

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure today to stand on behalf of the citizens of Cypress Hills who through these petitions are giving voice to their concerns raised by recommendations in the EMS (emergency medical services) development project report.

And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and to affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present these petitions from citizens of Eastend, Gull Lake, and Tompkins.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise on behalf of concerned people in southwest Saskatchewan who have as a priority the hospital facilities in the cities of Swift Current.

And I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners will humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to carefully consider Swift Current's request for a new hospital.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from Chaplin, Swift Current, Kindersley, Waldeck, Frontier, and Saskatoon.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of the good people of Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency who are concerned about the report of the EMS services in Saskatchewan.

And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present on behalf of the good people of Minton, Radville, and Ceylon.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Friday next move reading of a Bill, The Charitable Fundraising Act.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you'll get used to that as the days go on.

I am very pleased today to be able to introduce a group of people from the public service. And we have here people who are on a public servant tour from the Department of Justice, Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing, Agriculture and Food, Health, Environment and Resource Management, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

And I just want to say, Mr. Speaker that while government can set the broad-breast directions, it's the people in the public service who make the quality services that people depend on and that make government work for people.

So we thank you very much today, and hope that you enjoy your tour. I know you have a session in the Legislative Library on the system of government as well as a session on cabinet. And thank you very much for joining us today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I had the pleasure of meeting in the Assembly, men and women who for the past 25 years have been assembling information for the crop insurance reports that we have of the crop report. And we were honoured to pay tribute in recognizing eight individuals who have been crop reporters with the program from its start.

Mr. Speaker, these eight individuals, along with approximately 300 crop reporters across the province, are all volunteers who provide their duties out of a sense of responsibility and for the good of their community and the province.

These crop reporters year after year provide our producers and the government with valuable information that enables us to monitor and evaluate each year's crop. As well, Mr. Speaker, hundreds of private organizations and business depend on the work of our volunteers as they gather the information for us.

I would ask the individuals and their spouses to stand, their partners to stand, when I announce their names: James and Eileen Ewert, Frank and June Blake, George Stevens, William and Luba Bindig, Ron and Theresa Whitfield — were not able to be with us here today — Ron and Wanda Oliver, Harold and Irene Jackle, and Mike and Celphie Shawaga.

I'd ask the members of the Assembly to join with me in recognizing the valuable work that our volunteers do for us.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to

join with the Minister of Agriculture as the Saskatchewan Party Ag critic in support of the weather and crop reporters that are here today. It's certainly a valuable work that you people are doing. I've always admired your dedication at recording the information on a daily basis and perhaps even more than on one occasion throughout the day. It provides us with a great deal of historical information about the weather patterns here in Saskatchewan and helps us in our forecasting of events to come.

So we certainly want to join with the Minister of Agriculture in support of your work, and congratulate you for the efforts that you've made on behalf of Saskatchewan agriculture over the years.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and today in your gallery I'm honoured to introduce several people visiting the legislature on March 21 — the International Day for the Elimination of Racism.

These people have recently organized a very successful community consultation. They're taking that information forward to the world conference against racism this fall, and this community consultation was only one of its kind in Canada that was organized by the community.

Mr. Speaker, these people should be honoured because they're not only identifying problems, but finding solutions. And I just want to say that we have today with us: Wade Luzny, Yars Lazochuk, Rowena Roduta, Martha Mettle, Heather Robison — and unable to attend I do believe, although if you are here, stand up — Germaine Coates, there, and Wes Fine Day.

So thank you very much for your good work and I ask the members to join me in thanking you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome the group on the elimination of racism. In the year 2001, racism is just not acceptable. So we'd like to thank you for the work that you do and hope you enjoy the proceedings today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the legislature two of my constituents, Gary and Jessie Carlson, who are great contributors to our province in so many ways. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to this House, two regular visitors here, young men who have participated in youth parliament and have keen eye on what's happening in this province, contribute to the edification of many of our citizens through articles to the newspaper. I'd like to introduce Tanner Morrison and Kelsey Rose. They're in the gallery opposite.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome today two people in the gallery, constituents from Regina Elphinstone that's played a pivotal role in my being here today and not only that, but on the face of the earth — my mother and father, Doug and Carolyn McCall. Please welcome them warmly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is obviously a day for introducing very important people, people who've played pivotal roles in our lives and the lives of this province.

And I would like to introduce to you someone whom we will all remember was young and spry and athletic when first he joined this Legislative Assembly in 1991; and over the years through his contribution to service for the people of Saskatchewan he now uses a cane, which he tells me that he could also have used in a different way with the opposition parties.

So I would like members of this Assembly to please welcome Mr. Walter Jess, past MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Redberry.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, or should I say, Otuyumiw, in Cree. I would like to as well welcome our guests to the legislature. In the context of multiculturalism and the fight against racism and the respect, you know, that should be allotted with all peoples, I would say this to the guests, tawaw — it means simply you're welcome. Everybody is welcome in this legislature. Haw egosi. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

International Day to End Racial Discrimination

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise before you today, March 21, to speak about the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Yesterday in the Throne Speech Her Honour stated that:

My government is removing barriers that prevent too many people from sharing the benefits and meeting the obligations of full citizenship.

One such barrier, Mr. Speaker, is racism.

Since 1966, March 21 has been recognized by the United Nations as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Canada was one of the first countries to support the UN (United Nations) declaration, and in 1989 the Department of Canadian Heritage launched its annual March 21 campaign.

This campaign was initiated in response to the need to heighten awareness of the harmful effects of racism on a national scale. For more than 10 years this campaign has mobilized Canadian youth to rise up and to take a stand against racism. This year youth across the country formed teams and came up with interactive ways to teach people that racism has no place in our

society.

Youth are the heart of this annual campaign because they have the energy, commitments, and creativity to advance the struggle against racism. They are the voice of the present and the future.

In the words of the Governor General of Canada, Adrienne Clarkson, racial discrimination is a social ill whose existence and impact must be recognized and confronted by every member of society.

The March 21 campaign engages . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Your time has expired.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to rise in this Assembly today in recognition of the United Nations declaration that today, March 21, is the International Day to Eliminate Racial Discrimination. The declaration affirmed the fundamental equality of all people — regardless of their race, colour, or ethnic origin. With that, Mr. Speaker, respect, equality, and diversity are the three fundamental values that we should all adhere to.

(1345)

Mr. Speaker, if we look back in history, many horrendous acts have been committed in the name of racial intolerance. We must never forget the atrocities of the Holocaust and we must never forget the loss of human dignity through slavery.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we as Canadians have taken many positive steps towards the elimination of racism but there is much more that needs to be done. We must all be aware of our actions and our words and what we teach our children.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that all of us in the Legislative Assembly have an important role to play in educating the people of Saskatchewan to celebrate our diversity and embrace our differences.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Signs of Spring

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In yesterday's Throne Speech it was said, springtime in Saskatchewan is just around the corner. Actually, according to the calendar, spring began yesterday and, Mr. Speaker, the symbolism of that convergence is wonderfully appropriate. The uncertainty and bleakness of our long winter is over. We have a new leader and a new team . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — . . . and properly elected positions. Hope and optimism are abounding in Saskatchewan as a new

day and a new season dawns. Spring has sprung, Mr. Speaker, and with it some visible signs.

The ice ruts in our streets now extend down to the pavement; the mighty Wascana is getting ready to refresh our air with its sulphuric fumes; and we can now go to work and return home both in the daylight, regardless of the time zone.

The 14th century English poet, Chaucer, said that in spring people long to go on pilgrimages. Well here we are again at the shrine that is the people's legislature, come to do the people's business with, I trust, the sense of renewal and energy that comes with the spring.

In keeping with the season, Mr. Speaker, I welcome you to your new chair, and to all members best wishes for a fruitful and bountiful session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Congratulations to Saskatchewan's Brier Representatives

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand today to congratulate and to commend the Doug Harcourt curling team on their very fine showing as Saskatchewan's representatives at the Canadian curling championships, the Brier competition.

Mr. Speaker, the Humboldt-Quill Lake foursome is comprised of skip Doug Harcourt, third Kevin Kaltoff, second Greg Harcourt, and lead Brian Wempe. And they came within one victory of earning a tiebreaker spot at the Nokia Brier. And although the rink had a slow start, the foursome rebounded, moving ahead into contention for a playoff spot.

On the last draw the Harcourt rink needed a victory over northern Ontario's Al Hackner in order to force a tie-breaker with Manitoba's Kerry Burtnyk. However, this did not happen as Al Hackner put a stop to the Harcourt rink.

In the round robin, Mr. Speaker . . . in the round robin portion of the tournament, Saskatchewan defeated the Alberta team; the team that went on to win the Nokia Brier.

So over all, the Harcourt team finished with six wins and five losses — a very admirable record — and I stand today to commend them once again, and to wish them all the very best in their future endeavours in the curling arena.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fueling Change Conference at Weyburn

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's great opportunities for farmers in the land of living skies.

Mr. Speaker, coming to Weyburn tomorrow is a conference that explores the possibility of value-added ventures in rural Saskatchewan. This conference is called Fueling Change. It will focus on the areas of pork enterprises, value-added processing

of cereals, and production of ethanol.

Ten farms and agribusiness leaders will share their success stories including Jeff Passmore from Iogen, the Ottawa-based ethanol manufacturer which is currently searching for a location for a \$200 million plant which would make ethanol from wheat, oat, and barley straw.

This conference is being touted as a common meeting place for farm and business leaders' network. Saskatchewan has great resources, competitive advantages which could have a great impact on farmers and upon rural communities. We have the right people to provide participants with an opportunity to learn what others are doing, and information on building and attracting value-added agribusinesses in rural communities.

This conference will be beneficial to all, from farmers to bankers. The key to success is diversification and value-added ventures. Together with a united front between farmers, business, and government, we will be able to bring the rural farmer out of crisis. Working together is paramount to the success of any team, corporation, or local business.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Opening of New Arena at Whitewood

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday I had the pleasure of participating with the community of Whitewood and area residents in the official opening of their new arena. The official ceremony took place following the annual ice carnival and a large crowd was in attendance.

Mr. Speaker, the significance of this event was the fact that a little over a year ago in October of 1999, the old arena burned to the ground. After the initial shock, disbelief, and sense of despair, the vitality and resilience of rural residents came to the forefront. Within a few weeks of the fire, a building committee was put in place to oversee the rebuilding project. And they were certainly enhanced in their efforts by the foresight of a town council, which two years earlier had looked at their insurance policies and decided they just didn't carry enough insurance, and as a result they upped the insurance coverage, which has resulted, Mr. Speaker, in a brand new facility for the community.

Mr. Speaker, as I was in that community and certainly observed some hockey games, one of the significant factors that was pointed out was a year to the date of the fire, there were children skating on that arena ice.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the community of Whitewood and their residents for their hard work and diligence in the reconstruction of this arena.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Z99 Annual Fundraiser

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Z99's morning crew has been at it again, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday and

Friday, March 15 and 16, for 36 hours without sleep CC and Lorie and Buzz entertained us, they educated us, and they cajoled us out of a good deal of money — \$130,061 to be exact — and all for a great cause. The neonatal intensive care unit at the Regina General Hospital benefits. They gain a critical care station. Newborn babies and babies in trouble will benefit from the Z's community partnership.

CC, Lorie and Buzz built on a foundation of previous years' fundraising, Mr. Speaker, and as such they connect us with the future. Babies and their parents benefit from the critical care station, and we all benefit from improvements to the health system.

But CC and Lorie have shared more than that. They share hope and action with their listeners for a brighter future. We can sum up Z99, CC, and Lorie and their listening audience as connected to the future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by thanking Z99, Lorie and CC and Buzz, and of course, the generous listeners for making it a reality.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Job Creation

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, it is now painfully clear this government has no plan for growing Saskatchewan. Yesterday I congratulated the Premier on his new job, but unfortunately that's about the only new job that the NDP (New Democratic Party) have created in the past year.

Mr. Speaker, over the last 12 months, Saskatchewan lost an astounding 13,000 jobs. That's a direct result of the failing economic policies of the NDP — 13,000 jobs gone, vanished, in one year. And yesterday's Throne Speech contained no plan for reversing that trend.

Mr. Premier, why has the NDP driven 13,000 jobs out of Saskatchewan, and what are you doing to reverse your dismal economic record?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I anticipated a question or two today and look forward to the debate.

Mr. Speaker, the member talks about the numbers of jobs in our province. He will know that a year ago, we reached an all-time record high for employment in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — All-time record high. He will also know that we have suffered . . . he should know, Mr. Speaker, that this year our farm community, our agricultural producers have suffered as a result of low commodity prices, international subsidy wars, and so on.

He will know that the significant hurt on our job front in this year is a result of loss in agricultural jobs in our province, which I would point out to the Leader of the Opposition, we have seen a larger loss of jobs in the agricultural sector in the province of Alberta, while their segment is much smaller.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thirteen thousand jobs gone in one year and the Premier is proud of his record. I'm shocked.

Mr. Premier, every other province in Canada is creating new jobs. Alberta, 43,000; Manitoba, 7,000 new jobs; BC (British Columbia) is creating jobs; Ontario is creating jobs. And I might point out that agricultural-based Prince Edward Island is creating jobs.

There's only one government in Canada that's losing jobs, and it's your government. Mr. Premier, how do you explain that? Why is every other province in Canada creating jobs while your government is killing them?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition well knows, every other sector of Saskatchewan's economy is growing and producing jobs, with the exception of agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The Leader of the Opposition, I'm sure, would find interesting the report that was on the news at noon today, Mr. Speaker, noon today, headline: "Conference Board predicts strong Regina economy".

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — The Conference Board of Canada predicts that Regina's economy will grow by 2.5 per cent and the workforce will expand by 2 per cent. That's true in Regina, Mr. Speaker. It's true across the province in every sector except, as we say, in the agricultural sector, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I was actually at that presentation. I didn't see the Premier there.

He said that based on the dismal numbers of the current year, there might be a small increase but very, very small, certainly compared to other provinces.

But Mr. Speaker, these are real people that we're talking about and the tragedy is that many of these people are choosing to leave Saskatchewan, and they're building their future and they're raising their families outside of this province. They, I believe, would prefer to stay, but they are being driven out, Mr. Premier, by your failed economic policies.

Last year, Saskatchewan suffered a net out-migration of nearly 6,700 people. These are the facts, Mr. Premier. It was the worst year for people leaving the province since 1992.

Mr. Premier, how can you just shrug your shoulders and say your policies are working when you continue to drive people and jobs and families — real people — out of the province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday Her Honour in this Chamber talked about our intentions to build this economy, to build on the strong foundation that exists.

We talk about providing jobs for our young people. This is a government, Mr. Speaker, who believes in Saskatchewan, who believes in our future and approaches that future with optimism, and we are connecting to that future, Mr. Speaker.

I'll tell you what's different about Saskatchewan than other provinces. It's a loyal opposition who does nothing but, nothing but bring this province down. Nothing but bring this province down.

Join us in supporting Saskatchewan. Join us in promoting Saskatchewan and a little less of the Chamber of Commerce for Calgary, please.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm surprised, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier continues to defend his dismal record — 13,000 jobs lost, a fact; 6,700 people lost, a fact. That's the NDP record that he's so proud of.

Mr. Premier, your job creation record is an absolute disaster. I know it. You know it. And do you know who else knows it? Somebody that used to be on your side of the House, Mr. Dwain Lingenfelter knows it. He had to move to Alberta when he couldn't get the job that he wanted with your government.

Mr. Premier, I admit that we weren't upset, terribly, to see Dwain Lingenfelter leave. But we are very, very upset about the thousands of other Saskatchewan people who are leaving our province and taking with them their families, their hopes, and their dreams.

Mr. Premier, other than Dwain Lingenfelter, what are you going to do to stop this exodus? What are you going to do to create the jobs that you promised in 1999?

(1400)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I understand where the Leader of the Opposition comes from, and he'll want to be negative about the province, negative about the government, and negative about myself and others. But, you know, other people in this province have had an opportunity in the last month to pass judgment on this government.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that the member from Cypress Hills said to *The Leader-Post* that we're glad that myself is running in the Riversdale by-election because this would be a judgment on government. That's what the member from Cypress Hills said: this would be a judgment on

government.

Mr. Speaker, we've had that judgment. We've won two by-elections in three weeks. That's the confidence of the people. That's the judgment we accept.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Declining Student Population

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's for the Minister of Education.

Mr. Minister, your own Education department is predicting disaster. According to your own staff, K to 12 enrolment in Saskatchewan is going to shrink by almost 30,000 students over the next eight years — 30,000 students gone from our schools, 30,000 students gone from our communities. And that means their parents — young, working parents — are leaving the province. Mr. Speaker, that's the aftermath of 10 years of NDP government — driving young people out of this province.

Mr. Minister, why is your government driving students and young families out of this province? And more importantly, what are you doing to stop it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, as per usual, the members opposite haven't quite got their facts right.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that all across Canada there are decreasing enrolments. This is not unique to Saskatchewan. The facts are that people are having smaller families. This was a trend that began about the time of the Devine sweep in 1982 and the trend has continued.

The rates of family size have decreased. The number of enrolments have decreased. But you know what? You know what, Mr. Speaker? The amount of money that this government has been putting into the K to 12 system has been increasing despite the decline on enrolments, and we are very proud of our record with regard to K to 12 education.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — To the Minister of Education. I've been reading from your own department's report on enrolment projections, and if you haven't seen it, you should pick it up and read it, it's got some very disturbing reading . . . (inaudible) . . . Mr. Minister, the report says your government is projecting a massive drop of 30,000 students over the next eight years, but yesterday's Throne Speech promised to build new schools.

Mr. Minister, given the fact that your government is planning to drive 30,000 students out of the province in the next eight years, where are you going to build the schools? Thanks to the NDP government, if you're going to build those schools where the Saskatchewan school students are, you're going to have to build them in Alberta, Mr. Minister.

Will you table your plans today on telling us how you're going to keep the students in this province in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly we recognize the demographic trends; we also recognize that we have an increasing Aboriginal population. And recognizing that those students will be coming into the K to 12 education system we are working on expanding our community schools, we are working on expanding Aboriginal education programs within our K to 12 education system.

And we will be making those announcements within a very short time on budget day, Mr. Speaker. So I would say to the members opposite that they do stay tuned.

