the cars are available out there, I know that CP (Canadian Pacific) cars are available out there, we know that there are Burlington cars out there from the northern states, there are private cars available that would pick up the slack, that would be able to deliver this grain to market, but I'm not going to allow that.

That is what Ralph Goodale, right from Regina area, as a cabinet minister in the federal government from Saskatchewan, who represents Saskatchewan farmers -- is supposed to represent Saskatchewan farmers -- is saying, no, no private railcars allowed. I don't know, is he a socialist? I didn't think he was, but what's the problem with private railcars? I suspect the government members sitting there right now are saying, you bet, we need that, because there's a bigger crisis in the land than simply allowing private railcars to go in.

Mr. Speaker, that's part of the solution -- that's part of the solution. We've had a backlog of the grain not being able to be delivered by the strikes. That put us behind the eight ball. We've got a situation now where there are literally no grain cars travelling to the Port of Churchill, because it takes boxcars to go to the Port of Churchill. To my best knowledge, there are none of those available to go to Churchill.

What is the ultimate tonnage this year of grain that's going to be sold through the Port of Churchill? It's going to be disastrously low. It's compounding the situation.

I have a letter here from the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, and this letter is addressed to Mr. Peter Thompson, who is the administrator for the Grain Transportation Agency, Mr. Speaker. And according to this letter that the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association is writing to Mr. Thompson, that is an acknowledgement that the crisis will only worsen in the coming months. It's not going to get better.

And yet when the suggestion was made to Mr. Thompson, who is appointed by the Minister of Agriculture of the country of Canada, when the suggestion was made that this situation could be alleviated by having private cars being added to the runs, maybe even being added to the pool, the pool of cars, that it was rejected. It was rejected.

And they say, it is therefore with great alarm that we learn of your decision to not act immediately on the SGTC's recommendation, and that is that allow private cars to be added to the fleet on an unchargeable basis.

So the Wheat Growers of Canada are certainly very disturbed by that decision, Mr. Speaker. And I could go through the entire letter, which I will, due to the constraints of time, resist the temptation to do it.

But, Mr. Speaker, the point that I want to make is their sixth point, and I will conclude my comments by having the weight of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association's support being added to my comments where it says that the GTA appears to have lost sight of its mandate.

What is the mandate of the Grain Transportation Agency? And that is this: to exercise -- at least the role of the administrator of the WGTA -- is to exercise his powers in such manner as to facilitate the movement of grain and to ensure that the grain transportation system is efficient, reliable, and effective, with the objective of maximizing returns to producers.

Mr. Speaker, the only reason that they are not allowing private cars into the system is because of the perceived perceptions that it would be negative towards shippers. Well, Mr. Speaker, the mandate is not to support shippers. They will take care of themselves. They are individuals who are quite capable of looking after themselves. It is the administrator's responsibility to see to it that the producers, the producers of the grain are being supported as opposed to the shippers.

And they conclude by saying:

Please note that the objective is to maximize returns to producers. There is no mention in this mandate of shippers. It is therefore very disconcerting that you appear to be placing the interests of certain shippers ahead of those of farmers.

Your letter does not even make the slightest reference to what may be in the best interest of farmers.

(1115)

Mr. Speaker, I ask the federal government this question. Is this what your concern is? Is this what the federal Minister of Agriculture's concern is, that he's got to play the rules straight with the shippers as opposed to the farmers?

That member, the Minister of Agriculture of Canada, was elected by Saskatchewan farmers in large part. And that is why he is now the federal Minister of Agriculture. And I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that he is failing and that he is failing the Canadian, the Saskatchewan, grain producers miserably in the carrying out of his mandate.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all members of this House to send that minister a clear message of how we as legislators of the province of Saskatchewan are extremely disappointed in his carrying out of his mandate, and that we urge him to as quickly as possible alleviate those conditions that are adding to the demise of the Saskatchewan farmers, which he could easily do with a stroke of a pen, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to conclude now by once again acknowledging all members of this House by allowing this dire set of circumstances to be debated in this legislature this morning, Mr. Speaker. And so now, therefore, move the motion that I read before. And here we are, Mr. Speaker. I have found it.

And I move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by my colleague, the member from Moosomin:

That this Assembly urge the government to immediately take steps to address the agriculture crisis in Saskatchewan, particularly in the north-east where early frosts and wet seasons have caused crop failure for two consecutive years and where 50 to 60 per cent of the Agricultural Credit Corporation accounts are in arrears and between 500 and 700 Saskatchewan producers are in desperate circumstances, and further urge the government to support the SGTC's recommendation to allow private grain cars into western rail fleets because the current railcar shortage is costing prairie farmers millions of dollars in demurrage and lost sales, and further urge the government to consider using the \$300 million surplus in the revenue insurance program to help alleviate these problems.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to be able to stand in this Assembly and raise a few points, bring them to the attention of the members of the Assembly this morning regarding the motion that is before us. And I think it's certainly appropriate that we do that, Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that we just received a fax this morning from Agriculture Canada. In fact it was just prior to coming into the House that it was delivered to our office. One of the inquiries here or the suggestions of the headlines was "UGGS for transport inquiry."

United Grain Growers president Ted Allen has called on federal Transport Minister Doug Young to undertake an emergency inquiry into the crisis in western grain transportation and to immediately instruct the Grain Transportation Agency (GTA) to change their rules so as to encourage grain shippers to lease cars.

Now as my colleague, the member from Rosthern, has indicated in his remarks earlier on, Mr. Speaker, certainly there is a crisis facing a number of farmers. And, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to be careful in how we address the issue because it's not just farmers, it's

families, Mr. Speaker. It's small rural communities. It's people right across this province. Even the cities of Regina and Saskatoon are affected when the farming community is facing a difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the privilege of talking to a number of people, certainly in the north-east, regarding the farm situation. I've attended meetings regarding health and meetings related to some of the concerns people have had regarding the new gun laws.

And one of the major areas of discussion that always crops up is the problem that farmers are facing in north-eastern Saskatchewan. And we're finding out, Mr. Speaker, that it's not just a problem that's affecting farmers in north-eastern Saskatchewan, but it's affecting farmers right across the whole spectrum. However, the north-east area certainly has another problem related to their area that most farmers in general have been able to overcome. And that is in relationship in regard to the harvest of last fall.

Mr. Speaker, we realize that the north-east section of our province has some of the larger areas and acres of grain that still are yet to be harvested. And this isn't just the first year, it's the second year where they're facing a significant problem related to harvesting and the fact that they weren't able to get the crop off and put it in the bin.

Mr. Speaker, when you think of the fact that early frost . . . and that first of all wasn't considered a real problem. However when that first snowfall came . . . and generally in Saskatchewan when we get a snowfall in the fall, in September, you can expect that that snowfall and that moisture is going to disappear. It will dry up and we'll receive a normal period of maybe ten days to three weeks, even a month, of good weather late into the fall to allow the harvest. However in north-eastern Saskatchewan that reprieve really didn't come. They had one or two days, and in most cases, some farmers have very little, if any, crop today that they were able to harvest.

As we've been discussing this issue, as we've raised the issue on the floor of the Assembly, we've continued to ask the Minister of Agriculture and the government and the Premier, we've raised questions as to what they're going to do to address some of these concerns.

And the Minister of Agriculture, and even the Minister of Highways in his response indicated, well the prices of the product, the prices of grain have increased significantly; therefore it would be appropriate for farmers to just go to the bin and haul a bit of grain out. With the significant increases in prices they will be able to generate the cash flow that would alleviate the concerns that the lenders have and give them the opportunity to pay off some of last year's bills as well as put some money aside to put the grain in the ground.