And to just set the facts straight we do . . . we have seen a decline of approximately 10,000 students in the past decade in the province of Saskatchewan. But I remind the members opposite that we have increased funding and the pupil/educator ratios in this province have dropped — have dropped — Mr. Speaker, in the last five years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Commission's Population Projections

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's yet another Saskatchewan report which focuses on population forecasts in the province. Just yesterday the Health Services Utilization and Research Commission, HSURC, released a report called Planning for Saskatchewan's Future.

They project Saskatchewan population will increase by less than 7,000 people in the next 15 years. That's a growth of less than 500 people per year. What does that tell you, Mr. Speaker?

It should tell you that people are giving up. It tells you that even provincial health organizations hold out no hope that this government has any plan to increase our population base; they are planning for no growth. They expect trends to continue and our population to remain the same.

To the Minister of Health, do you agree with your health commission's study that this province is going nowhere?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We often wonder what happens across the hall in the room as the opposition is getting ready for question period, but it's quite clear that they're over there, sitting, sucking lemons. All they can do is think about the negative things about our province. What we want to do is build this province to . . . so that it's the best province in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We are working with the people who — in the health system — so that we can get the best information that we can about the long-term health needs of this province, and we will continue to do that so that we can build on the best health system that we have in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, this government is sucking the life out of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, that same study predicts that by the year 2015 the population of people between the age of 20 and 49 will drop by 40,000.

Mr. Speaker, these are our youth. They are the working families. They are the working people that raise their families and do business. They are the people that make the health care system work. The loss of this group of people is going to be dramatic to this province. It affects our schools; it affects our health system; it affects our tax base.

Mr. Minister, will you get out from behind the one-liners and say what you're going to do and your government's going to do to keep this province afloat.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the thing that we are going to do to make sure that this province has a future is to make sure that the people on that side never have a chance to run this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Future of the Province

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Please let the Leader of the Opposition put his question.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is again for the Premier. Mr. Premier, it's now clear that your government has no plan, no vision for the future.

We in fact are doing our homework. We're reading your documents — maybe your ministers aren't — and your own numbers on your side paint a very bleak picture for the province in the next few years: a shrinking population, three . . . 30,000 fewer students, 40,000 fewer people between the ages of 20 and 49. That's the NDP's vision for the future; your vision for the future.

And what do we get out of yesterday's Throne Speech? A mishmash of recycled promises, clumsy attempts to take credit for federal programs. It's like you've given up over there — you're not even going to try any more

Mr. Premier, why is your government accepting defeat? Why do you have no plan — no plan — to keep young Saskatchewan families here in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this province has enjoyed, in the last year, record potash sales and exports, record oil production. Last year, record employment. This province, Mr. Speaker . . . this province, Mr. Speaker, is strong. This province

is strong and it has a great potential and a great future, irregardless of what members of the Saskatchewan Party say and do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And the Leader of the Opposition should understand about defeat. He suffered two in the last three weeks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Support for Agricultural Producers

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, one reason the Saskatchewan economy is suffering is because of the ongoing farm crisis. And yesterday's Throne Speech did absolutely nothing to address this problem.

I understand that today your government is going to make up or attempt to make up for this mistake by calling for an additional \$1 billion in farm aid.

Mr. Premier, the Saskatchewan Party supports that proposal, but you must do more. Where is the long-term safety net your government has promised since 1992? Where is the long-term vision for the future of agriculture in this province?

We agree Ottawa must do more, but it's time we move beyond ad hoc programs that provide only temporary relief for our farm families. Mr. Premier, where is your long-term safety net that you and your government and your party has promised since 1992?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the member has raised. It's a very important issue and later this afternoon we've invited the opposition to join in a debate in this House on these very, very issues. And we haven't heard much from this opposition party about this very significant issue over the last few weeks or months.

Mr. Speaker, you will know and members will know that our Minister of Agriculture has joined with ministers of Agriculture from the five large producing provinces in Canada. They have been working together. They have been in Ottawa. They have talked about the need for an immediate assistance package from the federal government of \$1 billion — not the 500 million. They've talked about the need to build the long-term safety programs. They've talked about the need for opportunities for farm families to make the kind of transitions that some farm families want to do.

I appreciate the fact now that our opposition colleagues in the House are coming onside with us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, we will support your call for a billion dollars this afternoon. Unfortunately though, every effort that has been made in

Ottawa at this point has failed.

Mr. Premier, the farm crisis is affecting every single area of our economy in Saskatchewan and we must make this case as loudly and as clearly as we possibly can in Ottawa. We cannot allow Saskatchewan to be ignored any longer.

Mr. Premier, will you support us today in our call, the Saskatchewan Party call, on calling on the legislature to take the unprecedented step of sending every single MLA from this Assembly to Ottawa, to make the case before Ottawa, every single member of this legislature, every single MLA, government and opposition, rural and urban, every single MLA representing every constituency in this province, speaking together in one voice, making the case very clear?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Speaking together in one voice, Mr. Premier. Mr. Premier, are you prepared to work with us this afternoon in that call?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, for weeks and months, we haven't heard a word from the opposition party about the crisis facing our farm families.

Now that I hear this opposition party talking about — some weeks ago, they operated on the steps of the legislature saying that we should be electing senators. That's what they were interested in — electing senators. Not the crisis facing our family farms. Today they suggest they all want a trip to Ottawa.

Well, Mr. Speaker, a year ago, a year ago we put together a large delegation of government members, opposition members, producer organizations, producers from Saskatchewan, went to Ottawa. What happened? We went with a joint position. When we got there, when we came home, they abandoned the common position of Saskatchewan producers.

What we need, Mr. Speaker, what we need is a good debate today, a unanimous resolution.

I have communicated with the Prime Minister. Our Minister of Agriculture is meeting with the Ministers of Agriculture from each of the large producing provinces and we will be making the case in Ottawa. You can rest assured about that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, the only thing that's been absent in this province is any kind of cohesive agriculture strategy coming from you and your deputy premier's office . . . (inaudible) . . . that's what's happening in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1415)

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Premier, Mr. Premier, think of what kind of a powerful signal this would send to Ottawa. All of the people

of this province represented by their MLA, lobbying on behalf of Saskatchewan farm families in Ottawa, making the case, everybody represented.

There are a number of people in this country today who are saying, we want out. Well, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Premier, we should be saying to Ottawa, we want in. That's what we should be saying to them in Ottawa these days. Our economy is being crippled by a farm crisis. It's time Ottawa paid attention; it's time you and your department paid attention, working side by side with us this afternoon.

Will you, Mr. Premier, call on every MLA in this legislature to join with you in going to Ottawa to lobby on behalf of farm families?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm calling on every MLA in this Assembly to participate in the debate this afternoon that's . . . (inaudible) . . . resolution. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, they seem prepared to ask questions but not to hear answers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want every MLA to participate in this debate, to share in this unanimous resolution, but I do not want to have happen this year what happened last year. When we went with common voice to the nation's capital, who went south, who went south on us? Members of the Saskatchewan Party. Not the farm producers, not the farm organizations.

The Speaker: — Order, order. The Premier will proceed.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we all well remember last year how this opposition party pushed and prodded, and pulled until we forced . . . they forced us all into that AIDA (Agriculture Income Disaster Assistance) program. Well we know how that AIDA program worked out for Saskatchewan producers; we know how that worked out for grain and oilseed producers in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the members of the opposition — let us form that common front; we don't all need a free trip to Ottawa. We need to get our voice, in common voice, to Ottawa with farm producers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, when AIDA was being drawn up here in Canada, the only person that went south was Eric Upshall, went down to Mexico to sun himself. That's the only thing that happened then.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — What more powerful of a message could we possibly send to Ottawa than sending every elected MLA in this legislature down there, working side by side, going to Ottawa to deliver this message.

We should also ask the legislatures of Manitoba and Alberta to join with us in this unprecedented call for assistance for our farm families. It's time, Mr. Premier, to send a message to

Ottawa that they cannot ignore.

Mr. Premier, Mr. Premier, will you support this initiative? Will you send a delegation of all the representatives of this legislature and ask Manitoba and Alberta to join with us in this unprecedented call for assistance for our farm families?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that the five large agricultural producing provinces in this nation are represented by a variety of political parties in their government benches — including, if I may say, Conservative Alberta and Conservative Ontario.

To date we have been able to work together, Mr. Speaker — work together. We have been working not only as governments and political organizations; we work with farming organizations, producer organizations in this province and across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of voice that will be heard and will carry weight in Ottawa — not a group of men and women who . . . yes, who a year ago, who a year ago committed to make that trip to Ottawa, went with us, and then abandoned the united front that we brought to Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, let us have the beginning today of a solid debate in this House. Let us send to the federal government a unanimous resolution, and let us make it very clear that the legislature of Saskatchewan is not happy — is not happy with the 500 million committed by the federal government nor with the process. We will join with Canadians coast-to-coast in calling for a billion dollars in immediate assistance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. Hon. members before I call orders of the day, pursuant to rule 27, it is your duty at this time to elect a Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole. The procedures for the election are the same as those used to elect the Speaker.

I have been informed by the Clerk that only one candidate has declared his intention to stand for election as Deputy Speaker.

Pursuant to rule 27(4) and 26(3), it is my pleasure to announce that the member for Regina Sherwood, Mr. Lindy Kasperski is declared elected as your Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, fellow members of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'd first of all like to take this opportunity to offer you congratulations on your election as Speaker yesterday. I haven't had a chance to do so yet, and congratulations.

And, Mr. Speaker, through you to all the members of the Legislative Assembly, I wish to say it's a great honour that you've put on me today to be . . . to serve you as Deputy Speaker and Chairman of the Committee of the Whole. I look forward to working with you, Mr. Speaker, and working with all members of the Assembly in this very important function. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave to make a few comments on the election of Deputy Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to also take the opportunity, as my colleague from Regina Sherwood did, to congratulate you on your election as Speaker.

Also I'd like to congratulate the member from Regina Sherwood on his election as Deputy Speaker. We in the official opposition, Mr. Speaker, look forward to working closely with both of you and we're sure that this will be a well-run House with yourselves and the member from Regina Sherwood in the Chair. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to make motions concerning change of committees' membership, please.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Substitution of Name on Special Nominating Committee

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Saltcoats:

That the name of Mr. Don McMorris be substituted for that of Mr. Bob Bjerneud on the Nominating Committee.

Motion agreed to.

Substitution of Name on Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Indian Head-Milestone:

That the name of Mr. Ben Heppner be substituted for that of Mr. Brad Wall on the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs.

Motion agreed to.

**Substitution of Name on Standing Committee
on Crown Corporations**

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. I move, seconded by the member from Indian Head-Milestone:

That the name of Mr. Yogi Huyghebaert be substituted for that of Mr. Wayne Elhard on the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Indian Head-Milestone:

That the name of Mr. Brad Wall be substituted for that of Mr. Ben Heppner on the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask for leave of the Assembly to move several routine motions with respect to referrals to committees.

Leave granted.

**Referral of Report of Saskatchewan Legislative Library to
the Standing Committee on Communications**

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly I'd like to move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Nutana:

That the report of the Saskatchewan Legislative Library is tabled in the present session and be referred to the Standing Committee on Communications.

Motion agreed to.

**Referral of the Retention and Disposal Schedules approved
under The Archives Act to the Standing Committee on
Communications**

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker I would like to as well move, by leave of the Assembly:

That the Retention and Disposal Schedules approved under The Archives Act by the Public Documents Committee as tabled in the present session be referred to the Standing Committee on Communications.

This is seconded again by the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Motion agreed to.

**Referral of Bylaws of the Professional Associations and
Amendments thereto as tabled in the present session to the
Special Committee on Regulations**

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'd like to move:

That the Bylaws of the Professional Associations and amendments thereto be tabled in the present session and that they be referred to the Special Committee on Regulations.

This is seconded by the member from Saskatoon Nutana, as well.

Motion agreed to.

**Referral of the various Reports of the Provincial Auditor
as tabled intersessionally and in the present session to the
Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move as well seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That the various reports of the Provincial Auditor as tabled intersessionally and in the present session, be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Motion agreed to.

(1430)

**Referral of the Public Accounts
of the Province of Saskatchewan
to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and finally I would like to move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Nutana again:

That the Public Accounts of the province of Saskatchewan as tabled intersessionally and in the present session be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start by thanking the newly elected Premier for giving me the honour of moving the motion in support of the Speech from the Throne. I'm awed at this privilege and responsibility given me. I recognize the tradition of this moment. As of now, I'm a part of parliamentary tradition for which I have great respect.

I'm honoured to follow in the eloquent paths of the previous members who stood before you in such an important traditional role. My colleagues who have preceded me have set high standards and I hope today to approach their excellence.

It is once again a great honour to bring greetings to this Assembly on behalf of the residents of Saskatoon Meewasin. It is indeed a great privilege to represent them.

I would like to commend the Lieutenant Governor on a fine delivery of the Speech from the Throne, and the new Premier, the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, for clearly establishing

a new face for government in our province. With this new face on the future of our province, I can honestly say I'm very, very excited.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — I would also like to commend the Premier on a well-fought victory in Saskatoon Riversdale.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — Despite the heated attacks from the opposition, you have shown your dedication to this province and its people. With you at the helm, our government looks very, very good. You truly represent the spirit of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — I'm looking forward to working with you and with all other hon. members this session and into the future.

A congratulation to you as well, Mr. Speaker, on your newly elected position. Your knowledge, experience, and grace will no doubt be an asset to this Assembly. I know that you will conserve the image of this institution and that you will ensure that we, your sometimes recalcitrant children, will adhere to its rules — not an easy task, Mr. Speaker, but one I'm sure you'll be able to perform with delicate severity.

Saskatoon Meewasin, according to the report of the Chief Electoral Officer, boasts the largest number of electors of any constituency in the province at 13,587 eligible voters, and that was in 1999. And of course we all know that it has grown rapidly since then.

This is a very diverse community, Mr. Speaker. My constituents have the joy of residing on the shore of the mighty Saskatchewan River. A river that moves forward regardless of sun, sleet, or snow — much like our government. The marvel that is Innovation Place and the Meewasin Valley Authority are both highlighted nicely by the great river. Also contained within the boundaries is the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College.

Saskatoon is a good example of what Saskatchewan is capable of — a strong economy, many new opportunities, and a visible beauty that is second to none. For example, the Canadian Light Source synchrotron building officially opened on February 25. The building was built on time and on budget, consistent with the workings of our government.

A synchrotron is a facility the size of a football field that produces light, principally X-rays, with special qualities such as extreme brightness and short-wave lengths that permit qualities . . . permit unprecedented scientific, and technological research. Like a giant microscope, this brilliant light source allows for matter to be seen at the atomic scale. With a fine intense beam that's only the width of a human hair, scientists can analyze molecules, biological samples, and materials with higher accuracy and precision than has been possible before.

Synchrotron light is an indispensable tool in pure and applied research in a great variety of areas, offering new and exciting opportunity for state-of-the-art investigations in material

sciences, medicine, biology, chemistry, physics, and the environmental sciences.

An independent economic impact study estimates the Canadian Light Source synchrotron would add almost a 122 million to Canada's GDP (gross domestic product) during construction and 12 million per year once the facility becomes operational. Provide a \$66 million boost to Saskatchewan's economy during construction and about 8 million a year afterward. Create 2,000 person-years of employment during construction, create 200 permanent jobs once in operation, and potentially attract 35 million annually to Canada in commercial research and development spending.

This facility will be one of the four most powerful synchrotrons in the world and the only one that will partner private industry.

The University of Saskatchewan and its affiliated organizations may have the largest impact on the Saskatoon labour force and its economy. The university complex which includes federated colleges, Royal University Hospital, federal research agencies, Innovation Place, and Wanuskewin Heritage Park, generated 20 per cent of the city's gross income in '98, '99 — greater than the economic impact of any other organization in the city.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — 17,650 local full-time jobs were generated, or 18 per cent of the city's total employees; 137 million was paid out in salaries and wages by the university; 216 million was paid out in salaries and purchases by associate organizations.

Perhaps the greatest contribution to the whole is Innovation Place. Innovation Place has had a very stabilizing effect on the Saskatoon economy. It has a total direct economic impact of \$157.9 million on the city of Saskatoon, and a total economic impact of 197.3 million on the province. It also has a total employment of 3,240 in Saskatoon, 3,762 within the province. Innovation Place continues to be a generator of professional-level employment, and I'm proud of our government's investment in this area.

There's also a boom in construction at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) and Innovation Place. As well, Mr. Speaker, per capita, Saskatoon led western Canadian cities in value on industrial building permits with a 56.5 per cent growth in permits issued during 2000.

The Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority contracted 835 firms and agencies last year, working in biotechnology, food processing, information technology and telecommunications, manufacturing, mining; and multimedia, transportation, and warehousing.

On the arts side of this wonderful city of Saskatoon, there were five feature films shot, totalling \$16 million. Saskatoon's film and television industry is now worth a projected 18.5 to 25 million according to SaskFILM. Meanwhile, Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority estimates about 70 per cent of the film investment stays in the city.

It is my honour to move the motion for approval of Her Honour's speech. It is an honour because the programs, themes,

and policies are practical, effective, and they make sense — something the opposition seems to have difficulty with.

The Speech from the Throne illustrates three main priorities — the thriving economy; healthy citizens, families and communities; and finally, a responsible and effective government.

I'll get back to these points in just a minute. But now I'd like to address the new and improved substance of this coalition government. Mr. Speaker, the winter of our discontent is behind us. The sun is shining, the snow is melting, and an exciting new spring is emerging . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — . . . emerging just as the new coalition government. I see right here and all throughout our government, new faces, youth, and commitment. On that note, Mr. Speaker, I would like to be one of the first to welcome the new member from Regina Elphinstone.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — You will find, I think, that the proceedings in this House are spirited, informed, and unashamedly partisan, which is the nature of our system. Our newest member will be the third MLA from Regina Elphinstone to sit with you, Mr. Speaker. He follows two distinguished fellows, a Mr. Dwain Lingenfelter, and of course Premier Allan Blakeney. I'm sure he will represent his constituents and our government with honour and with pride.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — I also see many familiar faces — maturity, experience, and continuity. With this combination of youth and experience, our government will maintain the momentum gained from the leadership and the two by-election victories. We are going to make our presence felt, Mr. Speaker.

This government is on the move. It is the job of this government to take a stand on issues and concerns of the Saskatchewan people. It is also our job to bring these messages to the forefront of government.

I and all members of my party am willing and able to utilize my position to be a responsible advocate of government and of the NDP to all people in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned a moment ago some themes from the Speech from the Throne and spoke of our individual and collective job to be responsible advocates, to improve the quality of life for all people in all parts of Saskatchewan.

We announced in the Throne Speech changes to The Labour Standards Act to increase maternity and parental leave provisions. And we announced a labour-business round table to address issues.

Mr. Speaker, this is a start. I want to assure my friends in the labour movement, and indeed all people who trade their labour for wages, that I will continue to press for more and better

changes. All workers regardless of the type of industry or the location of that industry deserve the minimum protection afforded by labour standards.

All workers deserve to benefit from free and fair collective bargaining. All workers deserve to have their health and safety protected while they're at work.

Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded of a song from my youth that spoke about little boxes on the hillside and how they were all made out of ticky-tacky and they all looked just the same. Well on this side of the House, we're not made out of ticky-tacky and we don't all look just the same. We represent all people in this province and I have no fear in my caucus of using my position in government to advance causes that I believe in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — We have the ability to have to spread the good news of the province and to counteract the mean-spirited attacks trodded by the opposition. I am here to spread the word — to spread the word, Mr. Speaker — that our government has a strong vision to lead Saskatchewan into the future. The renewal of the NDP is continuing and we have the best team to do it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — Renewing our vision, our message, and our party will only strengthen our government making it more accountable to the people. The combination of our people and our resources make us a dynamic team. Strength, perseverance . . . demonstrating strength, perseverance, and good government, it is our responsibility to govern this province and govern it well and that we will do.

Addressing the themes outlined in the Throne Speech, I would like to speak about our priorities as social democrats: to maintain a high level of physical and mental health care; to create opportunities for the people through economic development; to improve the quality of life for people in all parts of Saskatchewan; to celebrate our diversity, to view it as a strength; and to increase the role of Aboriginal people, both socially and economically. These are just a few of the priorities of this government.

Did you notice anything mentioned about privatizing our Crown corporations and selling off the assets to pay for tax cuts? That's what our opposition proposes. It seems they wish to resort back to the buy now, pay later tactics of the 1980s.

(1445)

Saskatchewan is a pretty darn good place to live, Mr. Speaker, regardless of what the characters across the floor tell us. We have our finances in order, giving us stable ground upon which to build our future.

Regarding our finances, Saskatchewan was seen as the star of the '90s according to *The Globe and Mail*, illustrating that our economy — yes, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan economy — outperformed all other provinces in the decade.

An Hon. Member: — Good news.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — Good news. Also, according to StatsCan survey of financial security, the median net worth of Saskatchewan families in 1999 was \$97,250 — the second highest in all the provinces followed . . .

An Hon. Member: — More good news.

Ms. Jones: — More good news. The median net worth for all 10 provinces was \$81,000, about 17 per cent lower than Saskatchewan.

The survey also found that Canadians had on average an estimated \$16 in debt for every \$100 in assets. For Saskatchewan families, the figures were \$11 in debt for every 100 in assets — the lowest rate in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this proves the strength of our province. Saskatchewan and its people are economically strong, making our transition into the future one of ease.

I also want to take a moment to mention that in November of 1997 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. And I want to say that in Saskatchewan we have the highest rate of volunteerism in Canada. And I would like to thank our Saskatchewan residents and formally recognize the great contribution that they make to this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — Employment is up, Mr. Speaker. Unemployment is low and our mining sectors are flourishing, especially oil.

As you have heard, our summer student program, available to those students returning to studies in the fall, will create 10,000 jobs over the next five years, further increasing the employment level.

Our unemployment rate is low at 6.2 per cent, 1.3 per cent below the national average.

An increase of disposable income over the last few years has resulted in increased business resulting in benefits for everyone in Saskatchewan. Debt has fallen substantially, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of gross domestic product. Consequently, interest payments have fallen from 881 million in '94 and '95 to 677 million this year, providing over \$200 million in annual savings. Just imagine how far this money can go towards debt reduction, tax cuts, and improved public services.

In the words of our Finance minister, and I quote, “no responsible government can promote the well-being of its people unless it cares about its bottom line.” And anyone who cannot understand that simple principle of public administration is not fit to govern.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — The Saskatchewan Party and their belief in laissez-faire, free-market economics is not what this province

needs, as so proved by their past governing experiences. We need a government that is strong, able, and willing to stand for what it believes in. We have that government, Mr. Speaker, right here, right now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — Our economy is growing and creating exciting new opportunities for Saskatchewan's people because of the following. Taxes have come down significantly from 1995 and under tax reform they will continue to come down. Tax reform will bring new levels of fairness and responsibility to the tax system while making the economy more competitive. And our continued attention to sound financial management will ensure our ability to meet our long-term tax reduction and spending commitments.

The future of Saskatchewan looks promising from this side of the floor, Mr. Speaker. With solidifying our finances comes the opportunity for effective and responsible policies in government. The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that our government cares about this province and all those who call Saskatchewan home. With our feet solidly planted due to our strong financial plan, it will make concerns and issues of the people that much easier to address.

Diversity, for example, is a pivotal point of action for the Saskatchewan people, and therefore this government. Addressing the practical needs of Metis and off-nations . . . off-reserve First Nation people in regards to education, employment, and economic development, individual and community well-being are issues this government takes seriously. We have a framework in place that will guide 12 provincial departments to work in partnership with Aboriginal organizations and institutions, federal and municipal governments, Crown corporations, the business sector, and others in addressing the community priorities.

Comprehensive work represents the first integrated approach to addressing the practical issues affecting Metis and off-reserve First Nation people in Saskatchewan. Initiatives to support implementations of the framework will be addressed by each sponsoring department in the 2001-2002 budget.

Agriculture — maybe the most visible issue in our province — is in need of our attention. The situation on the farm is not good, Mr. Speaker. Grain prices should strengthen this year but they'll still be below the five-year average.

Ottawa continues to play games with our government and our farmers. The latest announcement of 500 million by Mr. Vanclief was made with no consultation and it's simply is not enough. After cutting farm support following their 1993 election, the Liberals are leaving our farmers out to dry.

We are a small province with a small but solid treasury but we will not abandon our farmers as the Liberals have. We will be making a contribution. At the same time it must be noted that we will be focusing on long-term rural economic development in Saskatchewan, not on short-term solutions.

There is no such thing as an instant solution to any problem as the opposition would like think. The Saskatchewan Party is

looking for the instant win, and therefore turning their backs on the people they claim to represent. We face both our strengths and weaknesses with all the confidence in the world, resulting again, Mr. Speaker, in a united and strong Saskatchewan.

The rural and farm communities must be successful for this province to be successful. We must work together with our communities in a way that is mutually beneficial to both business and individual issues and desires. We must always challenge and question each other in a way that leads to real solutions and positive change both for a government and for the people it represents.

We must also lead the way, not only in building a brighter future but also in being the champions of this province. This is our government, this is our place, these are our people, it is our duty — we can take Saskatchewan into the future and we will.

In our minds the glass is always half-full not half-empty. Both are potentially correct but it's the attitude that's different. Our collective attitude is one of confidence, accountability, and good government, and that is why our government will succeed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — To think and to act, to remember our priorities, to help each other adjust to change. These are the things we must keep close in our minds as we move into the course of action outlined in the Throne Speech.

I'm proud to serve with you, Mr. Speaker, and with all the hon. members of this legislature because I'm a proud member of this Assembly, because I'm a joyful member of this government. And because I believe in the policies of this government as outlined in the Speech from the Throne, I'm delighted to move, seconded by the member from Regina Elphinstone, again:

To Her Honour the Honourable Lynda Haverstock,
Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of this present session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — If they keep clapping, Mr. Speaker, I may be not speaking much.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, in the archaic language of a time thankfully gone, I want to address the first words of my maiden speech to the people of the Regina Elphinstone constituency.

On February 26 of this year, they placed their trust in me by giving me the privilege of serving as their MLA. I promise now, as I did in the campaign on more than 3,000 freezing doorsteps to work for them and with them, and to do this with all the

intelligence and energy that I can muster.

It has been said that all politics is local. And I'm about as local as you can get. I was born and raised in Elphinstone. I was educated in Elphinstone at Kitchener Community School. I work there, and my wife, Kelly and I, and our two cats live there at home in Elphinstone. My roots are deep and my commitment is clear. And I'll have more to say about Elphinstone in a moment.

As well, Mr. Speaker, as one of the grizzled veterans of this Assembly, at least by comparison with the new member from Saskatoon Riversdale, I want to congratulate the Premier on his victory Monday and welcome him back to this place.

He was a beacon of thoughtfulness and integrity as a member of the Romanow government, and he has already shown himself to be a leader with his own unique signature. And it is an honour to serve with him.

Speaking of honour — or more exactly a lack of honour — I would like to point out that the Premier won his seat despite a campaign by the Sask Party that deliberately misrepresented the facts because they had nothing positive to support their own case. I am speaking particularly, of course, of the Sask Party claim that the government would close St. Paul's Hospital. It was nothing more than slander.

But this wasn't the first time — nor will it be the last — that the truth got in the way of a good Sask Party story. The Sask Party's enthusiasm for rolling around in the gutter had a lot to do with why they lost in Riversdale and why they lost in Elphinstone.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — Don't be fooled, said one of that party's leaflets in Elphinstone. And they weren't. The people were not fooled. They could see the Sask Party coming from miles away.

The people took the measure and they cast their votes for a revitalized party that listens and that has a positive, realistic, doable plan. And that has everything to do with why the percentage of popular vote went up for the NDP in Regina Elphinstone and Saskatoon Riversdale.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — And that is why we are here on this lovely spring day to debate a new Throne Speech on a new day for this New Democratic government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — The Premier is not the only member in a new chair. I am pleased to see you, Mr. Speaker, elevated above the rest of us, both literally and symbolically. We have entrusted you with the keys of decorum and proper procedure in this Assembly and I am sure that we could not have found a more appropriate representative.

(1500)

I suspect you will miss your former activities as a more partisan member, and your desk as I borrow it, as I will miss the opportunity of being whipped into shape by you. But your experience and your keen awareness of the partisan nature of this place will ensure that you maintain order and fairness, and we can ask for no more.

I want to say to all members, colleagues and opposition alike, that I look forward to working with you as we carry out the people's business. As a new member I have much to learn and I know my teachers are not just on this side of this House.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier for giving me the honour of seconding Her Honour's Speech from the Throne with which we began these proceedings. It is a rare occasion, I suspect, for a member to be sworn in one morning, and then to address his peers in the next afternoon.

I do have the excellent example of the member from Saskatoon Meewasin to follow. I congratulate her for her fine speech. She had much to say that was pertinent and eloquent and I'm sure she won't mind as I borrow most of it.

The member spoke about her constituency, and I would like to say a bit about mine, or rather about the people of Elphinstone. Elphinstone is a diverse community. It is a living example of our province's motto "from many peoples, strength". First Nations, Metis, Vietnamese, Chinese, Italian, Greek, Scottish, Chilean, Indian, Ukrainian, English, German, Irish, and on — Elphinstone holds within it a rich mosaic. And growing up there, living there, has instilled within me the knowledge that culture . . . that the culture and heritage of others is something that is best approached not just in an attitude of tolerance but with respect and celebration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — Elphinstone contains many seniors like my grandmother, Olive McCall, who moved into Elphinstone off the farm in the 1950s and who still lives in her own home. And I am thankful for seniors like my grandma because I know that there is so much to be learned from our elders.

Elphinstone is also home to many hard-working families. They provide for their children. They contribute to the economy. They make our community a better place to live in by taking part in the rec leagues, in the community associations, in organizations like Neighbourhood Watch, in their churches and temples, and by simply being good neighbours.

The people of Elphinstone are down to earth, generous, energetic, hard-working, caring, and sharing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — Ours is a community that faces many challenges to be sure — housing, public safety, poverty, the need for decent, well-paying jobs with good standards, good pay and benefit packages; the need to reach out to youth at risk; the need to bring healing to troubled families; the need for respect and friendship across the colour line. These are challenges of particular importance to my friends and neighbours in Elphinstone and they will certainly be of

particular importance to me as their MLA.

As it is said in Cree, Mamawi weechi hitotan. Let us work together to take on these challenges and to build on the promise that has been made.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — I spoke earlier of my personal history in Elphinstone. There's something else I wanted to mention. I was born in 1972, the year that Pierre Trudeau said that the land was strong — a slogan which won him a minority government. It was the year of the Watergate break-in and the year that Paul Henderson scored the goal.

It was also the second year of the first term of the Allan Blakeney NDP government. Allan Blakeney, as you know, was the first MLA for the constituency of Regina Elphinstone, which was created in the election of 1975. Allan Blakeney served the people of Regina and Saskatchewan for 28 years, winning his seat in eight consecutive elections.

During his time as Premier, Saskatchewan came of age, diversifying its economy, expanding its social programs — achievements, sadly, that were sabotaged by the Devine government.

Blakeney created ownership of Saskatchewan resources by Saskatchewan people for the benefit of Saskatchewan people. Devine gave away SaskOil and the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan.

Blakeney gave us the children's dental plan. Devine fired all the dental technicians and killed the program, ripping it out of schools like Kitchener, where I was a student.

Allan Blakeney gave us a sense of provincial pride and self-respect, and Devine sold it for a mess of potage.

I am proud to represent the same people that Allan Blakeney represented so well for so many years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — As I continued on to six years of age, Mr. Speaker, the next MLA from Regina Elphinstone was elected for the first time, at first from another constituency. I am proud as well to follow in the steps of Dwain Lingenfelter, the minister who presided over Saskatchewan's miraculous economic recovery in the 1990s and who led the fight last year, both in Ottawa and here, against the people that would stab him in the back breaking the common front to force Ottawa to recognize the plight of our farm community.

Mr. Speaker, I am the third MLA for Regina Elphinstone — the third NDP MLA.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — I know I've got big shoes to fill, but I've got young, energetic feet that have already walked many a mile in the streets and alleys of Regina Elphinstone.

The member from Saskatoon Meewasin mentioned the fact that we are governments and a caucus in transition. Some veteran faces, some new faces — some veterans with new faces? No — in new positions.

As an example of this transition I want to make one more personal reference. In one sense I regret missing the chance to serve in the Romanow government. But I am proud to say that my first vote was cast in a provincial election in 1991. I voted for Dwain Lingenfelter and the Romanow NDP government. As I voter, I played my part then in restoring financial sanity and political integrity to this province, and I am now humbled to be playing my part as an MLA in continuing the crusade begun in '91 and '44 and '32 . . . and the fight, the fight goes on.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, at home I have a souvenir from the 1991 election, which I'd show you but for the rule against props, which I'm sure the member from Swift Current is aware of. It's an election card called Let's Do It The Saskatchewan Way. It's a card that lists four commitments of that campaign — commitments that have been and still are being kept.

Commitment number one says, first things first, common sense financial management, including among other things a promise to balance the budget within the first term. We kept that commitment in 1995 and in every budget since. And we all look forward to the Minister of Finance's new budget in the next few days and we know that he will keep the string unbroken.

Commitment two: new directions, new priorities in jobs, fair taxes, and in quality of life. Our economy grew steadily. Our taxes are coming down. Four hundred and eighty-five thousand people were working in the year 2000, and we have instituted major reforms, major successful reforms, in health and social services. We are the only jurisdiction in Canada to experience a drop in child poverty.

Commitment three: open, honest . . . You might want to pay attention; you'd learn something. Okay, commitment three . . . I guess he's beyond learning, Mr. Speaker. Okay.

Open, honest, and accountable government. If you read the front page of yesterday's *Leader-Post*, Mr. Speaker, you will be able to draw your own conclusion, one that will clearly show our promise is being kept, drawn in bold relief with that which went before.

Number four — and let's mention them all without editing — fighting for agriculture and rural communities. Granted, it's a tough one because the problems facing our agricultural sector are global and long-term in nature, but we're still working at them. And I'll say a bit more about that in a moment.

Four commitments made; four commitments kept. Much has been done; much remains to be accomplished. The faces at the table have changed somewhat but the energy and the dedication to keep the promises are the same. As other members have said before me, methods change, principles do not.

The government is led by a new premier with a new team. The mission is the same. A compassionate, caring, growing, secure society in which the principles of equality and mutual assistance are blended with economic and educational opportunity for all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — I'd like now to return to agriculture, Mr. Speaker, and say a few more words about agriculture, about the government in agriculture, and about the opposition in agriculture.

Now I grant that I am an inner city, urban kid with no great amount of direct farm experience. But like many of the people of this province, you don't have to scratch me too deeply to hit country. With many of my cousins still on the land, I've got more than just a passing interest in the well-being of our farm families.

As I said a moment ago, everyone knows that one of the major problems facing our grain farmers are the subsidies paid by the US (United States) and European governments to their farmers. In Europe, 58 cents of every dollar of a farmer's wheat sales is government subsidy. In the States, it's 46 cents. In Canada, it's only 11 cents.

Mr. Speaker, if you think these are our numbers alone, I would invite you to read a front page article of the December 24 edition of *The New York Times* — that famous NDP house organ, of course. It is about a county in Montana where some farmers were paid \$616,000 last year by the government, and the top 10 per cent which were paid an average of \$308,000. These payments did not depend on yield or market value. They were simply a device whereby American farmers farmed the government. Bumper crop.

The Saskatchewan treasury cannot and should not compete with that. It is the federal government's responsibility to first negotiate an end to that kind of obscene trade distortion. And secondly, until it does so, to devise a plan which gives similar help to Canadian farmers.

This has been our consistent message to Ottawa at least since the special session of the fall and early winter of 1999. A session I remember in which Premier Romanow and Agriculture Minister Lingenfelter forged a coalition of all parties of all prairie governments to take this message to Ottawa. Sound familiar? We were willing to co-operate as long as the feds took their rightful leadership role.

And what happened, Mr. Speaker? The friends of the farmer over there broke the coalition at the first expedient opportunity. And here they come again, Mr. Speaker.

Okay. Mr. Speaker, I'm having trouble speaking over the party of one, over yonder. But I'll carry on.

So what happened to the common front, Mr. Speaker? It was broken by the opposition party as soon as they got back to play political games. They threw their constituents to the wolves while this government fought for a fair and reasonable program.

That side said we should open up our treasury before the federal government had done anything — a signal to the feds that we were not united, as we claimed. It was a shameful performance, Mr. Speaker, but not a surprising one.

And since the opposition had such a great time selling out

Saskatchewan last year, they're now up to the same thing again. The Leader of the Opposition wants the provincial government to sign on to another flawed federal program, a program that will not give Saskatchewan farmers the help they need to get a crop in the ground.