However, Mr. Speaker, it's not as simple as that. There are a number of hindrances in the way. Number one,

any time you see a significant increase in grain it's a reflection of the fact that there was a lack of product on the farm. It's a reflection of the fact that there were poor growing conditions. It's a reflection of the fact that in many cases too the grain prices, the increased grain prices have come in the areas of grain production that has been harvested. As we've seen in this case, Mr. Speaker, higher grain prices for No. 1 and No. 2 high protein wheat, when most of the wheat that's been harvested is either Canada 3 or else feed.

And if you don't happen to have the right product in the bin, or if you have no product in the bin, it doesn't really matter what the prices are, you cannot generate the cash flow. You do not have the ability to derive the income to give you the cash flow to pay the bills.

And those bills, Mr. Speaker, are bills owed to fuel suppliers, they're owed to fertilizer and chemical dealers, they're owed to local grocery stores, as people have tried to maintain their ability to feed themselves, Mr. Speaker. And as those bills aren't paid, it makes it even more difficult for the local businesses in our small communities to survive.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, it may mean that there are few people from the rural areas coming into centres like Regina to take advantage of the shopping that is available here.

Mr. Speaker, I think the government has an opportunity to at least address some of the concerns. And I realize the issue of grain transportation is an issue that falls into the federal government's court -- its responsibility. However, as a province, it's up to the provincial government to continue to raise the concern of grain car shortage and the ability to move this product to market.

As I look at the release that came in today, just the second page of this release indicates . . . the headline is: "Canada's reputation as a reliable supplier in jeopardy". And we have Alex Graham from the Alberta Wheat Pool, recently returned from China and Japan, and said the single most important issue facing Canadians is our reliability as a supplier of grains and oilseeds. He said the labour situation at the west coast and our ability to ship commodities on time are the two issues affecting Canada's reputation.

Graham said the turnaround time of grain cars to the U.S. is terrible and so is the shortage of cars. He said the railways let too many cars go back into the U.S. and they didn't keep the leases up. We simply don't have enough cars. Graham said the solution is to have the railroads build and supply cars on their own.

And he suggests that the Western Grain Transportation Act guarantees railroads a return of 20 per cent on their investment and that should be good enough in asking the railways to make sure we have enough of a car fleet available to move the product into the delivery system, into the handling system, so that indeed we can meet the needs of our customers.

Because, Mr. Speaker, even if we do have product

available, and as I've indicated, there are farmers who do not have the product to even put into the system, but there are other producers who do have product to move, and even though they would like to, are unable to because of the lack and shortage of railcars across this nation to meet the demand out there.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but when you finally get the railcars up and running, what do we have? Lo and behold, another avenue that farmers and people right across this province have no control over, the ability of dock workers and grain handlers at the other end, at the ports, as we saw earlier on this year, to go on strike just as we're ready to move product into market, just as our customers are sitting there waiting to take up this product that's coming their way, and then their ships have to sit at dock, Mr. Speaker, waiting for the grain.

And what happens, Mr. Speaker? They then charge the Canadian . . . actually they don't charge the Canadian consumer; it does, in a way, come back to the consumer through government. But the producer and the elevator companies and the grain handling companies are then charged for demurrage for not having that product available.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of problems that are facing people in the agricultural industry, in the agricultural sector in trying to derive the revenue they need to put product in the ground.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that it is only fair that we remind the government . . . and the government, as some of the ministers have indicated, do whatever is necessary to emphasize and bring forward to the point, even to the federal minister and the federal government, the fact that they have a responsibility not just to look after, as we're seeing in the last few days, not just to look after the province of Quebec and pour the money into Quebec to try and build up the fortunes of the Liberal party in Quebec seeking re-election, but they have a responsibility to represent people right across this country, which includes the agricultural sector in western Canada, and specifically here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important that we continue to remind the members opposite that they must stand up, that they must give leadership, that they must speak out on behalf of Saskatchewan producers.

And, Mr. Speaker, even though the government may feel good about the fact that we're suggesting they speak and put the onus on the federal government, the provincial government also has a responsibility.

Now we've been in estimates in Agriculture and the Minister of Agriculture has indicated that certainly the revenue side of the GRIP insurance program, the GRIP safety net, Mr. Speaker, has the potential this year -- in fact, I believe he indicated that there was a \$42 million surplus to date -- and has the potential of a \$300 million surplus in the account by the end of the year.

And, Mr. Speaker, when there are farmers who have been involved in the program who had no control and who have lost the cash flow that was available to them because of the moves of this government, because they took away and changed the GRIP safety net, it would seem, Mr. Speaker, that it would be only appropriate that the Minister of Agriculture speak to his cabinet colleagues and speak with his caucus and indicate maybe we should move on some of this cash surplus that will be available and make it available right now, whether it starts out as a loan and then is forgiven as the funds are available; and indeed puts this money back in the hands of the producers, the actual producers who were part of the program, who continue to pay their premiums.

I'm afraid, Mr. Speaker, what we will see at the end of the day is the government will take the surplus and that the producers who put the money in will get very little out of it. It will be just thrown into another overall safety net program and handed out to all producers. And I'm afraid not just here in Saskatchewan but right across Canada, when it should be staying here in Saskatchewan.

(1130)

I think it's only right, Mr. Speaker, that indeed the funds that are generated in this province stay in this province. And that's why we have argued, Mr. Speaker, even on the grain transportation Act, that the money that would be coming to the province to help in grain transportation, the province should be lobbying the federal government to make that sum of money available to the province so that we could utilize it most effectively in a most effective manner to guarantee grain transportation an access to transportation to move the product from the province of Saskatchewan to the west coast or to the east coast.

Or even in this case, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Highways indicated the Hudson Bay Route Association is holding their annual meeting in Hudson Bay this weekend, and I'm sure that one of the concerns they have is the fact that it would appear that there is going to be a lack of shipment through the port of Churchill.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about lack of funds in the agricultural sector, when we talk about the inability to move product to market, when we talk about the problems that people are facing, we are also talking about jobs. And we just raised the concern again today that Saskatchewan had 2,000 fewer jobs in the month of March -- 2,000 fewer jobs available when students are now in the process of writing final exams and looking for jobs to create some economic activity and to build up a cash flow so that they can go back to university the next year, or wherever they're going to increase their knowledge, Mr. Speaker.

So it seemed to me . . . and the one thing I would note in this, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that agriculture is a major generator of jobs through the summer

months. Through the spring season, through the summer months and into the fall, farmers right across this province as they get into the billion dollar industry of agriculture, employ people to work on the farm. They employ young people. They give them an opportunity, or give them many job opportunities, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it's very important when we look at agriculture as being a major employer of jobs and a generator of jobs in this province, that they indeed look very seriously at raising those concerns, and that they do whatever they have available, and that they meet their responsibility to the agriculture producer.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's appropriate that we have addressed this issue, that we've raised the issue this morning. I think it's appropriate that we have brought some of these concerns to the floor of this Assembly. And I'm sure that there are many other MLAs in this Assembly, be they government members or members of the Liberal Party, who would like to bring some points forward as well.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to belabour the points that I've been raising; I think they will continue to be raised. And I thank you for the opportunity of having had a moment to speak and to raise some of the concerns and to address the intent of the motion that is before us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Upshall: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to again rise in the Assembly and talk about a very important issue, that being the agricultural economy of Saskatchewan.

Part of the problems that we have in Saskatchewan is that there for many years was a very huge lack of support; a lack of recognition for the importance of agriculture in western Canada by the federal government.

There were some people, when the federal election came around last time who thought that might change -- and in fact I was one of those people who said, well it couldn't get any worse anyway. And I was looking forward to some new faces on the federal agricultural scene and hopefully some support for western Canada, as farmers, in areas of transportation and areas of marketing.

I've been somewhat disappointed, Mr. Speaker, and I won't go on in length about the last federal government because I think we've done that many times in this Assembly. But it's the future that I'm very concerned about.

And I've been somewhat disappointed that the current federal Minister of Agriculture, although when I hear him speak and reported in the press sounding good, there seems to be a definite lack of action. And I know they're a new government, but my feeling is that any new government would want to put a stamp quickly on the direction that government would change, in this case, in agriculture.