(1515)

He told the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention last week that he thinks the province should sign on to the Canadian Farm Income Program, a program — here we go again — a program roundly condemned by farm groups, our Minister of Agriculture and his colleagues from Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. Everyone out of step except for the Leader of the Opposition. With friends like this, Mr. Speaker, who needs opposition . . . enemies, pardon me.

But the Leader of the Opposition is not the only one to play politics with the lives of our farm families. His Agriculture critic, the member from Kindersley, in the January 18, *Western Producer* said, and I quote:

Propping up small operations won't help.

What's a small operation anyway, eh? To continue with the quote:

Anybody who has any forward look at agriculture today, knows that those kind of things simply won't work. Anybody who thinks they're economic has no idea of modern agriculture.

Would you believe, Mr. Speaker, the rural newspapers were full of letters the next week, questioning his sincerity as well as his sanity.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I'm a city boy, not fully up to speed on all aspects of the farm economy. But I believe that I am like many of the people of our province; a community whose members pull together to make a better life for us all, regardless of where we lay our heads at night.

I know that we are interdependent, and I know that it benefits no one if our House is divided. And I know that the current Premier and that the Deputy Premier and Agriculture minister are working as diligently as the previous ones to assist rural Saskatchewan through the period . . . through this current period of instability. The measures our government are taking were outlined in yesterday's newspapers by the Minister of Agriculture. They are positive, not divisive, and we will hear much more during the session.

I want to say a few words about health. As Her Honour said in her speech yesterday, we are waiting for the Fyke report next month. But even before that, one thing is clear, Mr. Speaker. Our health system is not in crisis, despite the best wishes of the members opposite. It is functioning and it is functioning well, attended by teams of excellent medical professionals and support staff at all levels, in all facilities. That is a fact.

In our health system . . . is our health system stretched to the limit? It is. Does it face challenges? It does. Must we be ever

vigilant as we seek to improve, refine, and innovate? Always. Does it have to adapt to the changing realities of medical techniques and the fluctuating facts of our social structures? Yes. Do we need to hire more doctors and nurses? You bet.

Those are the eternal facts of every health system in the world, and they will never change.

But, Mr. Speaker, here are some more . . . other facts. Our publicly funded — publicly funded, the members opposite may want to meditate on that concept for a moment — publicly funded system paid for 4,761,800 visits . . . pardon me, 4,761,800 visits to family physicians and 920,000 visits to specialists last year — one year.

We fund approximately 9,000 nursing home residents in special care homes, hospitals, and health centres; 29,100 people receive home care services. There were 650,000 emergency room or clinic visits. Patients spent over 800,000 days in hospital care; 266,000 radiology services were provided; 125,000 ultrasounds; 53,631 CT (computerized tomography) scans; and 10,833 MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging).

What was it that the fellow had said about MRIs in Saskatoon Riversdale?

An Hon. Member: — They should be private.

Mr. McCall: — Privatized. Privatized, I believe that was what he said. I believe that was the Sask Party.

There is more of course, Mr. Speaker, but it is obvious that the vast majority of our people are receiving the health care they need in their time of need. In a system run by humans, for humans, you can obviously find a case where something goes wrong — something the opposition specializes in. But overall, we're not doing too badly in health care. And we will do better.

Mr. Speaker, in a few days we will have a new budget and that will be the time to talk about spending and taxes.

But since the opposition claims the taxes are the issue this session, let me just remind them for the moment that we have the lowest sales tax of any province in Canada, except of course for our neighbours, which the members opposite worship, to the west of us.

An Hon. Member: — Who have the medicare premium.

Mr. McCall: — Who have the medicare premium.

We have lowered the income tax four times in the last seven years and have announced that they will come down again in 2002-2003. In every budget since 1992, there have been targeted, sustainable tax adjustments for varying sectors of the economy to stimulate growth and they have worked. And they have added up.

Just to complete this part of my speech, Mr. Speaker, we have done all of this while balancing the budget, paying down the debt of the government the opposition claims to have never heard of. Who was the former premier before Romanow? Ring any bells? Okay. I see you're thinking about it, yes.

Okay, moving on, Mr. Speaker. As the representative of a constituency with a number of First Nations and Metis voters, I am very pleased — very pleased — that the Throne Speech announced the Metis and off-reserve First Nations strategy.

I know that this strategy has been under development for a while, and I look forward to the deals of the plan to be announced during this session. And I am pleased that the Premier has recognized the importance of this strategy by appointing a very capable minister to focus their attention on this strategy. There will be much more to say on this issue in the days to come.

I want to conclude my first . . . I'm getting a little dry. I'm thinking about you, your . . . Okay, I'm just taking on a little water there.

I want to conclude my first address in this Assembly by commenting briefly on something that others have said in and out of the legislature. We have it seems two competing visions in Saskatchewan.

One says, as a recent *Globe and Mail* article pointed out, that Saskatchewan is the star of the '90s and is continuing to grow, diversify, and prosper. Good things are happening here and any number of independent third parties will point that out. A recent survey in *The Leader-Post* and *StarPhoenix* said that most Saskatchewan people are relatively satisfied with their lives — contrary to the picture of destruction and desolation painted opposite.

A recent editorial in the *Eston Press Review* mentions the other vision. It begins by saying, in true Saskatchewan fashion, I've noticed a lot of doom and gloom around recently and far too many people running down the province and our town. The editorial goes on to point out that there were many, quote, "great stories" in and around Eston of businesses providing jobs, of regional park use growing, of a local feedlot doubling its capacity, and so on — stories similar to that which is occurring throughout the province.

Great stories and doom and gloom side by side — why is this, Mr. Speaker? Is it because the opposition wants Saskatchewan people to believe they live in the most godforsaken place on the face of this earth? Is it to their benefit, as the article says, to run down the province and our town?

As we all know, we have problems to face in Saskatchewan. We have challenges to meet. And it appears we also have an attitude to correct.

Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, we have the people to solve those problems, to meet those challenges, to dispel the gloom and doom. After all, Saskatchewan people have been doing just that since pioneers like my great-grandparents homesteaded near Montmartre, Saskatchewan in 1883. They pioneered and won over an often hostile and imposing environment. They and their children struggled against a distant and uncaring central government to establish the institutions which define our province — our credit unions, our co-ops, our pools, our schools and yes, Mr. Speaker, our uniquely Saskatchewan brand of government by which ordinary people have worked together to achieve the extraordinary.

This co-operative spirit of government . . . governance was there right from the start in 1905 when the Scott government began to create the first of our Crown corporations. And we do know, Mr. Speaker, that some good things happened before the Douglas government, but well, not much to be sure.

Today as we approach our first centennial, Mr. Speaker, we have new challenges, new opportunities, and new problems. The hostile environment doesn't just consist of grasshoppers and hailstorms. Today we are facing global warming and global trade, environmental hazards and energy shortages. Different mix, but we face it with the same spirit. It calls for new methods but we stand with the same principles.

Mr. Speaker, we don't have the time to wallow in doom and gloom. We don't have the luxury to be pessimistic for narrow, partisan purposes. We have a province that roared back to life in the last decade of this century . . . of the last century. And in this the first decade of the 21st century, we are a people ready to build upon the promise of today as we connect to the brighter future of tomorrow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — And I am proud to say that we have the Premier and this government to work for and with the people of this province as we bring this about. The Throne Speech announced the direction we will be taking during this session. It is a good, optimistic blueprint, and I am very proud to second the motion of the member from Saskatoon Meewasin. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course yesterday we had opportunity to extend our congratulations to the new members in the legislature — the Premier and the member for Elphinstone. And we had opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election to the Chair of the Assembly.

Now there is a further congratulation that needs to be extended, and I will take the liberty to do that immediately and extend my congratulations to the Deputy Speaker, the member for Regina Sherwood; and we trust that he will give you the able support that you need, Mr. Speaker, in the Chair.

Mr. Speaker, we are now in the Throne Speech debate, and it has been an unusually long period between Throne Speech debates — it's been 15 months since we last met in this Assembly to debate the vision and the future of the province of Saskatchewan.

You'd think after 15 months, Mr. Speaker, the government would have some time to consider the error of its ways, would have time to consider the . . . and take the pulse of the people of Saskatchewan. You'd think they'd have enough time to generate some new ideas, to get a grip on things in this province, but unfortunately, there's very, very little new in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker.

The faces on the front benches may have changed, but everything else has stayed the same. Mr. Speaker, there's the

same lack of leadership over on the other side. There's the same lack of vision for the province of Saskatchewan. We see as we look in this document, very, very little in the way of vision, very little in the way of solutions for our province.

Now normally throne speeches are a little light on the details. They're supposed to be broadly based, they're supposed to be more visionary, but oftentimes they do lack, lack substance and at the most, offer platitudes.

However, Mr. Speaker, as far as this Throne Speech is concerned, new standards of lack of performance and achievement have been set. Not only does this document not set out a clear direction for the government in the coming year, it also reverses — I emphasize that — reverses many of the plans and promises that we saw in the last Speech from the Throne.

In this speech the government has set out three priorities, and these are the three areas that have been giving the government . . . that have been part of the government's greatest failures.

A thriving economy — as we know there is no thriving economy in Saskatchewan. Talk about a strong health care system, as we all know, health care has never been in worse shape in Saskatchewan.

(1530)

And, thirdly, they talk about a responsive and effective government. And never in my lifetime have I seen a government more out of touch and less responsive to the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, for good measure, for good measure, they throw in rural Saskatchewan and they identify agriculture as a priority area. Even though, Mr. Speaker, this government has ignored agriculture and everything outside of the cities of this province for a full decade.

Now, Mr. Speaker, tomorrow I intend to speak on all of the aspects of the document that we are debating right now. But today I want to focus primarily on the issue of agriculture because I know that later in the day we will be moving into that area.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are new members in the House and I would just like to refresh everyone's memory about the CCF-NDP's (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party) history with rural Saskatchewan and particularly with agriculture.

How would you have guessed, Mr. Speaker, how could you guess that a party that arose out of rural Saskatchewan, that was called a farmers' party, how could you ever guess that it would so resolutely and so completely turn its back on rural Saskatchewan? How could you have ever guessed, back in 1944, that the government today, the NDP-CCF government of today, would forget — would forget — that there is an industry called agriculture in Saskatchewan that's very important and, Mr. Speaker, that they would forget that there's an important rural component to our province?

Let's look at history. But first of all, Mr. Speaker, there was a

move by farmers and many in the agricultural industry to change the payment of the Crow benefit from the railroads to the producers. These guys said it was heresy; it was awful. So what happened? The Crow was lost and farmers received no benefit whatsoever, except from a small pittance from the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, this government, this party, the NDP, refused to support reforms to the Canadian Wheat Board, and now we see that the Canadian Wheat Board has become more of an impediment to agriculture than a body that would assist agriculture.

Those two errors alone, those two errors in judgment, serious errors in judgment, have caused our province not to have the incentives to add value to our agriculture products.

So what have we seen over the last 50 years? We've seen depopulation of rural Saskatchewan. We've seen lack of value-added production in our province. We've seen small towns close down. We've seen elevators close down. We've seen branch lines close down. Simply because their priorities are wrong.

History tells us that they never really did understand the key to developing agriculture in Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, we'll roll the clock up to 1992 — 1992 — a new Romanow government in place. And what did they do, Mr. Speaker? They cancelled GRIP (gross revenue insurance program). Now it's okay. Other provinces cancelled GRIP; I recognize that. But they did two things that are unforgivable when they cancelled the GRIP.

First of all, they broke a contract. They broke faith with the farmers of Saskatchewan. They signed their name to the GRIP agreement. They said, this is our commitment; this is our 300-and-some million dollars; there's the federal commitment to the GRIP program. And then they ripped it up after they signed it and said no — no, we were just kidding you. We don't really mean what we said; you can't trust us. And farmers throughout this province today know that you cannot trust the NDP government.

And then secondly, Mr. Speaker, they promised to replace GRIP. They said, yes, we're going to cancel GRIP. Yes, maybe we did it in kind of a shady way. Maybe we really weren't upfront with farmers. But don't worry. We'll replace it. We'll put something in its place.

Mr. Speaker, we waited 1993, '94, '95, '96, '97. Nothing happened. Things started to get really bad by about 1997. We were back into some real serious difficulties. All those years, Mr. Speaker, and they forgot their promise. They forgot rural Saskatchewan. They forgot agriculture. They turned their back on the industry. And we're into a crisis situation again.

So as a result in 1999, my colleague from Indian Head-Milestone reminds me, didn't win any rural seats in Saskatchewan. I wonder why not. I wonder why not. Well after you turn your back on people for long enough, they lose respect for you. And rural Saskatchewan has lost respect. Agriculture as an industry has lost respect for the NDP government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, finally the federal government had to step in. Can you imagine that? Those eastern guys had to step in because this government wouldn't do anything. And they started to develop a new farm safety net. After being promised a replacement for GRIP for years and years and nothing happened, the feds finally decided that they were going to put in a new program. It turned out to be AIDA.

Well where was the Minister of Agriculture for Saskatchewan when AIDA was developed? Where was Eric Upshall? Well Eric Upshall said, oh no, we don't need a program; we don't want a program. He said there is no crisis. Do you remember that? There is no farm crisis. There is no problem in agriculture.

I saw him say it on TV. I turned my TV on. I was in a farm house in Biggar, Saskatchewan, and Eric Upshall got on there and said there is no farm crisis. We just about fell off our chairs. We just about fell off our chairs. Where is this guy? Wake up. Wake up. Don't you hear rural Saskatchewan?

Well, Mr. Speaker, Eric Upshall not only said there was no crisis; when the AIDA program was being put together, he went off to Mexico on a holiday. Somebody said about going south, the Agriculture minister went south. He went south on a holiday. And so Vanclief and the Liberals and the I-don't-know-who all, the bureaucrats down in Ottawa, put together the farm safety net program that the folks across there forgot about. And it doesn't work very well in Saskatchewan.

And I thought I heard some mumblings about it being the responsibility of the Saskatchewan Party that their Agriculture minister went to Mexico on a holiday that they said that there was no farm crisis when we were raising the issue right in this very Assembly. Mr. Speaker, you have to wonder about the intelligence of the members on the other side when they have such a short memory and can't remember some very, very straightforward facts.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we got this program called AIDA, and when it pays out its payments, the lowest per capita payments in all of Canada are in which province?

An Hon. Member: — Saskatchewan.

Mr. Hermanson: — Right here in Saskatchewan. Doesn't work here. I wonder why it doesn't work here? Because they were asleep. They were asleep at the switch. And the lowest payouts? The lowest payouts? They're right here in Saskatchewan. I wonder why? Well because Eric Upshall wasn't there leaning on Lyle Vanclief's arm and telling him how to do it right.

Well now we've gone on from AIDA and we've got this CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program) program. And I'm not going to spend a lot of time. We know that CFIP isn't what it should be. We would have expected that Mr. Lingenfelter would have made it better. He was the deputy premier, very powerful man in the NDP team over there. We thought he was going to do something. We said we'll certainly support you if you can improve the AIDA program, if you can improve the CFIP program. What did that Agriculture minister do? Where is that Agriculture minister?

An Hon. Member: — Calgary.

Mr. Hermanson: — Calgary. He left, he deserted Saskatchewan. He left. He pulled the pin and went to Calgary, Mr. Speaker. So we got one Agriculture minister that goofed off to Mexico and we got another Agriculture minister that takes off to Calgary. What's going on over there? What's going on?

Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we're looking at a Speech from the Throne. What's the NDP going to do? Well they say in this document . . . well I don't see anything about a farm input monitoring program. I think that was in this Throne Speech from last year. Did we get that by the way? Did we get that monitoring program? No, I didn't see it and it's not in this . . . it's not in this Speech from the Throne. So I guess that's another broken promise — another broken promise.

And, Mr. Speaker, I looked in this document, I looked hard and fast to see if there was a commitment to provide good long-term safety nets for this province. I didn't see it in this document. You know, I think they talked about it before but now they don't even talk about it. They're not even playing games when it comes to a farm safety net program. They've thrown in the towel. They've given up, Mr. Speaker, they've given up on rural Saskatchewan.

But there is something interesting in the document. They made government bigger. You know, when this NDP Party sees little problems, when they see little problems, they make government a little bit bigger. When the problems get a little bigger, then they make government even bigger yet. And then when they got big problems, then they really try to make big government.

So we've got problems in rural Saskatchewan. We've got problems in agriculture. What do they do? Do they lower taxes? Do they fix farm input costs? Do they get the ear of Lyle Vanclief? Do they get the ear of the federal Agriculture minister? No, not at all.

What do they do? They create a new office, an office of Rural Revitalization. They demote a minister; they take a minister that struggled in health care, that was creating huge problems in our health care system, and they said, well she's making a mess of health care; we might as well put her in Rural Revitalization. That's a hopeless case. She can mess that up too.

Well, Mr. Speaker, rural Saskatchewan doesn't intend to allow itself to be messed up; doesn't intend to let itself be messed up by this government.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has always been clear in its support for agriculture. The Agriculture critic, the member for Kindersley . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — . . . the member for Kindersley has been consistent in his support for agriculture. And, Mr. Speaker, we have tried on this side to pry this party, this NDP Party that governs Saskatchewan, into a position on agriculture. We've come at it from this side; we've come at it from that side. We cannot get them to take a stand. We cannot get them to make a commitment.

Mr. Speaker, they have not designed a farm safety net program. They haven't made a deal with Ottawa.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's this CFIP program. Mr. Speaker, we signed some memorandum that agreed we were going to into the program. And then the former Agriculture minister I guess didn't sign the final agreement. Now we've got this new Agriculture minister. He's the Deputy Premier of Saskatchewan.

Well he's been distracted lately. He's had his mind on other things. Agriculture has not been the top priority for the Agriculture minister. He has worries about getting his guy elected as the Leader of the NDP Party. And then he's worried about keeping this coalition together that's kind of falling and crumbling around him. And, Mr. Speaker, he's worried about making sure he gets into the Deputy Premier's chair. He's trying to look after everything except agriculture. And as a result, he forgot, he forgot to sign the agreement. And if he didn't like the agreement, he forgot to go down and tell Lyle Vanclief what was wrong with it and how it should be fixed. So we haven't even signed this deal.

So when people are now calling and saying, you know, will I qualify for the CFIP program, the Government of Canada says, well, you haven't signed on; we haven't heard from your Minister of Agriculture. He's gone AWOL (absent without leave) on us, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, any time anybody wants a constructive discussion on agriculture, we will be at the table.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, somebody said that if you scratch, Mr. Speaker, somebody said if you scratched a little bit, you'd find a little bit of, you'd find a little bit of rural Saskatchewan, a little bit of agriculture in all of us. Well, Mr. Speaker, I still am a farmer. You don't have to scratch at all.

Many of my colleagues still actively involved or have family, sons and daughters that are actively involved in agriculture. This industry is extremely important to us. We know how important it is to the province, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to be irresponsible. And I said this to the newspaper the other day. We're not calling for 80 or \$100 an acre. Some would say we need 4 or \$5 billion payout. Saskatchewan Party has never said that.

Now perhaps some over there would. If they care to make that kind of commitment for agriculture, the Finance minister is going to have to get out his cheque book and help a whole lot. But if they want to go 80 or \$100 an acre, you know, we'll have a look at it. I don't think it's going to work, but we'll certainly have a look at it. It's not our position.

But we've always consistently called for interim funding until we get the long-term fundamentals in place.

Now somebody on the other side, Mr. Speaker, somebody on the other side had the nerve to say, somebody on the other side . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Someone on the other side had the nerve to say that the Saskatchewan Party had been silent on the issue of agriculture. As soon as the federal government announced \$500 million of funding for agriculture, the Saskatchewan Party Agriculture critic, the hon. member for Kindersley, said right away to the media — it's on record; the news release is there — that's not enough, we need to do more. We're on the record. Folks, everyone knows we're on the record.

(1545)

You know, the last member that spoke said that we had somehow misled agriculture because we had somehow used the opportunity to break out of some coalition — I didn't know we were ever in a coalition on agriculture — but we were trying to work constructively.

But you know what the member forgot to say, what the member didn't observe, was that after we recognized that this government had no clue how to fix agriculture and after they basically asked us not to sit on the new acre committee — I mean it wasn't our decision not to sit there, it was their decision — after all that happened there are two words that I'd like those members to think about.

Those two words are: Wood River — Wood River — where you guys got blown out of the water by the rural agriculture sector of Saskatchewan. You know, these members think that the people of rural Saskatchewan are not intelligent. They think, Mr. Speaker, that we don't understand rural Saskatchewan. I tell each one of them go to Wood River. Go to Wood River. The people of Wood River, the people in Saskatchewan know who stands up for them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we want to see long-term solution for agriculture. Mr. Speaker, if the other side would just calm down a bit I want to talk about something very constructively. They're always saying we're being negative and I want to be constructive. I hope they listen. I hope they're quiet over there for just a minute or two, it won't take me long.

You know what, if we just look at short-term solutions, and if Saskatchewan refuses to take leadership when it comes to agricultural issues, even if we get a billion dollars or two billion dollars this year, yes we'll be fine but next year we'll be right back in the same mess unless we get the fundamentals right. Now we need the short-term help but we need to get the fundamentals right.

Mr. Speaker, we need the long-term safety net. Mr. Speaker, we need the lower taxes, we've got to have lower taxes, lower input costs for agriculture. Mr. Speaker, we need marketing freedom in Saskatchewan. There's the fundamentals that we need that these guys are opposed to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — And until they pull their heads out of the sand, it's going to be a billion dollars next year, it's going to be two billion dollars next . . . and there is going to be no industry

left in this province. Mr. Speaker, we've got to get the fundamentals right.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking on the Speech from the Throne, there's a lot more I could say just on agriculture alone. But I want to discuss the other issues as well. I think, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have a more focused debate on agriculture which I look forward to listening to. And therefore at this time I would move to adjourn the debate. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I'd like to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity under rule 46.

The Speaker: — What is the nature of the motion?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, as was in question period today and as we listened to both of the speakers during the Throne Speech debate, and as we listened to Saskatchewan people across the province and Canadian farmers across Canada, we hear about the plight that they are currently experiencing, which is the need for greater financial assistance to assist them in getting this year's crop in as well as maintaining their families on the farm.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I would like to do this afternoon is to introduce the motion:

That this Assembly call on the federal government that they provide a billion dollars to farm families immediately.

Leave granted.

MOTION UNDER RULE 46

Agricultural Crisis for Saskatchewan Farmers

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I also want to thank the members opposite for their agreement to enter into this very important debate in the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, first I want to start out by saying that in Canada today our Canadian farmers are not asking for a handout. Our Canadian farmers have never asked for a handout. What our Canadian farmers have been asking for is an opportunity to be on a level playing field with the rest of the world in which food is produced.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that when we talk about agriculture in Saskatchewan, as the Leader of the Opposition talked about earlier today and as my colleague from Regina Elphinstone talked about, there is no question that agriculture in our province is clearly a very important and integral part of our Saskatchewan community. Nobody makes any notion or bone that it's not important to us.

Forty per cent of the jobs that we have in our province today, directly or indirectly, are affected by agriculture. And there isn't

a soul that sits in this House today, either on that side or on this side, that isn't affected by agriculture in some sort of way by either coming from the agriculture community and living in urban Saskatchewan today and making a living in some related way, even maybe as it relates to agriculture.

Many members of this House will stand up and say that they have family members that . . . whom they're related to. The member from Elphinstone talked about his cousins today who live on the farm. So there isn't anyone here today, in this Assembly, who hasn't had some association or tie to what's happening in the agriculture community.

And what we should do, Mr. Speaker, is we should talk about the value of this industry to our province. But we don't take enough time to do that in this Assembly. We're too busy taking credit for who has ownership of it, or who should have ownership of it, as opposed to working together to try to build an industry that's important to our Saskatchewan community.

And I want to share with you for a minute the things that are happening in this province today over the last 10 or 15 years that have made a difference to our Saskatchewan community.

When we take a look, Mr. Speaker, at specialized crops, and just the dried pea acreage, it's gone from 2.3 million acres in 2000 compared to just only 35 . . . 350,000 acres in 1992. We look at the lentil acreage in our province today which is 1.7 billion in the year 2000. It was only 475,000 in 1992. We look at the mustard acreage in this province which is today 470,000 acres, which was only 240,000 acres in 1992. And canary seed today is 375,000 acres, which was only 215,000 in '92. And the list on the speciality crop goes on and on and on.

And we take a look, Mr. Speaker, and what's happened in the organics, where we see today 500 organic growers, including 50 organic livestock producers and 20 organic processors in our province. That's grown by 20 per cent just in the last 10 years. And that we don't talk a lot about that in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about the poultry industry, where our poultry industry here is doubling our chicken production quota over the next four years. And that continues to grow. And lots of opportunities for our poultry industry.

And the sheep industry in Saskatchewan, 45,000 rams and 2,000 ewes — up 18 per cent just in the last three years. And our bison industry and our elk industry and our deer industry, the specialized livestock in this province, is doing very, very well and continuing to grow.

And we look at our beef industry and the importance of our beef industry to Saskatchewan, and we see the beef industry making significant gains in our province. And there's more that we can do.

But I say, Mr. Speaker, that we have a huge problem today in our grains and oilseeds sector — a huge problem in our grains and oilseeds sector, Mr. Speaker. And the big issue that we have in the grains and oilseed sector today is that we have disparity with our friends who are providing food in the US and in Europe. We should make no mistake about this.

I hear the member opposite from . . . the Leader of the Opposition say that we need to make some fundamental changes. But there's a fundamental problem today and the fundamental problem is in the marketing boards, or in fact, he says, that we need to reduce the operating costs for farmers.

It's true. We need to reduce the operating costs for farmers and we have reduced the operating cost for farmers on this side of the House. Tax reductions on property, removing the fuel tax on fuels, providing additional dollars today for the . . . when we're processing, providing today an incentive for people who are wanting on building materials.

We provided a range of opportunities for agricultural producers in Saskatchewan, and it's helped a little bit but it hasn't made the major difference where it's required. It hasn't made the difference where it's required in the areas of what I produce and sell.

And I want to say that just a couple of weeks ago I was in Washington with all of my Canadian Agriculture ministers. And at that meeting were a number of people, a number of ministers — they call them commissioners and secretaries — from the mid-States and the northern States of the United States. And they're currently working on an American national farm Bill.

And the national American farm Bill, Mr. Speaker, is to look at whether or not they can reduce the subsidies. And I can tell you that the farmers of whom these ministers represent are not prepared to reduce the subsidies for their American farmers — are not prepared to do that.

And so today as a Canadian farmer and as a Saskatchewan farmer, I don't have two sources of revenue. I don't have two sources of revenue. I only have one source of revenue, and that's what I get from the marketplace. And that's the difference of what's happening today as a Saskatchewan farmer, Canadian farmer versus my American farmer — I don't get a cheque in the mailbox. But American farmers get a cheque in the mailbox of 36 cents on the commodities they produce. And the European farmer gets a cheque in the mail for 56 cents, of which our Canadian farmers don't produce.

But yet, Mr. Speaker, we're competing in that marketplace. We're competing for the share of the market. And we grow some of the highest quality grains and oilseeds in the world, right here in Saskatchewan. But we don't get for it what we require, because the marketplace is distorted and it's distorted at the international level.

So, Mr. Speaker, who in fact should be working at trying to fix this?

And I heard the member opposite talk about the fact that I've been distracted. And the reality is, Mr. Speaker, I have been distracted. I've been distracted trying to find a solution for what we can do for Saskatchewan Canadian farmers. And we started that process way back in September when we saw our crop coming off and saw what Saskatchewan producers are going to receive for their grains and oilseeds.

And I was worried about what our Saskatchewan producers were going to get, because when I looked at the price and

looked at the quality of what we grow in Saskatchewan today, I could see that they're going to have less cash in their jeans at the end of the year.

And so what did we do? We didn't attack the Canadian Wheat Board because the grains and oilseeds aren't marketed through the Canadian Wheat Board. So what we did is we went and got . . . I went and got our agricultural producers together and I said to them, what should we do in this province?

And they said, there's a couple of things that we need to do. One is that we need to start telling our Ottawa friends that we need more cash. And so that's what I did. In October I wrote the minister, the hon. minister of . . . Mr. Vanclief, and said, we got a problem in Saskatchewan — in October. And then I phoned the minister and said, we got a problem in Saskatchewan and we need to be cognizant of what's happening here.

And we requested that Mr. Vanclief and his government prepare to put a cash injection to deal with the distortion in the grain prices, because that's what our disaster is about. Our disaster in Saskatchewan today is about a distorted price — that's what this is about.

And then we had an election in November, of which I called for more assistance from my friends in Ottawa. And I didn't hear a huge uprising here from anybody else — other than the producers. But I'm distracted now by trying to farm . . . I'm now distracted, Mr. Speaker, by trying to find money for farmers.

And what happens is that we have the Canadian Alliance leadership landing in Regina and at the steps of his airplane from which he speaks to farmers — because he doesn't come into the Saskatchewan community and talk to the farmers — he says there's enough money in the safety net system for farmers. There's enough money for Canadian farmers. We don't need any more money.

So here we are in Saskatchewan and other provincial ministers calling for more money, and our official opposition in Ottawa saying there's no need for more money.

Mr. Speaker, we then went on . . . we then went on, Mr. Speaker, and called a meeting here in Regina. Called a meeting in Regina of all the provincial Ag ministers, of which five attended. The big five, who will produce 90 per cent of the agricultural commodity in Canada, were here. And we had the discussion about what we should do. And collectively we advanced the notion that we should have in Canada today \$1.5 billion for Canadian farmers was the position that we put forward.

(1600)

And then we met with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and I met with my producers in Saskatchewan again to say what is it that we should do. Can we get by with \$1.5 billion? And the various different farm organizations said no, we need to have \$3 billion for Saskatchewan farmers. And one other organization said we need to have \$2 billion. And some said we need 800 million.

But collectively we put our heads together and said we should try and get for Canadian farmers \$1.5 billion, of which the federal government should put a billion dollars in to deal with the price distortion. And that's the resolution, Mr. Speaker, that came out of Regina. And that came out of Regina because this minister was distracted by working for farmers.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we then met by telephone conference, or had a discussion by telephone conference, with Mr. Vanclief — all of the Canadian agriculture ministers — and said to him that we have a crisis in Saskatchewan and we have a crisis in Canada. And our crisis is that we have Canadian farmers trying to work in and feed their families in a distorted environment. And you, sir, Mr. Vanclief, have a responsibility because you negotiate the trade agreements for our Canadian farmers — you do that. We don't here in this Assembly — you negotiate that.

And we're tired as Canadian agricultural ministers to hear you say that we're going to be working at reducing the subsidies because we just heard three weeks before that that they're not reducing the subsidies. And so it's your responsibility in Ottawa to put the money in to help the Canadian farmers.

Mr. Speaker, we went on then to Ottawa . . . or to Quebec City as a united group of agricultural ministers, and said, Mr. Speaker, that we need \$1.5 billion for Canadian farmers. And, Mr. Speaker, we came away from Ottawa with Mr. Vanclief saying to us that you now have \$500 million and that is the final amount of dollars of which the federal government is prepared to invest in one-time emergency aid.

The five big provincial . . . or the five largest producing provinces in agriculture, along with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Quebec Union of Farm Producers held a press conference. And we said in a united fashion, we need to see \$1.5 billion for Canadian farmers and the federal government needs to contribute its share, which is a billion dollars for farmers today. And that's the process, Mr. Speaker, that we continue to work on.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is a need to do several things in agriculture, without any question. We need to have an envelope that addresses itself to emergency aid until such time as the subsidies are reduced, until such time as the subsidies are reduced. And there is the national responsibility here for the federal government to participate as every other world country participates for their agricultural producers. We need to have in that envelope a guarantee from our friends in Ottawa.

And secondly we need to fix the safety nets. There's no argument in this Assembly that we shouldn't be working at fixing the safety nets, and some people here will say that GRIP worked. GRIP worked for some people, it's true. We haven't got GRIP anywhere in Canada today, it's gone. Not only in Saskatchewan, but all of the provinces have removed it.

And we have now, and had, AIDA. There isn't anybody on this side of the House who wanted AIDA. We argued against AIDA. And it's true, people on that side of the House said that there were some things that we needed to do and AIDA was one of the messages that they provided for us and said, you need to get into AIDA 150 . . . or \$170 million, you should get in. Some

won't remember it because they weren't part of the party who were talking about it. They won't remember it because they weren't there. But that's the debate that was had.

And, Mr. Speaker, we got into AIDA and then everybody says AIDA doesn't work. Well what a surprise. We knew AIDA wouldn't work. And so we're getting out of AIDA, Mr. Speaker.

And what happened in this country, the agricultural ministers got together, and their officials, it doesn't matter, pick the party — Conservative Ontario and Conservative Alberta and NDP Saskatchewan and Conservative PEI (Prince Edward Island) and NDP British Columbia — all got together and said, we think we need to devise and we'll work at devising a new plan called CFIP, called CFIP.

And we said, in Saskatchewan, we don't think this is a very good plan because it does not address that disparity with the grains and oilseeds' people. And it does not. And it's the same situation that we're stuck in today as we were with AIDA, that we have a grain industry that's going like this today and we have a CFIP program that can't respond to it. And we say we shouldn't be in it. We say we shouldn't be in CFIP.

And I listened to my colleague from Kindersley when he and I had a discussion with Sheila Coles a week and a half ago. And I appreciate what my colleague from Kindersley said. Because he said he didn't think that the CFIP program worked either. And then, lo and behold, I pick up the newspaper three days later and I read the front page, and there's the Leader of the Opposition saying we should be in CFIP.

How does this work? This is the same old picture that we saw two and a half years ago. Like why is it, Mr. Speaker, that we have the member from Kindersley who I think understands the farm issues in Saskatchewan as well as most anybody does, and he knows that the Canadian Farm Income Program is not the right place for us to be.

And he also knows that we shouldn't be investing today, over the next three years, \$240 million in a program that's not going to address the issues with our oilseeds and grains people.

But that's not what the Leader of the Opposition says. He said, you take your money and you stuff it into CFIP. And I say, what's the wisdom in that? What's the wisdom in that? No question that we need to readdress the safety net structure. No question. And the commitment from Canadian Agriculture ministers today, the commitment today from Canadian Agriculture ministers in each of the provinces is that we're going to try and fix the Canadian Farm Income Program and the safety net piece.

And I can tell you today that that's going to be led over the next couple of weeks. That whole review and reopening of the safety net is going to be led by Alberta. And I know that my members opposite will be happy to hear that Alberta is going to lead. They're happy about that. Because what they say . . . I mean Alberta is where they get most of their inspiration from. Not from Saskatchewan, but from Alberta.

So I can say, Mr. Speaker, that over the next several weeks

we're going to open up that piece of the safety net and we're going to take a look at how we can help Canadian agricultural producers on the grains and oilseeds piece, without any question.

So when the members opposite or the Leader of the Opposition says that this minister and this government have been distracted, he is absolutely right. We have been distracted. Since September this government and this ministry and this administration has been busy trying to find solutions for Saskatchewan and Canadian grain farmers, is what we've been doing, Mr. Speaker.

And we've been doing that, Mr. Speaker, last year. The member from Saltcoats is chirping from his chair. Because the member from Saltcoats last year, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that the member from Saltcoats last year, Mr. Speaker, he went to Ottawa with us and he tried to work a way with us in the government to try and get the \$300 million that we brought back.

And the premier of the day, and the deputy premier of the day, and farm organizations, we went to Ottawa. Of which the member from Saltcoats was also there.

But we weren't home 2 minutes, 2 minutes we weren't home off the plane, and the member from Saltcoats is out there saying this is a sham; this is a sham. And that's the kind of partnership and co-operation, and whom that member from Saltcoats works for. Not a chance, Mr. Speaker. The member from Saltcoats is about himself, and we should not be fooled by his approach — should not be fooled. It's about himself.

When we talk about co-operation and participation and working together, Mr. Speaker, it's about the provincial governments. The provincial ministers from across the country are saying today, Mr. Speaker, we have some solutions. And we need to find those solutions in the safety net side. And we will find those solutions, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to say to the members opposite, this solution can't be resolved without co-operation and participation from each other. It can't be. And we need to fix this as a national issue. We need to fix this as a national issue. And we need to have every provincial government on the same page.

And right now, I can say to this Assembly, I can say to this Assembly today, Mr. Speaker, that I have all of the provincial ministers on the same page. I have that. I've got that commitment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — And today, Mr. Speaker, I have all of the provincial Ag ministers asking their treasuries and their leadership that in fact that we should have one billion brand new dollars from Ottawa.

And I am extremely pleased, Mr. Speaker, today that the opposition is joining us because that, in my view, is the spirit of co-operation for Canadian farmers. In joining us, in helping us to cement the additional money that we need for our Saskatchewan Canadian farmers.