The basis of this whole argument in agriculture, Mr.

Speaker, in my estimation revolves around one thing. And that is do we or do we not have an orderly marketing system in this country? Do we support an orderly marketing system or do we not support an orderly marketing system?

The current shortage of grain cars is an issue. The use of Churchill and the Hudson's Bay route is an issue. The lack of support for grain transportation is an issue. The lack of standing up to the U.S. on the durum question is an issue. And these are some of the issues, Mr. Speaker, that I want to bring in in the time that I have today, all around the single question of why do we need an orderly marketing system?

I often have to remind myself, Mr. Speaker, because I get sidetracked. I get sidetracked on the issues of the day, but every once in a while it hits me square in the face again that every issue of the day in the last number of years has been brought forward for the sole purpose of undermining the orderly marketing system that we have in this country. Every one of them. And I thought with a . . . I was optimistic. I was hopeful that with a new federal government, that this might change. But sadly it appears that it isn't.

Let's look at the issue of railcar shortage. The Canadian Wheat Board has put money in through the farmers; governments have put money in to buy railcars. And I asked the question of the federal Minister of Agriculture: whose responsibility is it to maintain this fleet? Ultimately whose responsibility is it?

I say that it is his responsibility. And I'm sure the member for Shaunavon will agree with me. And if it's his responsibility, ultimately, to make sure all the players are working together to maintain a fleet to get the harvested grain to market, then he has to be watching every aspect.

Now I've been around long enough in the agricultural industry to see the railroads time and time again trying to improve their profits. Nothing wrong with that. But they're doing it on the backs of Saskatchewan farmers and Saskatchewan's economy and the western economy. There is something wrong with that, and that's why it's the federal Agriculture minister's responsibility to oversee this.

So if again this issue is coming up, if this is a . . . what if it's a power play by the railroads again to force the method of payment change? I mean, does Mr. Goodale know that it's not a power play by the railroad? Does the member from Shaunavon talk to Mr. Goodale and say, are you watching for this? I don't know. We may hear in a minute, if he has something to say.

What does the Leader of the Third Party have to say about some of the actions of her federal counterpart? Nothing. Silent support for things like changing his mind on interest free cash advances is one thing, but I don't want to get off on that tangent because it's not directly related to this.

But the March 24 *Western Producer*, Mr. Speaker, is reported -- Mr. Feeny is saying that there's a car shortage of several thousand cars. There is very few U.S. cars available, he says. But I want to quote something here:

Feeny said the railway doesn't like to describe the current situation as a "car shortage." There are lots of cars, he said, noting that CN will have more than 15,000 cars in service in April, almost the highest ever.

The railways say the problems are a reflection of unexpected changes in crop production and sales patterns, especially the increased volumes of special crops and the large volumes being shipped to the U.S.

So let's assume that's the problem. If that's the problem . . . let me describe the problem. Increased volumes of special crops. And what's happening, Mr. Speaker, is that because of the cereal grains being very low priced, there has been an increase in special crops, pulse crops especially. Those crops are not handled through the Canadian Wheat Board; they're handled on the open market system.

But what's happening is because of the timing and pricing and the fluctuations in the market, the pulse crops are being stored in grain cars at the terminals, on sidings. And I don't know their numbers, and I don't think it's a major problem, but it's a contributing problem right now.

So the solution isn't really getting more cars into the system. The solution is ensuring that the system is operating functionally whereby . . . as an example, under the Canadian Wheat Board and the orderly marketing system the cereal grains move, but we can't allow the railcars to be used as storage by special crops. I mean the farmers don't want this. I mean they want to grow their special crops; they want to ship them.

So I say to the federal government, why don't you look at the orderly marketing system for special crops? Because this is going to become a greater problem. Right now we're marketing most of our . . . just about all the special crops that we grow. There's very little carry-over every year. And the wheat acres are going down; special-crop acres are going up. And if this continues, this means that at some point in time we're going to hit a saturation point where we're not going to be able to sell all the special crops that we grow.

And right now the system is working fairly well because when you can sell everything you grow it's just a matter of getting it through the system. But now we're starting to have problems because after there's more than you can sell, there's become an ever-increasing problem of cars availability, of sales on the open market system.

That's why we have to have the federal minister look at the possibility of putting special crops under the Canadian Wheat Board. Because if you don't have the

orderly marketing, we would never . . . I really enjoy talking about this, Mr. Speaker, because it brings, it snaps, me back to reality of exactly why we're here.

And I want to step back. We grow about the same amount of wheat as Kansas. The only reason that we're in the market in the world today the way we are -- the only reason -- is because of the orderly marketing system we have. Because the world . . . France now grows as much grain as we do. The world is growing grain. But we have an orderly marketing system that's comprised of deliveries, quotas, fairness -- which means fairness to producers -- timely deliveries through the rail system, if it's operating functionally, and quality. And those factors have been . . . Our buyers have . . . We have a reputation of being very, very good at this. And that's why we're in the market.

We're in there because of the system that was built by our forefathers. And every time that I hear an issue -- I don't care if it's durum or railcars or something else -- it's another chink in the whole orderly marketing system.

And I'm very guilty of getting sidetracked on the issues of the day. And like I say, sometimes you have to just sort of sit back and say, well why is this going on? Why are the Americans so concerned about durum? Do you think they're concerned about durum? I mean they could care less about durum. But they're using it to erode the credibility of the Canadian Wheat Board.

And that's what they continue to do. You read the articles, you listen to the senators, and they're playing their little political games. You see the ultra right wing in North Dakota and Montana organizing as they are at their meetings that started this week in North Dakota and moving down to Montana.

They have a commission, Mr. Speaker, in the U.S. now meeting in I think it's a dozen or so cities -- towns and cities. And this commission is going to report to the President of the United States suggesting whether or not he should activate section 22 of their agricultural . . . I just forget the name of it.

The Speaker: -- Order, order. I've been listening to the member and I think, although it's very interesting, what he's talking about in the United States I don't think it's very pertinent to the motion that is before us and I ask the member to get back on the motion that's before the House.

(1145)

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Speaker, I realize that I wasn't at this point in time talking directly about this motion. But the purpose of this motion is directly . . . is the same in which I was talking.

We're talking here about railcar shortages, okay, and I started off by saying, why is there a railcar shortage? Is it a power play by the railroads? Is it the special crops taking up cars? Is it the unavailability of U.S. cars? And another reason, a similar reason, is the durum. And I

won't continue on that, although I wouldn't mind. But what's happening is they're using the system . . . or they're using issues and excuses to erode the system.

Another thing that we have to do is something like . . . oh, yes, the Wheat Board Advisory. I want to talk about that for a minute. Now the Wheat Board Advisory Committee are 11 farm representatives who are right now in Vancouver. And you know what they're doing? I mean they're concerned about the railcar shortage, they're concerned about the deliveries, because it all affects the economy of Saskatchewan, but they're in Vancouver, they're sitting down with the labour movement, organized labour in Vancouver, and they're sitting down with the elevator companies, the management, to try to drive home to them the importance of the shipping system that we have and the movement of grain for the western economy.

I think that's a very constructive move because they're not, as some members in the opposition are doing, pounding on our workers on the west coast, and they're not going to blame management. They're sitting down and they're trying to find . . . they're trying to ensure that there's a total understanding of the system that we have. And that system is being eroded, and they know it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, another problem that we have is Churchill, and it was mentioned by the previous speaker. Now Churchill is, for Saskatchewan and Manitoba especially, north-east Saskatchewan and Manitoba, a very cheap route. And we wouldn't need as many railcars and we could ship our grain cheaper if we did use Churchill. We have a natural salt-water port. It's closer from my farm to Churchill salt water than it is from my farm to Thunder Bay, where it has to go another thousand miles to hit salt water.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's been every excuse in the book used why we can't use Churchill, and we hear rumblings and we hear that maybe this year Churchill's not going to be used at all. And I say, where is the federal Liberal government coming from? Are they bound by the votes in the East? Are they trying to use this for political purposes? Beat the Bob Rae government in Ontario by making sure that all the people in the lakehead are working and forgetting about northern Manitoba and the farmers of Saskatchewan? Is this what's happening?

I mean, and I ask my colleague from Shaunavon to stand up and tell me that he has consulted with his leader and Mr. Goodale to ensure that we get not less grain or no grain moving through Churchill, but more grain moving through Churchill.

I was up in Churchill last year and there was an ice-breaker came in through the solid ice in early June. There are ways . . . modern technology shows us there are ways to move grain through that port, but the desire isn't there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I say, whose responsibility is this? And I don't want to be too critical of the new federal

Liberal government, but I want to be critical enough to ensure that they listen. And I think in this House, if we speak in one voice, they may listen. The federal minister is from this province; he has an interest, and we have an interest.

But I want to repeat what one of the members said today in question period, and I quote from **The Western Producer** of March 31, "Goodale is criticized for copy-cat ag budget".

And in this article, the federal minister is being criticized by one of his own back-benchers, Mr. Easter. Now Mr. Easter says that the budget brought forward by . . . the agricultural budget brought forward by Mr. Goodale is no change from the last Tory administration; it's a "copy-cat ag budget". And I just want to read a little bit into the record, Mr. Speaker.

During a Commons agricultural committee meeting March 23, Wayne Easter (Lib -- Malpeque) complained that the government's 1994-95 spending proposals tabled in the (House of) Commons, do not reflect (did not reflect) the commitments he and other Liberal candidates made during the 1993 election campaign.

A direct criticism of his own minister, saying that he wasn't doing . . . wasn't carrying forward the promises made by himself and all the other Liberal candidates with regard to agriculture.

He said the new government appears to have simply accepted the spending plans that Agriculture Canada bureaucrats were preparing for the previous Conservative government.

Now be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I still reserve judgement because I think there's still time for something to happen. I think we still have to give the federal minister a little time, but his time is quickly running out in the eyes of Saskatchewan farmers. Because you can't take away a promise like you're going to give back interest-free cash advances and say, oh, I guess we're not going to do it. Time is running out.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I was saying, all this points to one thing and that is the demise of the orderly marketing system. The U.S. durum, the cars, the fleet that's out there, the lack of use of Churchill -- all pointed at destroying our orderly marketing system.

And I want the member, the Liberal leader, to stand in her place and tell the people of Saskatchewan in this House that she supports orderly marketing and she . . . even though at one time a year or so ago, she said she didn't, but that she's changed her mind and she supports orderly marketing; and that she has relayed that message to Mr. Goodale, that unless we maintain an orderly marketing system in this country, we will not maintain our economic base through grains, whether it be cereals, oilseeds, or pulses.

In the short term it may look like you can do that. But when you look through and look at the whole picture, you understand why the system was made in the first place. And if we don't continue, Mr. Speaker, if we don't continue to support that system, we're going to be in grave, grave trouble.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now would like to move an amendment to the motion. This amendment will be seconded by the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood. And I will read it:

That all the words after "Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

encourage the provincial government to continue its efforts to assist the agriculture industry with its recovery, and urge the federal government to assist with the resolution of localized difficulties such as those caused by early frosts and snows in the north-east;

and further, that the Assembly call on the federal government to resolve the problems in grain transportation system including the shortage of rolling stock, and to require the railways to provide better and more efficient rail service;

and that a copy of the relevant *Debates and Proceedings* from April 8, together with a copy of the resolution, be forwarded to the federal Minister of Agriculture and the National Grain Transportation Agency.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would move this motion. And in doing so, I'd like to indicate that our Minister of Transportation, my colleague from Kelsey-Tisdale, has written the Hon. Douglas Young, Minister of Transport for Canada, indicating a number of things that we think should happen in order to make sure that we have a good transportation industry in Canada, for the economy of the West. So our government has already started the process.

The Deputy Speaker: -- Order. Has the member moved the amendment or is he simply indicating that he's planning to move that amendment at some point? Because if the member is speaking after having moved the amendment, then he should stop now. Or is the member giving . . . advising the other members that he will in fact be moving that amendment?

Mr. Upshall: -- I have not said, I so move, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm sorry if I didn't make that clear . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, I understand the rules. And I will be moving it very shortly.

But as I was saying, we have already . . . I want to get the intent of the amendment forward. Before, I indicated that we have already started, through our provincial minister in contact with the federal minister, through our Agriculture minister contacting the federal Agriculture minister and working with them, to try to make sure that we have an orderly,

efficient system. Mr. Speaker, it is so important that we maintain the system to maintain the economy of Saskatchewan.

And I don't think I'll say much more but just to end off with the way I started: the only reason that we're in this game is because of our orderly marketing system. It maintains timely deliveries, which our customers have to know, and it maintains quality. And unless we move that into our special crops and the new crops that are coming in, we will in the short term be all right because the market is bigger than we can supply, but as we grow we'll be getting into ever-increasing difficulty.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members of this House to support this amendment, especially saying that it's going to be sent to the national Grain Transportation Agency and the federal Minister of Agriculture, a unified voice showing that there is a serious problem and he has the ball in his court. We'll work with him -- we're already indicating we have, and we're starting to -- but he has to be a little more decisive. He has to have a little more support maybe from his provincial colleagues. But the job has to be done.

So, Mr. Speaker, I move:

That all the words after "Assembly" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

encourage the provincial government to continue its efforts to assist the agricultural industry with its recovery, and urge the federal government to assist with the resolution of localized difficulties such as those caused by early frosts and snow in the north-east;

and further, that the Assembly call on the federal government to resolve the problems in the grain transportation system including the shortage of rolling stock, and to require the railways to provide better and more efficient rail service;

and that a copy of the relevant *Debates and Proceedings* from April 8, together with a copy of the resolution, be forwarded to the federal Minister of Agriculture and the national Grain Transportation Agency.

I so move, seconded by the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Flavel: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure today to enter into the debate as the seconder of the motion that was:

encourage the provincial government to continue its efforts to assist the agricultural industry with its recovery, and urge the federal government to assist with the resolution of localized difficulties such as those caused by the early frosts and snow in the north-east;

Mr. Speaker, there are some problems, serious problems, in the north-east and we know that and we have been dealing with it and trying to rectify some of the problems up there.

Last fall, Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation moved in a massive amount of adjusters into that area, gathered them from all over the province, sent them up there to get the adjusting done on those crops as soon as they could so the farmers could get their claim and get the money in their hands last fall.

Mr. Speaker, moved almost in 13,000 adjusters; 30,000 province-wide claims were processed with 13,000 come from the north-east. They paid out 85 per cent of the claims prior to receiving grading information, within two weeks of the adjuster visiting the farmers up there.

(1200)

They say that the government hasn't done enough. Well we did what we could with the crop insurance. We moved the adjusters in; we paid 85 per cent of the claims out before the grading information was got back -- 85 per cent paid out within two weeks of the adjuster being at the farm.

Adjusters were also instructed to use discretion when assessing whether the crop was harvestable or not. So there was some leeway given for that area under special circumstances last year.

Extension of insurance was granted unconditionally to compensate for losses over the winter. Extension of insurance was granted for 1,922 crops comprising of approximately 190 acres in the north-east of Saskatchewan.

Crop Insurance did more than go out of their way last fall to accommodate the farmers in north-eastern Saskatchewan to get the harvest off. We realize that they were brought in by an early snowfall.

We have, last year, negotiated or talked with the federal Minister of Agriculture for extra help for the farmers in north-eastern Saskatchewan. He agreed with it at that time. Where has he been ever since? There is no help coming and now he's backing off again. Last fall he did say that it was needed and now he's saying not.