And I'm going to conclude. At the end of my comments, Mr. Speaker, I make the motion, Mr. Speaker, moved by the member from Yorkton and seconded by the member for Kindersley, by leave of this Assembly:

That this Assembly call on the federal government to provide \$1 billion to Canadian farm families immediately.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very pleased to enter the debate and take part and second the motion put forward by the hon. member, the Agriculture minister of this province. We certainly do support the initiative that he has put forward here this afternoon. I think it is important to recognize that it is a very, very first step however in what needs to happen in terms of addressing the problems that agriculture is faced with here in this province today.

And that's why we feel that not only should we be doing this, but there are other things we should be doing as well to help in this regard. Yes absolutely, we have to call on the federal government to initiate and go forward in terms of putting a strategy in place for agriculture right now. But we also have other problems that we have to address in this problem as well.

We have the whole area of safety nets and what are we going to do in those areas. We have the whole problem of an international trade war that is ongoing and we must continue to participate in terms of the debate surrounding that and how we are going to frame that discussion with the federal government and with nations throughout the world that are involved into that kind of discussion.

In addition to that we feel, and we put forward to the Premier in question period here this afternoon, that we need clearly to raise the debate even one more level. Raise the bar for the federal government even one further level by calling on and doing what we suggested this afternoon: asking every member of this legislature, every single member, rural and urban, rural and urban because it's a problem for all of Saskatchewan — it's just not a problem for rural members — rural and urban, to go forward, take the message to Ottawa on behalf of all of Saskatchewan; on behalf of Elphinstone, on behalf of the northern constituencies, on behalf of Kindersley, and Watrous, and all of the other constituencies because we are all affected.

(1615)

Whether we are a farmer or not, we are all affected by this problem in Saskatchewan because we are literally seeing our province collapse in terms of economic activity and a large measure of that collapse is as a result of the shortfall in agriculture in terms of income these days.

And that's why we are calling on that unprecedented step by this legislature. I do not know of, ever before in the history of Canada, where an entire legislative body representing every single person in a province has gone to Ottawa to make their case. And I would say to you, members opposite, that you should be thinking about that before you just simply discard it.

For example, do you think for one moment if the legislature in Quebec City en masse went to Ottawa, they wouldn't be listened to? And they should be listened to. If the Ontario legislature went en masse to Ottawa, they would be listened to and they should be listened to. And I see no reason why that if the entire legislature of Saskatchewan — and hopefully the legislatures of Manitoba and Alberta went along with it as well — they, I believe, would or at very least should be listened to by the government in Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And I want to speak for a moment not just to the rural people of this province, because I think they understand the magnitude of the problem. But we also want to speak to the urban people of Saskatchewan to try and give them or hopefully provide them with an understanding of the magnitude of the problem here, in Saskatchewan.

It affects the car dealership owner in Swift Current the same way it affects the bookstore owner or the sales clerk in Regina or Saskatoon. And I think they understand that, frankly. I think they understand that there is a problem here and yes it's been ongoing for a number of years. And we'll get into the reasons why it's been ongoing for a number of years and I suspect that the Minister of Agriculture may not like that part of what we're going to say.

But nevertheless, it affects us all, whether we are a sales clerk in Regina or whether we are a car salesman in Swift Current or whether we actually do — and I do and many of my colleagues do — actually make our living from the farm in this province.

I think it's important to recognize how we got to this state in agriculture here, in this province, what problems we have been faced with for a long, long time. And I think it's also significant that we give an understanding to rural . . . or to urban people as to what kind of problem we are faced with.

As you know, we are faced with an international trade war. Just think for an example — for example, if we were faced with this similar situation in the automobile industry, just think for a moment what would happen. If the car dealership owner in Regina, Saskatchewan, all of a sudden faced an international trade war, where other countries said we are going to subsidize the purchase of our cars to the point of 50 per cent. What would happen, do you think, to the car dealership sales in Regina, Saskatchewan? They would plummet like a rock. And that's what's happened in agriculture prices as a result of international trade activity by other countries.

And they have their reasons for doing it and they're varied and many, and I don't suppose we need to get into the discussion about why they do it. But what they have done as a result of that is they have put tremendous pressure on the incomes of our farmers here in Saskatchewan, and indeed Western Canada, and perhaps all of Canada. They've put tremendous pressure on those prices.

And anybody that's associated with agriculture understands that kind of pressure. They've seen their commodity prices literally cut in half and they've seen their cost of production just heading straight up, practically.

And if any of you are following the prices of things like fertilizer these days, as a result of the increases in natural gas prices, you will know that that kind of pressure is very, very real. You could buy nitrogen last year for a couple of hundred bucks a tonne. It's going to cost you probably 300-plus this year. That is a tremendous price increase in that alone.

Fuel prices are headed the same way; chemical prices. Virtually every input that we have has just gone up and up and up, and it's put a cash crunch on the farm families of this province like never before.

And as a result of that, we're seeing incomes just plummeting, just absolutely plummeting for our Saskatchewan farm families. And we are called to respond.

As a legislature I say to you, each and every one of you, we are called to respond and we have a responsibility to respond. And before you just simply say that idea won't work, of going down to Ottawa as a complete legislature, I think you should think about it a little bit. I think you should think about it a little bit.

I understand, and it's very disappointing, I understand that the Premier just dismissed the idea and said no; they wouldn't be participating in it. But think of the impact that it would have. Think of the impact if we closed this legislature down for a day or two and all of us en masse go to Ottawa and say, this is the problem we are faced with, and you must understand it.

I think and I believe that the Prime Minister of this country would respond. I think he would be at significant political peril if he didn't respond. And I think that we would also find that if Saskatchewan raises the bar to that level, I think it would put a tremendous amount of pressure on the other provinces to respond in like manner. I think you'd probably see Manitoba and Alberta fall into line in this thing.

We need that kind of pressure on Ottawa these days. We need this as well . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And yes, absolutely, if the Ontario legislature were supportive, absolutely we would want them to be a part of that initiative. Without question we'd want them to be a part of that initiative and any other province that wanted to do that.

But let's at least, Mr. Minister, let's at least, Mr. Minister, Mr. Agriculture Minister, let's take the first step. Let's take the first step and say . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Let's take the first step. Let's put something out front there so that farm families in this province and all our economy here in Saskatchewan can be provided with some small measure of hope. We owe that to them. And the members whining about what are the various federal parties doing? I don't know what the CA (Canadian Alliance) is doing necessarily on this issue. I don't know what the NDP is doing on the issue as well. But one thing is for certain, we have an obligation and I would say you, sir, have an obligation as well to support this initiative. And I hope that you will.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — This problem has been with us for some time. And let's just review history for a moment here and think about where we are and how we got to where we are.

In 1992 you people said to the farm people of this province that the safety net that was in place at that time was inadequate, didn't serve the need, it didn't do what was necessary, was too costly, all of those kinds of things. That was your argument.

And so you took the unilateral step, unprecedented probably before in the history of this country or at least in our province, of ripping up a contract. The one thing that farmers always — and I think most people — always look to their government for is at least some direction. What should or should not you be doing?

And one of the things I don't think you should be doing is just simply tearing up responsibilities, ripping them up before people and saying, too bad. We don't like this thing. It wasn't an NDP initiative so we don't want it.

And then on top of that what have you done every year since? Every single Throne Speech that you have put forward with the exception of the one yesterday, every single one of them you said we're going to put in place a long-term safety net. We're going to do that. We're going to get this done.

You've been working on it for 10 years now and what has resulted? Have you put forward a single, solitary idea or any kind of initiative at all? No, what you people opposite have done right from the very start, right since 1992, is you've let everybody else drive the agenda in this country and you have done nothing in agriculture at all. Absolutely nothing. Every time there's an initiative come forward, what can we expect from our government here in Saskatchewan? Did they put forward any ideas at all? No, nothing whatsoever. No ideas at all. All you do is sit on the sidelines and carp that it isn't good enough. Carp that . . . Shout like a wounded dog that it isn't good enough.

Have you put forward a single, solitary idea, Mr. Minister? Have you talked about; have you talked about some of the initiatives that are out there? Have you talked about a cost-of-production formula? We want to talk about that and I'll move to that in a few moments. We want to talk about that one.

Have you talked about anything in terms of some of the other initiatives that are out there? Focus on sabbaticals out there. Have you talked about that? No, we haven't heard a peep from you on that one.

Have you talked about Farm Corp International? Have you discussed that in any manner? Have you put forward one single, solitary idea in terms of safety nets? I don't recall one. You put in place, you put in place a Farm Safety Net Board. You appointed a few NDPs most recently and reappointed them again here in the last few days. Has there been a report from that committee? Has there been a report from that committee?

Have you put forward any ideas? What, what do you support in terms of a long-term safety net? Do you support the initiative, do you support the idea of a revenue insurance program? Do you or don't you?

Do you support cost of production? Do you or don't you? Do you support sabbatical? Do you or don't you? What do you support?

We'll tell you what we support. Absolutely we'll tell you what we support, absolutely. We want to know . . . I think the farm families of this province are owed an explanation. Yes, we'll tell you what we support and we'll get to that in a minute but I'd like to know what you support. And you have an obligation to tell us what you support.

You after all, you after all do have responsibility in this area. What do you support . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, let's talk about cost of production for a little while. I'll be happy to talk about cost of production.

There is a program in Quebec right now that is a modified cost of production. We're looking at it. We've sought some information in recent days on it. We're interested in it. We don't know whether we like it or don't like it because we just haven't made a decision on that. But let's think about that for . . . Let's think about that for a moment. Let's think about that for a moment.

In Quebec, in Quebec they have relatively small numbers of farms, relatively small numbers of farms. There's a thin strip of agriculture land along the St. Lawrence. They have a very, very large tax base because they have millions and millions of people. And they have a very small agriculture sector that exports virtually nothing. It's almost all used domestically. So in that kind of situation similar to, similar to supply-managed industries in Saskatchewan that type of program will work in those kinds of situations in that province. And we understand that.

But in a province like Saskatchewan where you have about 80 per cent of our production exported, it is very, very difficult to put that kind of program in place because in addition to having a cost-to-production formula, you also have to have control over whether you export or not and you have to have a quota system to gauge the amount of production that you're putting forward. And so that presents some very, very obvious challenges in terms of putting a program like that together for Saskatchewan.

In addition to that, whose cost to production do you use? Whose cost to production do you use? You use the farmer . . . and this isn't a criticism. This is just a reality. Do you use the example of a farmer down in Maple Creek, half and half, half summerfallow-half crop, generally speaking. Do you do the math on his farm?

Well I'll tell you, they're primarily growing wheat and durum in those regions. Very, very low cost to production because they have to do it that way. Limited rainfall to work with. As a result of that, very, very small use of fertilizers and chemicals. And as a result of that, a very, very low cost structure. And they have done that for very, very obvious reasons — that's how you make a living down there at Maple Creek. And that's not a criticism. That's just a reality of how they operate in that area.

Compare that to the Nipawin region or the Melfort region or something like that in Saskatchewan, where they're on a

continuous crop basis, sure crop country, where they get rain on a consistent base. And as a result of that, they have very, very high costs. It's not unusual for them to put \$50 an acre plus into fertilizer alone. And on top of that, they put in significant costs in terms of chemical weed control and as a result of that their costs just go up and up and up. So let's . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, we're getting to that if you just listen for a moment. We're getting to that if you just listen for a moment. We're getting to that.

So let's look at that kind of cost-to-production-type formula. If you put in place an average — and some of the folks that I've been talking to recently are saying well, just give an average — well let's say for argument sake we have an average cost-to-production formula and we'll say it's going to be \$50 an acre. Well I can tell you that the farmer down at Maple Creek is going to love it. He's going to say my cash cost to production is about 30 bucks, maybe even less than that. And they think to themselves well, there's a \$20 margin in there; that works pretty good for me.

(1630)

The farmer up at Melfort is thinking to himself, \$50 an acre, that's how much I put into fertilizer alone. What about my chemical? What about my cost to production in a whole range of areas? And they're going to say this doesn't work for us.

So then you have to . . . from there you have to take it one step further if you're going to still go down this road.

Are you going to start dividing it up into regions and saying: in that southwest corner it's 50 bucks an acre, part way up the province it's 60 bucks an acre, 70, 80, 90, \$100 an acre, all of those kinds of things. How're you going to do that?

Crop insurance does it in terms of yield. It doesn't do it in terms of cost of production. They make that determination in terms of yield. They have historical records to go back to Maple Creek and say that the average yield history in Maple Creek is 20 bushel, 25, 30 bushel to the acre, perhaps even better on my good friend's farm. But nevertheless, that . . . those numbers are in place, yes. But is there any numbers in place as to what his cost of production is? No, I don't know of any.

Are you getting it? Is this something that you're looking at, Mr. Minister. I think it's time that you started outlining the things . . . options that you are looking at. Is this an idea that you are looking at? Because if you are looking at that as an option, I think it's time that after ten years . . . after ten years of doing nothing in terms of a long-term safety net, I think it's time you said what options you are looking at.

Are you looking at cost of production? You seem to indicate, Mr. Minister, that that might be something you're looking at. Well, we would be very interested, as a party and as the opposition, in sitting down with you and saying, okay, let's look at this thing, let's try and figure it out, let's see whether we can make it work or not.

Have we received any kind of an invitation from you folks at all to discuss anything? Over ten years, not a single, solitary word has come forward from your department saying that you want

the input of the people who actually represent rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Well, Mr. Minister, it's time that you said to the farm families what they . . . what you have in mind for them. I don't think it's good enough to sit back and when AIDA comes forward, all you do is criticize it, because you don't like it. When CFIP comes forward, all you do is criticize it, because you don't like it. When the whole idea of going to Ottawa comes forward, criticize it, because it isn't your idea and you don't like it. What ideas do you have?

What ideas do you have — what ideas do you have? Your solution to this . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well, just hang tight, just hang on there. Well, just hang on and I'll give you some thoughts on it in a minute. We're not certain . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I would . . . I'm listening to the debate intently this afternoon and I've noticed something that I would like to bring to all members' attention.

There are two ways of addressing debates in the commons or in this legislature, and one is, the accepted way is to, in debate, address your remarks to the Chair and speak about the opposition in the third person as opposed to speaking directly to the opposition. And I would ask your co-operation . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . or to the opposition or the side opposite, pardon me, to the side opposite. And I would request your co-operation on this in order that we not personalize the debate, but that we address the issues.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the debate has ensued here this afternoon, our leader, the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggan, made some comments about his thoughts in agriculture. And I recall when that was happening, the minister, the Hon. Minister of Agriculture said that maybe the leader would be prepared to put his seat forward on that. Well I think we would, and I think I would. If you want to put your seat up, I'll put my seat up.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — We'll see . . . We would be prepared to see whether they support your initiatives or whether they'd put our initiatives forward. Whether you're prepared to put your initiatives forward or not. What we have seen from your administration in the last little while is absolutely nothing, and the farm families of this province understand it.

The new Minister for Rural Revitalization said, and we were talking about this this morning in caucus, some of the things that they've been putting forward. The moment that . . . it is almost laughable some of the things, Madam Minister, and, Mr. Speaker, that they have put forward in terms of this thing. They are saying that one of the problems in rural Saskatchewan is the fact that we don't have high-speed Internet.

Oh and I can just imagine how many farmers as they go to sleep tonight and are thinking about whether or not, whether or not

that they can pay their bills, whether or not that they can pay their bills, whether they can buy fertilizer and whether they can buy fuel and whether they can put seed in the ground are going to bolt upright in bed tonight and say, well at least we might have high-speed Internet.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And one of the other initiatives, one of the other initiatives was we need to have better cellphone coverage, and I'd support that because I use it a lot. But I can imagine them bolting upright in bed again tonight and say, well at least when I'm going broke, at least when I'm going broke maybe I can phone somebody.

What exactly are you thinking in agriculture? What exactly are you thinking in agriculture? Because we see nothing to this point — absolutely nothing to this point.

You want to know . . . What we believe needs to happen is threefold right now in terms of agriculture. We believe that the province has to fulfill its responsibility in terms of a long-term safety net. You have to do that. That's something you have to do, and that's what we would support.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — We would support sitting down and talking about the various safety net options from cost to production to any other idea that there is out there, we would be prepared to sit down and discuss all of those options that are available out there and decide as a group whether or not they make sense or not. We'd be prepared to do that. That's something we are prepared to do.

We'd also be prepared to continue to put pressure on the federal government to live up to its responsibility in terms of international trade discussions. We'd be prepared to help in that regard; we'd be prepared to help in that regard.

We'd also be prepared to take the unprecedented step, along with you people, of going to Ottawa in an unprecedented fashion . . .

An Hon. Member: — Everybody.

Mr. Boyd: — Yes, the entire legislature.

Mr. Speaker, it's almost laughable. The member from his seat is saying that they don't trust us as individuals to go. Well actually, I think they probably do. But I think it would be a bigger impact if we all went; I think it would be a bigger impact.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Even whatever modest amount of help you would be able to provide — and I suspect it would be modest — even your help would be valued in that kind of effort. Even your help, and the member next to you who knows a little bit about agriculture, he would be worthwhile on a trip like that. I believe every single member of this legislature would help in that effort.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — In terms of long-term safety nets we need to get down to business here very soon. We haven't had one in place for 10 years and the clock is ticking. And every farmer in Saskatchewan knows that it's ticking on them, and it's grinding down on them very, very hard. And another crop is going to be seeded here pretty soon in Saskatchewan and still there is nothing at all in place in terms of it.

And we'd like to know from the minister and his department and your government what plans do you have in terms of a long-term safety net? I don't think it's good enough to just say to Ottawa you design it and then we'll criticize the heck out of it when you put it in place. I don't think it's good enough.

That's what happened in AIDA. My colleague reminds me of that — that's what happened in AIDA if you recall. When AIDA was put in place — let's just think about that for a moment — what did you people do? Did you put forward any ideas? None whatsoever.

In fact, the minister wasn't even at the discussions. I don't know whether you had officials there. You may have had officials but they wouldn't have been in a decision-making capacity at that . . . they'd have been as an observer or someone that just sat there and listened to what the discussions were. But the minister was not there and made no apologies for it in fact. In fact, he said at the time, and the member for Rosetown-Biggan said — and I remember that as well — there is no crisis.

If you recall, Mr. Speaker, at that time there had been a very small increase in the initial price on wheat of about 20 cents a bushel I believe it was. And the minister stood up and said, I don't know what you people opposite — referring to us — are talking about, because the crisis in agriculture is over. That's what he said.

And the people in rural Saskatchewan couldn't believe that the Minister of Agriculture was so naive in terms of that at the very time when they were trying to put in place a ad hoc safety net program — at the very time that that discussion was going on — the leadership from Saskatchewan, in terms of agriculture policy was saying, we don't have a crisis. And is it little wonder that we wound up with something like AIDA as a result of that? Is it little wonder we wound up with that kind of thing?

And then the federal government comes forward with the second part of that, the CFIP program. Yes, we don't like it a whole lot, you're right. We don't like it a whole lot, but what other options do we have, Mr. Minister? What other options do we have? You have got the farmers of this province into such a box, you put the farmers of this province into such a box that . . . such a box, they are in a position where they don't like what's there and yet at the same time the federal Minister of Agriculture is saying to you, you're either in it or you don't get any more.

And so the Minister of Agriculture decides to play this little game of chicken. Little game of chicken, with the minister . . . What our leader said — and let's correct the record because the minister obviously doesn't know what he said — what the

member said, what our leader said was, we don't like the options at all. We don't like the position that you have put the farmers of this province in. We don't like to see CFIP program, but that's what we're stuck with because of your inaction.

We don't like it; we would want to see a whole number of modifications to that program. But what other options do we have? If we are going to get any kind of assistance from Ottawa, what other options do we have? What other options do we have, Mr. Minister? I said that in that interview, and you know I said that. You have put the farmers of this province at peril as a result of your inaction. That's what you have done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — And you stood on the stage, you stood on the stage in Saskatoon the other day. You stood on the stage in Saskatoon the other day and kept on insisting and saying to the farmers that were assembled there, I've got my money, like somehow or another you had ownership over it. Somehow or another you had ownership. I've got my money on the table. Well I will remind you that it doesn't belong to you; it doesn't belong to the official opposition; it's the taxpayers of this province's money and you most certainly don't have it in your back pocket and it's a good thing. It's a good thing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — We believe, we believe that there has to be this long-term solution put in place. And what are you doing with regard to putting it in place?

The Speaker: — I remind the member to direct his remarks through the Chair.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture had opportunity when he spoke on the floor of this legislature to put in place and outline for a moment to the farmers of this province what his thoughts were in terms of agriculture.

And he got up and he gave a pretty decent speech, I think most people would say, about agriculture. But he missed one — he just kind of forgot, I guess — missed one little opportunity. I think what the farmers of Saskatchewan could have gained some comfort from was if you would have said, we're looking at cost of production as an option. We don't know about that one; we're looking at it.

We're looking at a revenue insurance program, if you are, something of that nature to help.

We're looking at some top-ups in terms of NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) or in terms of adjustments in the CFIP program to make it work for Saskatchewan because it clearly doesn't right now. We're looking at all of those kinds of things.

But what did we get from the minister? Nothing . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Emergency aid and we support that call. We support that call but let's not, let's not get ourselves into this argument about this is going to solve it — this is going to solve it — because there's no plan for a long-term safety net. And you know as well as I know that last year we had this exact

same debate and we're right back here again because of your inaction and your government's inaction.

Nothing in place for it at all. Nothing in place at all. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, that's why, Mr. Speaker, we are calling for this government to do something in addition to just calling for emergency aid because that won't solve it.

(1645)

That is why, Mr. Speaker, we have said in the legislature here this afternoon that we are prepared to look at all of the options. We're prepared to put forward three new additional options for your consideration and the farmers' consideration of this province.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, that's why we are saying yes, we support the main motion by the minister. But in addition to that, we would want to amend the main motion by adding these following amendments to that motion; that the following amendments be added to the motion:

That this Assembly calls upon the provincial government to fulfil its commitment to negotiate and implement a long-term agriculture strategy and a long-term farm safety net program in conjunction with the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — The second one being:

That this Assembly recognizes the absolute necessity for the federal government to live up to its obligations in addressing the area of international agriculture subsidy war and recognizes the severe negative impact that agriculture subsidies in other countries have had on the economy of Saskatchewan, both rural and urban.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: —

And that this Assembly be adjourned for a period of time to allow all MLAs to travel to Ottawa in an united action to deliver this motion to the federal government to once again draw attention to the ongoing crisis in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I move that amendment to the main motion, seconded by my colleague, the member for Watrous.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to join in this debate on agriculture. It's very near and dear to my heart.

It's disappointing, listening to the debate today, when I see members from the opposite side of the House saying what are you going to do, pointing to us as the opposition. We have no power over the purse strings of the province.

I'll tell you the first thing that I did — the first thing that I did was defeated the Agriculture minister who was doing nothing to

help agriculture in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — They say that we are always the ones saying that this province isn't going anywhere and they're always, you know, negative. But what have they done to give rural Saskatchewan something positive to move towards?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Where is their vision? Where is there long-term vision and when is it going to come? It's been 10 years.

We have to listen to our producers. They are giving us a lot of good ideas and we need to at least look at them.

So they're pulling away, both levels of government have pulled away. Both levels of the government are denying responsibility for an industry that they control and manipulate, and always have.

They are . . . never address the difficulties. They denied them. They have denied them for too long. It is now in a crisis situation. Now they're saying agriculture is in a crisis, it's our number one industry; we don't know what to do.

An Hon. Member: — Again.

Ms. Harpauer: — Again. We just simply don't know what to do. Well nor do the producers any more. They're in a state where they no longer know what they're going to do.

Here's an article in the newspaper and it says — this is the esteemed minister that I defeated, Mr. Upshall — he said farm crisis, what farm crisis?

It's been denied too long and it's been denied too long both provincially and federally so that now we're in a state where these farmers need help, they need help today. And they need a vision and they need a vision today. They need a long-term plan and they need it today.

We started off initially . . . I know a lot of people blamed our producers, and our producers have evolved. They've diversified; they've become more efficient; they've looked for different markets. They've expanded into livestock, both traditional and exotic. They've investigated different avenues of value-added processing and they've implemented as many methods as they could that was allowed within the present controls of our government.

And they have survived a lot of years through this, but finally they can't keep up any more. And they cannot compete with the global trade subsidies and they cannot single-handedly evolve an industry that was structured on government dependency. They can certainly not evolve their industry as fast as their government is backpedalling out of their own responsibilities for that industry.

Ottawa still wants control but without any responsibility for that control.

So what's going to happen to Saskatchewan and to our own province? We have more front line workers in agriculture industry than any other province in Canada. We're fools to think this crisis is going to go away and we're fools to think that it's not going to affect everybody in this province if we allow it to continue.

We're already closing schools; we're already closing businesses; we're closing small recreation facilities; we're running out of dollars to give to social programs. And StatsCanada says that Saskatchewan has lost 13,200 jobs over the last year and even our Premier said this morning that most of those jobs are agriculture-related.

These are our taxpayers and where did they go? Some, they stayed. I know my neighbour quit and stayed. A lot of them left. They're leaving our province. And our whole population then just stagnates.

So who is going to provide the tax dollars that's going to sustain programs in years to come if we don't sustain our own number one industry?

We need to realize that we need a vision. And being a producer, I've waited for 10 years of this government for that vision. And I shouldn't say that my husband and I sat back and waited for it, we diversified. And we have changed our agriculture operation a great deal. But we can't keep up to what's happening in the global marketplace. We cannot keep up to competing with the subsidies.

We need to give back . . . another thing that we need to do is give back our number one industry its respect and its dignity. And our press is not necessarily going to help us with this. CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) was gracious enough to report that this year with the government's support pledged at \$2.6 billion, farmers should end up receiving more than 75 per cent of their income from the government. I don't know where they got their numbers, but I do know the impression that they are going to make with our non-farming communities.

Does this article create an understanding of how the government through intervention has created such a mess? And does this article state that the average farm income is projected to be \$5,000? So even if the numbers were true and the government did provide 75 per cent of that income, that is only going to be \$3,750 per farm family, which I would say most of those families have already paid back in taxes on their fuel bill alone.

The article didn't state the tax dollars that's collected from our producers directly or from the industry as a whole. But the perception that that article that CBC published is going to be very negative and it's going to have a huge impact on our farmers and our producers getting urban people to understand their plight.

We need to let the Canadian people, we need to know Saskatchewan . . . or let Saskatchewan people know the whole picture so they have some understanding and are able to support . . . The levels of government need to look . . . both levels of government need to look at and to, to design a vision. And we need to design a long-term vision of hope, of sustainability, and

of stability. We need to build on that vision with our own producers. We need to look at their ideas; we need to actually do analysis of their ideas and not just totally disregard them before we even know what it's going to cost or if it's sustainable. Our producers deserve that respect.

And members opposite were looking across when the member from Kindersley was talking, and saying what are you doing? Well I can tell them what I'm doing. At least I'm meeting one on one with my producers and listening to what they have to say . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I've listened to your constituents as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — And we won't debate what we get paid for.

Our producers have given their time to their community, they've given their dollars to their communities, and they are the ones that have been fundamental in building Saskatchewan to where it is today. So now we need to give more support, we need to live up to our responsibility as government, and we need to keep our producers as productive members of society.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I second the amendments put forth by the member from Kindersley.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for allowing me to rise and enter into this emergency debate, calling on the federal government to provide \$1 billion to Canadian farm families immediately.

Mr. Speaker, just an update in case my hon. colleagues have forgotten. I was born on a farm and I still have family that have farmed all their lives and continue to work in a farming community.

And I also want to remind the members here, and I want to remind the people that are watching this debate, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Liberal caucus has been at the forefront in bringing to the attention of the federal Liberal government the full extent of the plight facing Saskatchewan farm families. The caucus has been at the forefront in pushing for a delegation to go to Ottawa in 1999 to negotiate directly with the federal government for a \$1 billion farm aid package.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Liberal caucus promised and delivered on its promise to farmers to reduce the tax on farm fuels through our coalition government.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Liberal caucus promised and delivered on relief of the Education portion of property taxes for farmers through this coalition government.

The Saskatchewan Liberal caucus, Mr. Speaker, promised and delivered to get farm voices heard at the World Trade Organization talks through the coalition government, Mr.

Speaker.

(1700)

The Saskatchewan Liberal caucus has been ceaseless in trying to get results from the federal government. We've had repeated contacts with federal ministers Lyle Vanclief and Minister Ralph Goodale. The Saskatchewan Liberal Caucus has called on the federal government to make early cash advances available so farmers can get on with their spring seeding plans.

Several years ago, Mr. Speaker, our caucus was the first to bring to the attention of this House and the federal government the issue of rising farm costs. We wrote farm input manufacturers, and we urged both federal and provincial ministers to look at this issue. Today everyone recognizes, everyone recognizes the wisdom of the position we took and have been looking for ways of reducing these costs.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Liberal caucus has done this and will do more with our coalition colleagues, because we do believe in the Saskatchewan farm family, in the small family operations. Mr. Speaker, in my constituency in Melville — a constituency that takes in some of the finest farms in Saskatchewan — people are hurting deeply, and they need help.

Mr. Speaker, when I was a proud a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, I made a solemn vow to protect people, to protect them from harm, and to ensure that they had justice when they were wronged. Mr. Speaker, I may have turned in my RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) letters for a suit and tie, but that solemn vow I made still applies today, and my efforts on behalf of my constituents, all the constituents of this great province of Saskatchewan.

As an MLA I have to protect the people who I represent and seek justice for them when they are wronged, and that's because I believe in Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. I believe in the Saskatchewan farm family.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in the Saskatchewan farm family. The question is, however, do those members opposite believe in the Saskatchewan farm family? For example, Mr. Speaker, and we've heard some of the quotes from the hon. member from Kindersley who publicly stated, no point; it's useless. But in the January 22 issue of the *Davidson Leader* a comment from the member from Arm River which was documented and reported, and I quote, "Nothing can be done for the farm community."

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from Arm River has given up on farmers who elected him to represent them. Mr. Speaker, he is not the only member, and you have already heard the comments that the member from Kindersley had publicly made, and the member from Elphinstone had alluded to. The hon. member from Kindersley may have given up on the farm family as well, Mr. Speaker, but the Liberal caucus and the Liberal coalition, the Liberal-NDP coalition, will not give up on the farm family.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — While I'm saddened, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite have given up on our farmers, our real problem exists that the farm families face. They need help, Mr.

Speaker, and it's quite clear that the Saskatchewan treasury cannot compete with the forces of Europe and the United States all by itself.

Our coalition government said it would put up its share to ensure that Saskatchewan farmers get a share of the federal emergency money. Unfortunately, the federal payment is too small and the share to Saskatchewan does not recognize the fact that our grains and oilseed sector has borne more than its fair share of the recent pain in this emergency situation.

As a country we face an emergency on our farms. We need our federal government to work, not just for Saskatchewan farmers, but for all Canadian farmers.

Mr. Speaker, families do not like to protest. Those people just feel they need to get some attention paid to the plight that they find themselves in, and nobody seems to be paying attention. The people in Ottawa do not seem to want to pay attention.

Saskatchewan residents, all of Saskatchewan residents, want a strong Canada. They sincerely want their governments, at all levels, to respond to their critical needs like those faced by our farmers.

The resolution before us today helps bring further attention to this serious cause. My coalition colleagues and I will continue to work and encourage the federal government to respond to their need, and by doing so, strengthen our province and our country as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, while additional emergency assistance is badly needed in Saskatchewan, we must not forget the great strides our farm families and rural communities have made in the last 30 years in the face of great obstacles. Without these achievements, problems would probably be a whole lot worse, Mr. Speaker.

Bred-in-Saskatchewan, for example, canola provides a great deal of opportunities that took hold on our farms and in recent years overtook what was the king of the crops. Saskatchewan breeder Al Slinkard also introduced lentil varieties which encompassed 1.78 million crop acres in Saskatchewan in the year 2000. We've also made — and the Agriculture minister has alluded to the fact — the great strides in livestock industry, organic crops, horticultural, just to name a few.

And now, Mr. Speaker, new opportunities present themselves with crops like chickpeas which promise an opening to huge markets in India and the Middle East. In 1997, there were less than 30,000 acres planted to chickpeas in Saskatchewan. This spring, it's anticipated 1.2 million acres will be sown. By 2005, Garth Patterson of the Pulse Growers Association expects as many as 3.2 million acres of chickpeas will be grown in Saskatchewan, which will provide good returns for farm families.

The coalition government, Mr. Speaker, has worked to help Saskatchewan farmers make good on our opportunities. It is my sincere hope that Minister Ralph Goodale and the federal government will make good on their suggestions that they will work toward such a goal as well.

Mr. Speaker, this leads me to an important point. The members opposite want to help farm families, but they don't believe in farm families. They say they want to help people in Saskatchewan, yet they talk like they don't believe there's any hope in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our farmers and our agrologists have been great innovators. They believe in the abilities of Saskatchewan people. They believed in themselves, the province, and above all, they believe in a brighter future for this great province of ours.

Mr. Speaker, I became part of this coalition because I believe in Saskatchewan and I want Saskatchewan people and the members opposite to believe in this province as well. I'm not just here to serve my constituents, but the people in the members' opposite constituencies as well.

Mr. Speaker, I'm working to put forward liberal policy, like removing the farm fuel tax. But I'm also here to remind Saskatchewan people that the sooner all of us join together and remind ourselves that we can make this province better, then the sooner we will. I've heard all kinds of bad things, Mr. Speaker, being talked about here this afternoon. But we forget, like our grandparents before us, we can meet any challenge and build a greater province only if we believe we can.

The Saskatchewan Party members should ask themselves when they are going to stop trash-talking Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, they tell Saskatchewan people that things can't be done here. Only in Alberta they say. What a pity.

Saskatchewan people are proud of their province and they're tired of hearing the Saskatchewan Party drag our province down. When are the people in the Saskatchewan Party going to start becoming positive about Saskatchewan and believing in this great province?

Mr. Speaker, when I see and listen to the doom and gloom . . . And then I see facts and figures that are presented here that says Saskatchewan is the centre of agricultural biotechnology in Canada. Expenditures on biotechnology infrastructure now total \$700 million with annual expenditures of \$68 million on research and development. The biotechnology sector now employs 1,240 workers, 496 scientists, technicians, 50 in sales and manufacturing.

There are 30 agri-food biotechnology and related companies with approximately \$130 million in sales in 1999. That's up 490 per cent, Mr. Speaker, in a very short period of time.

Our farm equipment manufacturers — just listen to this — Saskatchewan short-line equipment manufacturers report sales of \$584 million in 1999. Up \$250 million since 1991. Employment in that sector doubled. It goes on.

And we talk about the destruction of rural Saskatchewan. Let's listen to this. A number of locations throughout the province have been actively pursuing strawboard plants and are at various stages of development. Investment in a strawboard plant has been approved for Kamsack project.

The flax fibre-processing plant at Canora is operational and

markets have been secured for all the flax fibre that can be produced. I don't see that as a demise in those rural areas. Expansion plans are even being considered, Mr. Speaker.

The opportunities associated for those businesses and those lines, those kinds of ventures, are possible in that part of the country, Mr. Speaker. A new flax straw-processing plant, Alpha Fibre Inc., worth \$14.5 million U.S. is locating in Weyburn. The plant will create 50 full-time jobs and a local market for tons of flax straw. This processing plant is scheduled to be up and running by the fall of this year.

Let's get into a little bit of the food end of it — the food processing. We're talking about innovators. People who believe in the province are investing and are doing good things, are creating jobs. We're talking about diversification. We're talking about food processing. There were 279 food processors in Saskatchewan in 2000, in the year 2000. That's almost double the 143 firms operating in 1991. Food processors — hey, get this — food processors now sell more than, more than 1.9 billion, billion, Mr. Speaker, worth of products, which make up 2.1 per cent of this province's gross domestic products.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Saskatchewan's food exports, Mr. Speaker, increased 90 per cent, 90 per cent between . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm saddened again that those people opposite do not like to hear good news for this province. They don't want to boast about it. Well I'm prepared to boast about it and talk about all the good things.

I have some more good news for you folks over there. Employment in this industry that I'm talking about, in the year 2000, Mr. Speaker, totalled 7,500 — 7,500 full-time jobs and seasonal employees. And you know what the payroll, Mr. Speaker, \$220 million. Rural-based companies, Mr. Speaker, account . . . rural-based companies — let me underline that — rural-based companies account for 53 per cent of the total number of Saskatchewan food processors. Over two-thirds, and that's 68 per cent, are located outside of the cities of Saskatoon and Regina, Mr. Speaker.