Crop Insurance has done, as I said . . . have went out of their way to accommodate the farmers in north-eastern Saskatchewan. But Crop Insurance is under pressure itself. And why is it under pressure, Mr. Speaker? It is under pressure because of the debt load that was left by the manipulation and the poor management of the administration through the '80s. A \$600 million deficit that was left in Crop Insurance has their hands tied as to what they can do. They're restricted.

Now the farmers in north-eastern Saskatchewan not only have to worry about paying the crop insurance and paying their premiums to keep crop insurance

going, they also have to pay a premium to pay off the \$600 million deficit left by the former administration. Hand tied, but we have done everything that we could to make sure the farmers in north-eastern Saskatchewan got the money that was coming to them, even before they should have got it. But we went out of our way to make sure they got it as quick as they possibly could.

Mr. Speaker, adding to the railcar shortage, as my associate from Humboldt has hit on, I believe he's on the right track with that. The only reason that Saskatchewan farmers are in the world market-place, with the quality control that we have, with the service that we are allowed to provide to our customers, is because of the orderly market system. Being able to gather the grain, knowing where it's coming from, what the grade is, what the dockage is; knowing where it is coming and where it is going.

What we have now are producer cars, cars outside the orderly marketing system picking grain up all over, no control on the grading, no control on the moisture content -- helter-skelter all over -- coming into one point, and we don't have the quality control that we did have under the orderly marketing.

We also have coming through that system unlicensed varieties that are hitting the market-place also, causing our producers to question our ability to provide good quality product.

Mr. Speaker, the railroads have to control and we have to get the orderly marketing through all grains. And I agree with him that all grains should be harvested through the Canadian Wheat Board, or through an orderly marketing system so as we know what the quality is, we know where the grain is, where it's coming from, and we can deliver it and deliver it on time.

As we sit now, with the boats that are sitting in the harbour in the west coast, we are paying demurrage on those ships. We are also losing our reputation as a supplier of good quality and a supplier on the time frame that was set out to do it within. If the producers or the customers out there want their grain, we are known to deliver it when they want it; because of the shortage of railcars now we are not being able to do that and we are losing our reputation.

Mr. Speaker, the federal Minister of Agriculture, to bring private railcars into the system, I guess in the short term if that is going to alleviate the problem or get rid of it for short term, then maybe the Minister of Agriculture should be looking at that and working as hard as he could to do that. But I must remind the members that when we were under a system that had all private cars, it didn't do the job. The producers and the taxpayers were forced to buy cars to put into that system.

And now we have a rail system that has the rolling stock or has the engine power and now pulls up to the producers' elevators with the producers' cars and runs down to the producers' terminals and can't keep up

and can't make money at it. We have supplied the cars, we have supplied the elevators, and we've supplied the terminals; and they are still crying for more help from us.

Then we have the federal government on the other hand that cuts another 5 per cent out of the transportation . . . the western transportation Act -- 30 or \$40 million more out of the producers of Saskatchewan; 30 or \$40 million more that the producers of Saskatchewan would have to put their crops in the ground this spring.

The federal Minister of Agriculture on the other hand, too, also goes with cash advances, interest-free cash advances. Some farmers can't pay their cash advance off now because of the lack of rolling stock; their elevators are plugged. The other guy can pay his off. They have to coordinate this -- the amount of railcars -- and if it takes private railcars in order to get the system going again, then so be it. If they're out there, then let's use them.

Mr. Speaker, the first speaker today hit on what the government has done, not only for north-eastern Saskatchewan and what we have failed to do, but the whole industry in Saskatchewan. And I want to look a little at the livestock industry, because it also adds in here some of the problems in the agricultural industry.

The member says that, because of the FeedGAP and doing away with the interim red meat stabilization program, that the cattle industry in Saskatchewan is suffering because of that and we have come around at the back door to injure the cattle industry in Saskatchewan.

Well I remind the members opposite that in 1980 and '81 in this province, the Saskatchewan beef stabilization program was brought in. It was the first beef stabilization program brought in anywhere in Canada that guaranteed the cost of production -- 95 per cent of cash costs, 55 per cent of non-cash costs. A person that went into the beef industry knew what he was going to get for that animal, knew what his recovery was on that animal when he put it in the feed lot or even when it dropped on the ground.

What did the members opposite do? It was too rich a program. They threw it out; it was too rich. They had the gall to say that it was too rich of a program for the farmers of Saskatchewan; our cow numbers were going up. And they killed the program and they went into the tripartite.

The Deputy Speaker: -- Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. McPherson: -- Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: -- What is your point of order?

Mr. McPherson: -- I would like to have a ruling as to whether the member is speaking to the main motion or to the amendment of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: -- I'm listening very carefully to the member, and the member knows what the motion is and what the amendments are, that he should try to speak to the amendment . . . or to the motion and amendment concurrently. He should not attempt to stray too far from that or to speak at length on agricultural issues that are not related to the motion and amendment.

Mr. Flavel: -- Mr. Speaker, when you look at the north-east, it is not just . . . railcars in there isn't going to help. The cattle industry in north-eastern Saskatchewan is what is keeping that corner of the province viable also. So the cattle industry also has to look at the whole agriculture industry.

I want to close then, Mr. Speaker, by saying that the rolling stock -- and repeating what is said -- the Canadian Wheat Board has to be . . . or an orderly marketing system of some kind has to be the only marketing system that can gather the grain, that can organize the cars, and that can get the rolling stock and get the producers' grains to the market on time and the quality of grain that we are known to deliver to our customers.

Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite and the member from Shaunavon will enter the debate, which I'm sure he will later on, I'm sure he will state in that that he will be talking to the Minister of Agriculture to do whatever he can to get the rolling stock of Saskatchewan or the rolling stock of the railways going in Saskatchewan and back here to move the grain. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today to speak in support of the main motion that was put forward by the member from Rosthern. And listening to some of the comments that were made from both the member from Humboldt and the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood, I was somewhat surprised. I heard them both make statements that the present provincial government has done all that they can do for the farmers. And I say that is not so, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact in both of their speeches they're continually blaming someone else. They're saying someone else is always at fault; they refuse to take any responsibility for agriculture.

One has to wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why is it that we have such a large Department of Agriculture? Why is it that we even have a Minister of Agriculture in Saskatchewan any longer, if they fail to accept any responsibility; that they must show some leadership, show some leadership in not only Saskatchewan, but in Canada. We're the province that's most affected. Our economy is most affected by agriculture than any other province in Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And for once I think it should be upon their shoulders, their responsibility should be on their shoulders to bring forward some plans, whether it be safety nets or crop insurance or disaster relief programs.

However, I didn't hear either of the members speak on

those issues, in fact they chose to ignore . . . and what they have ignored for the last few months, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to address any futuristic thinking in agriculture at all. Neither of those members have got up, that I know of, in this session, and spoke of any direction that this province can take agriculture in, or any of the problems that many of the farm families are being faced with in Saskatchewan. Neither of those members have addressed those concerns.

However they have continuously said that it's somebody else's fault, somebody else's responsibility. They can't even put forward a plan, and I think that's getting somewhat disappointing, not only from our perspective, but the perspective of all the farm families in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Knowing those two members as well as I do and watching them give their short talks on agriculture, I truly believe that they were both somewhat embarrassed in what they were saying and had to say, but I don't know as they had a lot of choice in what they could talk about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason why . . . Mr. Speaker now, the reason why I enjoy to get up and speak on the main motion is that the farmers in the Shaunavon constituency in the part of the province that I represent are going to be in the fields. In fact some of them are in the fields now, as of today, and being ahead of many other areas of the province with their seeding plans and such. I guess that's exactly why the Liberal caucus has always taken the lead and showed a strong leadership role in defending the farmers of Saskatchewan and trying to bring these issues forward and get them dealt with in a very succinct and proper fashion.

Several times during this session in fact, when I look at many of the agriculture issues that the Liberal caucus has brought forward, probably once or twice a week since the session began we've been up with questions in agriculture and making statements in the agriculture industry, only to have very few, if any, of those questions properly answered.

(1215)

And that's becoming very apparent to the farm families in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And I judge this by the amount of calls and letters that we are getting into our office regarding some of the comments made by the government of the province. On many occasions we have raised the issues that were touched on, both in the main motion and at other times throughout the day -- that being issues of crop insurance.

I look at the crop insurance program and what's happened to it in south-western Saskatchewan. And it's becoming very evident when you have something in the neighbourhood of 20 per cent of all the participating acres in the crop insurance program being dropped in one year alone, just in the past year, and what we're hearing from the farmers in this upcoming spring for their plans is to . . . once again

many of these people that stayed in last year are going to be dropping out.

But you've had in one year a 20 per cent decrease in participating acres in the crop insurance program, and yet in that same time frame you've had a 30 per cent increase in the premium rates. And one has to wonder, is that where this government thinks that it's really at for the farm families of Saskatchewan? Farm families that have for several years in a row now have been financially hard-pressed.

Who are they defending? You're very capable in defending your family of Crown corporations, very capable. When you formed government in 1991, you took much of the debt of the province, brought it forward and made a big issue out of it, wrote debt off in the Crowns. However, in the Crop Insurance Corporation, you left a \$600 million debt.

I hear today the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood blaming, as they often do, blaming the Progressive Conservative Party for not dealing with that \$600 million debt in the crop insurance reinsurance fund. And perhaps they are at fault.

But now you're in government and you're the one with the large majority -- 50-some members. Why aren't you dealing with it? Fifty-some members. You can deal with that on, actually, today. You could deal with it on Monday. Over the weekend you can prepare some stuff and come in here on Monday and start to show us what you really intend to do for the farmer in Saskatchewan.

In the south-west, the crop insurance premiums have risen. It's gone right through the roof. And yet at no time have you ever stood up -- the Associate Minister of Agriculture has been asked this question on numerous times, but never has he stood up and said, we know full well that the south-western Saskatchewan farmers are really impacted hard by what we're doing in the crop insurance program with premiums and such. No answers. Never is he going to address that.

Full well able to write down debt of the Crown corporations. Get prepared for elections, get them nice and healthy so you can cut 2, \$300 million cheque out of some of the Crown corporations. However when it comes to dealing with the farm families of rural Saskatchewan, you have no answers and you have no intention of bringing any forward. And that's why at the next election, Mr. Speaker, those people -- those people -- are going to be dealt with by those same farm families.

Only a few days ago, the Liberal caucus also raised the issue of the farmers in north-eastern Saskatchewan, and I noticed those north-eastern Saskatchewan farmers are mentioned here today on the main motion. And once again, the Liberal caucus had showed some leadership. And it's usually a week or a couple of weeks after we raise the issue that it becomes a bigger issue from the other parties of the

House.

However, the seriousness of this situation in north-eastern Saskatchewan where you have six out of ten farmers faced with difficulty with their ACS loans, businesses that are having a tremendous load placed upon their shoulders because of the large increases in accounts receivables, inability to collect them, this problem, as I stated a few days ago or day ago, is really starting to snowball.

Once you have made the decision, as this government has done, to not help the farm families of Saskatchewan, to let them go down, to ensure that their programs will not be in a satisfactory manner that will protect these people in the event of disasters in north-eastern Saskatchewan, then the next step is to let the businesses in the area go down. And it starts to snowball. Pretty soon you're not going to have schools.

However, I don't see any concern from the members of the government about dealing with rural Saskatchewan at all. They haven't since the day they were elected, Mr. Speaker.

What has become, I guess, very evident since the government won the election in 1991 is that these issues become much more severe. People are starting to hurt that much more. But instead of putting programs in place, programs that during and leading up to the 1991 election, that group said that not one more farmer, time and time again. Now of course "not one more farmer" means no one out there will get help, not even in the form of putting out a program that people can pay into to protect their farms, to protect their livelihoods.

In fact you've went the other way. You've dismantled programs. You took away the 1991 GRIP program, replaced it with a program which was unsatisfactory to the farmers of Saskatchewan. After that you've moved again. You've continued to make the programs less and less affordable for farmers and the pay-outs are . . . well in fact what we're hearing from the farmers is they're not worth having.

In fact, I note an article that was in the **Western Producer** on February 26, 1994, where it says in regards to crop insurance:

Crop Insurance has scheduled 35 meetings across the province to explain new crop insurance options and the benefits of the overall program, but when they head into the south-west it will be an accomplishment if many farmers attend the sessions.

"A lot of farmers are really teed off," said Gary Wellbrock, a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool director who farms near Ponteix.

He hopes farmers go to the meeting to learn about and assess the new programs and raise concerns about premiums and coverage levels. "But I will be surprised if they get a big turnout

at these meetings," he said.

Last year there was a dramatic drop in the number of insured acres in the south-west because of a big jump in premiums and a drop in the value of coverage. For example, (he gives an example) in parts of the south-west, crop insurance premiums for barley represent 40 per cent of the value of the crop.

Well, Mr. Speaker, who could insure . . . who would ever, say, insure their house for \$100,000 if they had to spend \$40,000 a year insuring it? They wouldn't. If that were the case, if that were happening, the government I'm sure would step in. They would ensure that . . . whether their own government insurance corporation or through reinsurance plans that are used throughout the world, they would ensure that there would be an affordable plan in place.

But are they doing it for the farm families? Not even considering it. Not even considering it, Mr. Speaker. Instead what they want to do is try and put the blame always onto the federal government without ever having put forward a plan.

I don't know if the farmers of the province are even so much asking you to finance it any more, just work with them to see what you can do for them. Can you not even do that? Can you not even develop and design a plan that you can put forward? Maybe all three parties of this legislature could take a look at that plan, perhaps support it, and talk with one unified voice with the federal government. But you won't even, you won't even initiate the process. That's why I think the people that you represent, or the members that were up speaking today, are so embarrassed by your comments. And you should be too.

Mr. Johnson: -- Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I'd like to say a few comments on the motion, the motion and the amendment that were put forward related to why we find ourselves in a position where this motion comes forward.

If you take a look over a period of about 20 years, you see a huge shift in the responsibility that the federal government had taken for agriculture being shifted to the province, to all of the provinces. But what that has meant for the province of Saskatchewan is a very huge shift in total costs. Now making that shift means that there is problems generated for this government, for the government of the province of Saskatchewan.

During the 80s, the federal government in the '80s that made this . . . that was involved in this shift, along with the provincial governments of the time, did make a presentation that said that they were going to be in a position to cover third line protection. And that was when the first two lines of protection, that is the line that the farmers put forward failed or was unable to cover it, the second line would come in, which was a joint line between the . . . of the programs that were cost shared by the province and the federal government, what they picked up; then there would be a third line of defence.

And in that particular case, ever since that was part of the proposal that came forward from the federal government to the province and then the province accepted the joint funding of the programs, that has never once been implemented by the federal government.

And I'd like to point out to the Liberal members of this Assembly that a federal election changing the federal government from a Conservative government to a Liberal government leaves the opportunity for the federal government to simply come forward and fully support what was previously stated was going to be there. And in doing so, that would mean that there would be money available from the federal government for the north-east part of the province of Saskatchewan.

And that is, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons why I feel that the amendment to the motion that was put forward is very accurate and states what really should take place. Because the history of why we are here indicates that the third line should now be implemented.

But in stating this, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to make the . . . have anyone leave with the assumption that I fully support the programing that was in place. All I'm saying is that the programing that came about from those negotiations and that if it was implemented, it would be an improvement on the situation that we have here today. And the implementation comes from the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, the problem that we have -- and it's been covered fairly concise -- but the problem that we have in transportation is one where . . . the history of the rail transportation in Canada has been one where we have operated a very efficient system. And in order to do that we've operated with quotas, with the allocation of cars being made so that the best use of those cars could be achieved. And there's a very strange thing occurring in the last four or five years -- probably most of it has occurred in the last two years -- in that there's been a fairly large change in crop production.

And the reason that there's been this change in crop production, Mr. Speaker, is that farmers in the province of Saskatchewan where 40 per cent of the agricultural field crops are seeded, have changed the cropping patterns that they have. So you have here a different use of these railcars and we have lost therefore as an efficient system that allocated and moved things very rapidly and used a very limited number of cars.

And if we're to continue on this process of changing what farmers grow, and I believe that has as much what the federal government is saying they should do is change as anyone, then we're going to have to revamp our concept of how the rail structure works in moving grain and field crop seeds to market.

(1230)

Secondly, this year there happens to be a new experience in the fact that there are sales going south into a country that produces probably the largest amount of crop to export in the area of field crops, of grains, and corn, and that, of any country in the world. As I think of it I believe I can say without any problem that they do export the largest amount of these grains.

And a strange thing has occurred. This year, due to the fact that they don't have an orderly marketing system and that they then do not know what . . . the left hand in the U.S. does not know what the right hand is doing. They have moved grain out of their country leaving themselves short of specific types of grain and we as a country are able to supply those grains and move and ship into the United States.

And this has increased the length of time of turnaround of the cars in the fleet, and we are therefore in a situation where the efficiency of that fleet has dropped considerably.

Mr. Speaker, it is those types of things that fall within the responsibility of the federal government, and in that manner they leave me to fully support the amendment that was made to the original motion and I will be doing so when the vote comes. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: -- It's interesting to stand here in this debate as a member for the north-east part of the province. Very pessimistic attitudes of farming by the opposition and especially by the third party, the member from Shaunavon in particular. There's no realization, I think, by those members that the agricultural industry in this province is indeed improving. Certainly there are spots in the province that have some concerns and have some problems, but in general agriculture is improving.

The people out there are a lot more optimistic today than they were two years ago. I talked to a farm machinery dealership in the north-east just yesterday in fact, Mr. Speaker, and I asked him, what is the attitude of the farm community in that particular area? Is he hearing the same things that I'm hearing? And he said yes, indeed he is. He is hearing that the farmers are more optimistic, they're more encouraged. Machinery sales in his particular dealership are up.

I happened to have the opportunity to be in Nipawin a week or so ago and I talked to a lot of the farm community there. They're saying the very same things, Mr. Speaker -- that they're optimistic. The future looks brighter. Certainly they realize that there is still some concerns and some problem areas. But all in all, they're a lot more optimistic.

The member from Shaunavon is pessimistic, and I believe it's because of the lack of support by the federal government to the farm community in Saskatchewan and in fact in all of Canada. We as a province have instituted some major decisions. One of those very important decisions was the six-year leaseback program for farmers that are in trouble. And

indeed in the north-east some farmers have taken advantage of the program.

On the other hand, we have a corporation, the Farm Credit Corporation, which is a federal institution, that is reluctant to participate in helping the farmers and giving them that opportunity to lease back their land for a period of time so that they can stabilize their income and build their farm up again.

And I can see why he's pessimistic about that, but he shouldn't be in this House condemning this government. He should be on the phone with the federal Minister of Agriculture, talking to him, saying, we've got to do something for the farm community.

The Saskatchewan government is doing things within our financial limitations, because of the members opposite in the last 10 years that they were in power, but we are doing things. Ag equity fund this year announced in the budget, Mr. Speaker, a \$20 million fund to help farmers value-add to their products. Jobs for rural Saskatchewan. But not only that, Mr. Speaker, it allows the farm community to be more stable.

Ag 2000, just released this year, a direction for stability for the family farm and the ag industry, a direction to look at and to discuss. We in Saskatchewan, realizing that the GRIP program was flawed and had a lot of problems, put together the Farm Support Review Committee, a committee of producers in the province, to design a new support program -- a support program that will actually help the farm family and give them some stability. And not only that, but with a realization to the rest of the Saskatchewan taxpayers that it is a tax friendly program.

Improvements to crop insurance. The member from Shaunavon again in his discussions stated that, you know, crop insurance have some problems, and that the premium rates are too high and that the coverage is too low. I'm sure he must realize that crop insurance is a provincial-federal program; that we have some concerns with the program as well and we are attempting to address those concerns. But he has a responsibility to talk to his Minister of Agriculture -- the federal Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Goodale -- and bring those concerns to him as well.

We did make some changes to crop insurance this year and the farm community is very supportive of those changes, such as spot loss hail. I think more importantly though, Mr. Speaker, farmers are taking charge of their own destiny. They're actually ahead of government in the area of diversification, in the area of growing more specialty crops rather than the traditional crops that we were growing in the province. Red meat, for instance, is up. It's a billion-dollar industry now in the province of Saskatchewan. I know in the north-east I have some farmers growing saskatoon berries. I have some farmers actually producing heavy road equipment for rural municipalities. I have some farmers there

indeed building their own air seeders. I have farmers there that are into the tarps and duffle bag business.

Farmers are taking charge, they're changing with the times, and are looking after their own destiny. We, as a province, help as much as we can. We do of course have some concerns that the federal government is not maybe taking its full responsibility in an industry that affects every Canadian. Agriculture is a part of every Canadian's life, and we have to have a federal government that will consider that and look at supporting this industry better.

One of the concerns of course that was mentioned is the north-east where we had a lot of moisture problems last year. The early snowfall, an early frost, wildlife damage to crops that remain out. And we realize that and we are continuing to work with the federal Minister of Agriculture to see if there is indeed . . . or if indeed the federal minister continues to support his pre-election thinking about the third line of defence, a sort of a disaster relief program that would be shared by every taxpayer in Canada to help the farm families like the families in the north-east. And we continue to do that and we will continue to do that. It would be nice to have some support by both the official opposition and the members of the third party.

It's kind of interesting to note too, Mr. Speaker, that we don't see anything new in the new federal government in regards to agriculture. I know that the provincial Leader of the Third Party did borrow Mr. Mulroney's ag policy for her 1991 election campaign, and it seems that the federal government now is borrowing Mr. Mulroney's agricultural policy again, and it seems a little strange.

It's kind of interesting to note that Mr. Easter, who is a member of the Liberal government, condemns his federal counterparts in not changing direction of agriculture. And I think that the member from Shaunavon should join with Mr. Easter in letting the federal minister know that they want a change of direction, a change that will help the farm families in Saskatchewan.

I just want to deal a little bit . . . I want to deal a little bit with the transportation concerns. There are transportation concerns and we're very aware of them. I have taken the opportunity to write to Mr. Young; the Ag minister has written to the federal Ag minister, and we will continue to pursue that.

One of the concerns, I guess, is the railways have not caught up to the changes in the farm community. And in fact this article in **The Western Producer**, by Mr. Feeny, states that:

The railways say the problems are a reflection of unexpected changes in crop production and sales patterns, especially (in) the increased volumes of (specialty) crops and the large volumes being shipped to the U.S.

I guess the railways have to change with the times. As farmers change, the railway companies have to change too, to address the concerns. If you sell

something in a store and it's not a product that the people want, then you change that product. Well the railways have to do the same -- they have to address the needs of the farm community.

I want to just say one more thing before I sit down, Mr. Speaker, in support of this amendment, is that the Port of Churchill was mentioned. And a very important part of help for the farmers in the north-east is the freight rate used to ship grain via the Port of Churchill. Last year there was some 240,000 tonnes. The need is 600,000 tonnes to break even, and there seems no desire by the federal Liberals to enhance the use of this port, thus helping the farmers in the north-east with lower freight rates.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I will sit down in full support of the amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to add a few remarks to the debate here today. I want to commend the member from Rosthern for bringing this motion forward. I want to thank the individuals for the willingness to give leave to discuss this issue, because I think it's timely and I think it's an important part of the discussion that we need to have in this Assembly.

I also want to acknowledge the fact that this information is going to be provided to the federal Minister of Agriculture and the Transport minister, and I want to say that that's an important part of this discussion.

Realizing of course that there are many things and many factors that put themselves into place as a background for this motion being brought forward and the conditions that exist today, I want to go through them, as much as time will allow me, to provide to this Assembly some of the reasons why I think it's an important issue to discuss.

First of all, there were some issues mentioned from the other side of the House that said that orderly marketing was the reason . . . a decay of the orderly marketing system and an erosion of the orderly marketing system was the reason why we were having all the problems in western Canada as it relates to the lack of grain cars, a lack of movement of grain.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that the people across the way understand that the Canadian Wheat Board sells the wheat, does not transport the wheat. The western grain transportation commission transports the wheat, allocates the cars, gives direction as to where it's going. The Canadian Wheat Board does not do that, Mr. Speaker. And I think the people on the other side should understand that those are the conditions that exist. And the transportation of grain has nothing to do with orderly marketing, Mr. Speaker.

And that is what has to be clearly understood by this Assembly in order to transfer this information to the Minister of

Agriculture and to the Minister of Transport. That has to be understood. And we as a Legislative Assembly need to underscore that so that the ministers know in Ottawa what their responsibility really is.

(1245)

And I want to point out some things that . . . how they impact in western Canada, Mr. Speaker. The member for Kelsey-Tisdale brought up Churchill. Mr. Speaker, information that I have made available to me through a news item called Agriline says that the Port of Churchill will not be receiving cars this year because the allocation of cars through the western Grain Transportation Agency has made those cars available for transportation to the Port of Churchill, and therefore they will not be available to go to the Port of Churchill.

Given that, Mr. Speaker, and to the members opposite, given that, we will have a decline again in the volume of grain moving through the Port of Churchill. And that is a very, very serious consideration. We are 5,000 cars behind, Mr. Speaker, in the volume that is required to be on target for this year by the month. We're 5,000 cars behind in transportation.

Some of the reasons given by the member from Humboldt are accurate as to why the grain cars are not available. However, in a recent . . . As of today the Agriline daily business . . . Agribusiness News Summary says this, and I quote, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's important for us to understand that this is a belief that is available today, and I want the people of this Assembly to understand:

(The) IDEA OF ALLOWING PRIVATE GRAIN CARS into western rail fleet apparently is not dead: Grain Transportation Agency is talking to interested companies to get detailed proposals (to bring those cars in and allow that grain to be transported through private held grain car companies), trying to see how privately-leased cars could fit into allocation system (is what the Grain Transportation Agency is going to do.) Biggest obstacle may be the Wheat Board . . .

Mr. Speaker, I want them to know this. The biggest obstacle may be the Wheat Board. Think about this. Rumour is that the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I didn't say this, but I'm telling you what's being discussed. Mr. Speaker:

. . . rumor is that the . . . (Canadian Wheat Board) threatens to restrict use of its cars to Board grains only if private cars are allowed . . .

And that, Mr. Speaker, is a detriment to the very fabric and the factor of establishing why those cars were purchased by the Canadian Wheat Board in the first place.

And if that happens, Mr. Speaker, then the Canadian Wheat Board should step aside in view of that to deal with their fundamental demand when those cars were

purchased in the first place that they would provide the best opportunity for transportation of all grains to all ports for all farmers in western Canada. And that's what they were bought for, Mr. Speaker, and that's the point that needs to be made here today.

And I want the Minister of Agriculture for Canada to understand that if that is a fact, then he needs to step in and deal with it in a very precise and a concise way. And that's the role that he should play.

As it relates to the Canadian Transport minister, he should also be aware that he has the responsibility to allocate and that he needs to allocate to places like Churchill, Port Arthur or Thunder Bay, Prince Rupert or Vancouver.

Another problem that is occurring, Mr. Speaker, is that the Vancouver grain terminal labour negotiations are stalling. We have had one strike there already, Mr. Speaker; the arbitrator in the labour dispute came forward and said: we will pay to the workers what the employers offered as their last offer. So what did that cost us, Mr. Speaker? It cost us demurrage in the millions, it cost us lost markets throughout the world. And the member from Moosomin read into the record some of the things that are dealing with . . . the lost markets in China and other places; the Alberta Wheat Pool has indicated that that is where the markets are being lost.

We must understand, Mr. Speaker, it is a cost to the people of Saskatchewan, it's a cost to the people of the province of Alberta, and also the people of Manitoba.

Then we come into another item that needs to be addressed. Mr. Speaker, the people are having serious problems -- decline of rural Saskatchewan irreversible, Mr. Speaker. Why is it irreversible? Because all of these things are dragging down, down, down.

And that's what they're doing. We can't market. We can't deliver our grain. We can't deliver our products into the market-place. Why, Mr. Speaker? All these outside forces are driving us back into the place where we can't do it.

Top that all off with, Mr. Speaker, as we speak, Sask Wheat Pool employees are voting on whether they should go on strike. Top that all off with that, Mr. Speaker. They're voting whether they should go on strike. And that, Mr. Speaker, is again a deterrent to the grain going to market.

My question is, Mr. Speaker, why does everybody think that they have to take out of the farmers' pockets in western Canada to live, so that the farmer who grows the grain himself can't live? Why do they think that they have to take it out of my pocket -- and the members of this Assembly who are in agriculture understand that -- why do they have to take it out of our pockets so that they can increase their wages?

And if, Mr. Speaker, there's lots of farm boys here that wouldn't mind going working for \$20 an hour in

Vancouver or Prince Rupert, or in Thunder Bay or in Churchill . . . Mr. Speaker, they would like to do that. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the reason why we think this is important to discuss here today and that's why we're urging the members of this Assembly to support the main motion too.

Mr. Speaker, there are significant items that need to be raised in this and I know that there are considerably more. However, I want to conclude my remarks by saying this: the people that live off of agriculture in Saskatchewan are getting bigger and bigger and bigger. That volume is getting bigger. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why rural Saskatchewan has a problem. They have a problem because it costs more to deliver grain from Saskatchewan to Vancouver than the grain is worth.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why we should be supporting this motion, delivering it to the Minister of Agriculture, delivering it to the Senior Grain Transportation minister, and then, Mr. Speaker, having him understand that we clearly need some help in making sure all of the ducks get lined up and so that they don't fall off the track. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why I will be supporting the main motion here today.

The division bells rang from 12:53 p.m. until 12:54 p.m.

Amendment agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas

Wiens	Renaud
Tchorzewski	Hamilton
Shillington	Trew
Teichrob	Flavel
Johnson	Scott
Goulet	Crofford
Mitchell	Stanger
Upshall	Knezacek
Lyons	Carlson
Calvert	

-- 19

Nays

Neudorf	Britton
Martens	D'Autremont
Boyd	Goohsen
Toth	

-- 7

The division bells rang from 12:56 p.m. until 12:57 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas

Van Mulligen	Flavel
Wiens	Scott
Tchorzewski	Crofford
Shillington	Stanger
Anguish	Knezacek
Teichrob	Carlson

Johnson	Swenson
Goule	Neudorf
Mitchell	Martens
MacKinnon	Boyd
Upshall	Toth
Hagel	Britton
Lyons	D'Autremont
Calvert	Goohsen
Renaud	Haverstock
Hamilton	Bergman
Trew	

-- 33

Nays

-- Nil

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- I would ask that question no. 51 to 54 be converted to motions for return (debatable).

The Speaker: -- Questions 51 to 54, motions for return -- converted to motions for return (debatable).

The Assembly adjourned at 1 p.m.