There have been some expansions in this particular industry as well, Mr. Speaker. Mitchell Gourmet Foods, for example, has expanded their plant, created an additional 160 jobs. Fletchers announced intentions to expand its facility in Yorkton and called on Saskatchewan hog producers to increase their production. The company will spend almost \$6 million in that part of the country to improve its Harvest Meats hog-killing plant in the city of Yorkton.

This is one that should be interesting. It will affect the agricultural community as well, Mr. Speaker. We should be boasting about these things. A \$7 million pulse processing plant to open in Regina in the spring of 2001. Is that doom and gloom? I don't think so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1715)

Hon. Mr. Osika: — That particular plant, Mr. Speaker, will have the capacity to process 100,000 tons of peas, lentils, and other pulse crops each and every year.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we need to start boasting about all the good things in this province. We've got to stop saying that this province doesn't have any options and opportunities for our young people or for people that may be interested in coming home to invest or reinvest. But they will be reluctant to if all they continue hearing is the doom and the gloom — this ain't the place to be, this is a bad place to live in.

I don't think so. I know a lot of folks that love this province. A lot of people that fight very, very hard, speak very highly of this province, fight for everything that we . . . and have fought for things that we have in this province, and will continue to do so. And I think we should very, very proud of that and not beat the province down.

I think we're just . . . we're probably the best province in this country right now, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — And you know why, you know why I believe that? Because the people out there know we believe in them as well, and they will continue to believe in this coalition government to do everything we can to make their lives tomorrow better than it was today. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, I support the motion that's put forward to address the needs, from the federal government to help our farming community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I rise in this important and significant debate, I want to say that I hope that all of us can set aside some of our partisan feelings to deal with an issue of critical importance to the founding industry of our province and the one that continues to be our cornerstone.

And may I say that the most disappointing and upsetting part of my work as an MLA has been the number of farmers, especially young farmers, who I have to speak with who tell me the problems they are up against. These are hard-working, innovative people who have made the changes in their farms that they have been told they need to make in terms of crop diversification, in terms of livestock, in terms of specialty crops and specialty animals. And in spite of the changes they have made, in spite of the changes they have made, they continue to be up against enormous pressure.

And it was upsetting for me to be able to give them so little assistance when they would come to me and tell me that their AIDA forms were long and complicated even with the assistance of a chartered accountant. They took months and months to get any sort of reply, oftentimes, most times they got nothing. Sometimes when they got something, they got a demand for repayment to the federal government after they got their cheque.

So these are farmers who are among the most productive in the world. These are farmers who are not just sitting back expecting that the government and the taxpayers of this country will cover them regardless of the result. They are trying to make the changes they know they have to make to be modern, to be progressive. And yet in spite of the changes they are making in the operations of their farms, they still find that they can't make it.

Now possibly the situation is different in Melville where it would appear that our farm population is doing much better. But I regret to inform this House that in North Battleford I'm continually speaking with farmers who are under enormous pressure through no fault of their own, and it has been a source of personal frustration and disappointment to me that I have not been able to offer them more assistance than I have.

Well will the CFIP program, will that be an improvement over AIDA? Will the money get out any quicker? Will the forms be any more comprehensible? We don't know that.

I am told that CFIP is not well designed for the grain producer. And of course we, of all the provinces in Canada, are the most dependent on the grain economy. And that is the reason that our producers are up against the most pressure, and I understand it when our Minister of Agriculture says that we in Saskatchewan are not at all sure that CFIP addresses the problems of Saskatchewan.

But let me say that I am embarrassed, as a Liberal and as a Canadian, when the federal Minister of Agriculture says that his squabble with our provincial government is grounds for withholding from Saskatchewan producers their share of a national program. I find this disgraceful and totally unacceptable and embarrassing to me.

We are Canadians. Our producers have a right to share in any national program. And a squabble between various levels of government can surely not disentitle citizens of this country to share in a national program. And I can't possibly think that a squabble between the federal government and the governments of, say, Ontario or Quebec would be used as grounds for disentitling the citizens of those provinces to their just rights as Canadians.

So I call upon the federal government to say that regardless of what the provincial government decides — even if they do go back on their word as appears to be the case — regardless of the decision of the provincial government, the decision of the provincial government and a squabble with the provincial government is simply not a just excuse for denying the producers of Saskatchewan their rights as Canadians.

I also, though, want to say in terms of our provincial government, that I listened very carefully to the Minister of Agriculture a few minutes ago. I wanted to hear: is he formally repudiating the commitment of his predecessor, Dwain Lingenfelter? Is he formally saying that the commitment of Dwain Lingenfelter on behalf of the province of Saskatchewan is now off? Is he formally saying that the Deputy Premier of the province, whatever he says, can simply be ignored and set aside and not followed through on? If so, what position does that leave the government and province of Saskatchewan if

commitments entered into in good faith by the second-highest authority in the province can be freely jettisoned and ignored?

I find that puzzling but I'm not totally opposed, if the Minister of Agriculture says we think there are better ways of helping our producers than entering CFIP.

I don't necessarily disagree with the Minister of Agriculture. But what I do say is the 75 million that was supposed to go from Saskatchewan into the CFIP program, will that be committed to the producers of the province regardless, if not in CFIP, in some other form? And again I listened very carefully to the Minister of Agriculture to see if he would make that commitment this afternoon. He did not.

My position is that whether through CFIP or through some other mechanism, that is money which must be devoted to the farm crisis. And if the Government of Saskatchewan thinks there are better ways of assisting our producers in the present farm crisis than going into CFIP then, yes, let's hear about them, let's discuss them, let's debate what is the best way to assist our producers so they can meet their obligations and so they will continue into our province's second century as our province's most important industry.

What I am concerned about — and I very much, Mr. Speaker, hope I'm wrong — but what I'm concerned about is that not entering the CFIP program will be an excuse for not giving the 75 million to our producers and instead using that money to shore up the government's urban base of support. Now I hope I'm wrong on that. I hope I'm wrong.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — I don't want to be right on that and I do not criticize the government if they're not going to be in CFIP. But I do say let us hear a firm, loud, strong commitment that the 75 million it would cost us to go into CFIP will go to farm aid and the farm crisis.

It seems to me there are two reasons for that. The first is the obvious need, at least in those communities other than Melville. But the second is that while we all acknowledge that Saskatchewan with its small tax base and its large number of arable acres, its large number of farmers comparatively, and its large grain production cannot answer the farm crisis on its own, we have to be prepared to do whatever is within our power to have the moral right to demand that the federal government — the government in Ottawa — stand behind our producers.

We do not have the moral right to go to Ottawa to demand that they assist our farmers while we ourselves are saying we will do nothing. So we have to do what is within the possibility of our provincial structure, our provincial budget, to assist our farmers, to assist our cornerstone industry. And having made that commitment, then we have a right to demand that the federal government treat our farmers with respect and allow them to participate fully in all programs designed to assist Canadian producers, no matter where they live.

So what I am saying, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, is that a squabble between two levels of government cannot be used as an excuse by either Ottawa or Regina to deny our producers

their just desserts.

Finally, in regards to the amendment introduced by the member for Kindersley, I wish to say that I think that if this is going to be successful, the members should be prepared to use their own money or to go on . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — My concern is that if we ask for a special payment to go to Ottawa, that our taxpayers will consider this as little more than a junket. And I give my commitment that I think this is important enough that I am prepared to go to Ottawa on my expense as part of the delegation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — And hopefully we can stand shoulder to shoulder, not as New Democrats and Saskatchewan Party and Liberals, but as citizens of this province who care about this province and its first industry.

And on that basis, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to be part of that delegation to Ottawa, and I will be voting in support of both the motion and the amendments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As a member of the Assembly who represents a rural riding, as a member of the Assembly who still has farmland personally, and as a member of the Assembly whose family is very involved in farming, it gives me a great deal of pleasure, I should say, to enter into this debate.

I do need to say though that — acknowledging both sides of the House, the concerns that have been raised on both sides — my family's actually involved in the sector of farming that is doing very well right now. That's the cattle industry.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I do acknowledge that many farmers that are engaged in cereal crop production are hurting very badly right now, and that's why we put forth the motion that we have here today. And that is that the Assembly calls on the federal government to provide \$1 billion to Canadian farm families immediately.

There's much criticism, Mr. Speaker, from across the House about what this province, this government, is not doing for farmers and the fact that we don't have any ideas for the farming community.

(1730)

Well, Mr. Speaker, here's a little bit of what Saskatchewan and this government is doing. We allocate, Mr. Speaker, more of our fiscal capacity on a per capita basis than any other provincial government or the federal government. We provide 3.3 times as much as the federal government does on a per capita basis, Mr. Speaker. We provide 3.2 times as much as the average of all other provinces in Canada, Mr. Speaker. And we provide nearly twice as much as the next highest province — that being Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker — on a per capita

basis.

We have made the commitment, Mr. Speaker, that we'll provide funds to assure that farmers get access to Saskatchewan's share of the \$500 million that was recently announced by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, we are helping farm families to cope with high input costs through a number of programs. The Farm Land Education Tax Rebate Program will rebate, Mr. Speaker, \$25 million to farmers for education tax paid in the years 2000 and 2001.

There is now no provincial sales tax on farm fuel. The cap on the gas tax rebate was removed in 2000. The provision was made to exempt gas used on a farm at the bulk station starting in 2001, Mr. Speaker.

And there will no longer be provincial sales tax charged on major agricultural inputs. This will, Mr. Speaker, reduce fertilizer, pesticide, and seed costs by nearly \$80 million.

Exemption on diesel fuel and gasoline are worth over \$120 million, Mr. Speaker.

The provincial sales tax rebated on building materials used for livestock and horticultural facilities is worth \$2 million annually, Mr. Speaker. So we're doing what we can here in Saskatchewan.

Crop insurance, Mr. Speaker, has been improved for the year 2001. Premium rates will be reduced, Mr. Speaker, by 12 per cent in the year 2001, Mr. Speaker.

We are providing funding for research, technical expertise, and work in partnership with industry to capture new opportunities.

Farmers now grow, Mr. Speaker, 50 different crops, providing diversification opportunities when market prices warrant. There is now, Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan, believe it or not, 2.3 million acres of peas produced in this past year — 2000 — which compares to 350,000 acres back in 1992.

There is 1.8 million acres of lentils produced . . . that were produced, I should say, in 2000 compared to 475,000 acres back in 1992. And there are now in this past year — 2000 — 375,000 acres of mustard produced in the year 2000 compared to 215,000 back in 1992.

In total, Mr. Speaker, we have 128 special crop processors who employ over 1,000 employees with a payroll of \$21 million annually.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan helps also in the industry of value added through a number of programs. The Canada/Saskatchewan Agricultural Food Innovation Fund has allocated all of its mandated \$91 million to eight sectors since its establishment in 1995.

And, Mr. Speaker, Crown Investments Corporation — the portfolio that I am now responsible for — projects that it will invest \$170 million over the next five years in value added and processing sectors for agricultural and related sectors.

And the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation — another corporation that I currently find myself responsible for — estimates that approximately 20 to . . . 25 to 30 per cent of their investment over the next five years will be in the area of food or crop processing and meat production or processing sectors. Mr. Speaker, this is significant.

The Saskatchewan Government Growth Fund anticipates that 10 to 15 per cent of its future investments will be in agriculture and food production or processing opportunities.

The Agri-Food Equity Fund is mandated to invest up to \$35 million in new or expanding Saskatchewan agri-value businesses.

Agricultural Development Fund provides approximately \$18 million in the annual funding to research and development projects by the Saskatchewan agricultural . . . Agriculture and Food.

And, Mr. Speaker, technology adoption and demonstration programs — Saskatchewan Ag and Food, Mr. Speaker, provides 3.5 million annually for adoption of technologies in areas that are critical to crop and livestock production and processing.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Beef Development Fund provides 300,000 to \$400,00 in annual funding to support the development and diversification of the Saskatchewan beef industry.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, and very importantly, new generation co-operative assistance programs will provide up to half a million dollars a year to assist the development of value-added new generation co-operatives.

My point, Mr. Speaker, in all of this is that Saskatchewan is and has been at the plate with its commitment by way of new ideas and financial assistance, Mr. Speaker, and it's now time for the federal government to step up to the plate to show its commitment to agriculture in Saskatchewan as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's why I call on the federal government to immediately come to the table, come to the plate if you will, with \$1 billion in financial assistance for Canadian farm families as soon as is absolutely possible. And we call on that assistance to be immediate. And I encourage all members of the Assembly to strongly support that motion. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it somewhat confusing. We have the Minister of Agriculture bringing an emergency motion into the House today to debate the crisis in agriculture. And then we have the member from Melville stand up and give us a good news story in Melville — you would think that the federal Minister of Environment wrote a speech for him — that everything in Saskatchewan is great. And then we have the member from Meadow Lake stand up and say that agriculture is doing quite fine in Meadow Lake.

I would like to remind that member that if we should happen to

get foot and mouth disease in this province, our livestock producers are going to have some huge and serious problems. Dr. Otto Radostits of the College of Veterinary Medicine was recently on the radio just the other morning saying that if foot and mouth happens to hit in Canada, it could be a \$20 billion problem. You think we've got problems now? You ain't seen nothing yet.

So I would suggest that the Minister of Agriculture talk to his two members who can legitimately claim that they represent rural Saskatchewan. And I see where they're coming from because, certainly, things aren't that rosy. As many members on this side of the House and members on that side of the House have said, that agriculture is in a crisis. That's why we're here past the hour debating this issue today.

And nothing really has changed since . . . I can recall, shortly after the '99 election, soon as the House was called into session in December of '99, we sat here till 10:30, 11 o'clock at night listening to the farm organizations telling us about the crisis in agriculture. And here we are again. Here it is, March of 2001, and we're right back right where we started from.

At that time, Mr. Speaker, we in the Saskatchewan Party, the farmers, the farm organizations told this government that if they didn't get to work on solving the problems in agriculture, developing a long-term vision, developing a long-term safety net which is part of a strategy, that we'll be right back . . . nothing will have changed. We won't have solved the problems. And their predictions were exactly dead on the money.

And it's quite evident today that this government has no plan for agriculture. They don't have a long-term vision. They don't have an idea, any kind of an idea for a long-term safety net program, and they refuse to listen to the folks that have some ideas, Mr. Speaker.

And the sad thing about this whole situation, Mr. Speaker, is that they are playing with the lives of our farm families. Our farm families are telling us we need to know where we fit in the picture. What is the long-term plan? Do we have a future in agriculture? Does the family farm have a future in agriculture?

What will the family farm in the future look like? Will it be the husband and wife and the family working the farm or will it be a combination of father and sons, brothers, neighbours getting together, forming small corporations, and farming the land. That probably . . . all of those things are probably the vision of the family farm, Mr. Speaker.

But they want to know where they fit into that puzzle. They're right now . . . there's many farm families are cashing in the few RRSPs (Registered Retirement Savings Plan) that they have — if they do have some — to try and hang on but they're getting weary. They're tired of hanging on. In fact some of our farm families are giving up and saying, I've just had it. This crisis has just gone on far too long.

We've seen crises in the past and we . . . and they've hung on and saw their way through it because they knew there was a light at the end of the tunnel. Right now many farm families don't see a light at the end of the tunnel, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we need those plans. We need some vision, we need some stability, and this government had a chance to get that process started. They had . . . they called the farm organizations and we in the opposition together last year to go down to Ottawa and lobby for some short-term money. And so the trek to Ottawa took place and as it turned out there was a bit of money late in the year.

As one of my producers said to me, they threw us a few crumbs in the hope that we'd go out and seed a crop. And we picked up the crumbs and we did that. But that's all that was accomplished.

The former minister of Agriculture in this government . . . they had an opportunity, they had the farm groups together, they could have started developing a long-term strategy for agriculture. When members of that farm coalition asked to do that very thing, they were told no. The only reason we brought you together here is to go down to Ottawa and lobby, Mr. Speaker. And so, therefore, there was a lost opportunity.

So finally what happened here in September of 2000, right in the middle of harvest, the Minister of Agriculture brings ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) together. Isn't that a coincidence? In September, in harvest time, that's when he finally gets around to working on the problem. Not unlike having an election in 1999, Mr. Speaker.

So now we're faced with the situation, Mr. Speaker, where the federal government has said here's \$500 million. Provinces, if you want a piece of the action you've got to join . . . you've got to join this program that the feds designed, called CFIP, which had no input from this government, from Saskatchewan. It's the brother of AIDA. If AIDA didn't work, this program isn't going to work.

But we on this side of the House feel that there's \$190 million that can be made available to our farmers. So if we've got a gun to our head maybe that's the only choice we have. But if we had a plan, a plan that we developed here in Saskatchewan, a plan that worked for western farmers, we could say to the federal government, CFIP doesn't fit here but here's something that will work. If you don't have an alternative then what are your choices, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, the federal government certainly has a responsibility in this farm crisis. There's no doubt about it. You won't get an argument from this side of the House that the federal government has a huge responsibility in this trade war.

I heard it recently described that the producers of western Canada, the grain and oilseed producers are the cannon fodder in a trade subsidy war; and I think that person, a prof from the College of Agriculture in Saskatoon, made that statement recently at a farm meeting and I think he hit the nail right on the head.

We look at history, Mr. Speaker, recent history, we'll see that in the early '70s, the federal Liberal government changed the Crow rate. There was certainly need for that change, Mr. Speaker.

But at that time, Mr. Speaker, there was two schools of thought.

One school of thought said, okay if we're making changes to freight subsidies and those sorts of things, maybe we should look at paying the producers and not the railroads. But what did we hear from the then government of Saskatchewan, the NDP government of Saskatchewan? No way, don't you dare give that money to the producers; you better give it to the railways.

Then in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government . . . or there was a change I should say, I believe it was the Liberal government, although I stand to be corrected, there was a change to the grain transportation. There was a proposal put on the table, memory serves me correctly I believe that it was the PC government, Charlie Mayer said that, look if we're going to change this and make a further change, I've got \$7 billion for western agriculture — \$7 billion.

Now we're quibbling about an additional 500 million but there was \$7 billion on the table for western agriculture at that time. And what did we hear from members opposite and their supporters? No way, keep continuing paying the railroads. Well now, Mr. Speaker, we are paying the price for those short-sighted views.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — The federal government pulled the subsidy which — to rail transportation — which was between 5 and \$600 million annually, to the western grain transportation system and now we have nothing. And that's part of the problem that we're seeing today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite have asked what is our plan. And the member from Kindersley this afternoon outlined part of our plan, Mr. Speaker, and so therefore I'm not going to go into that area. I think we've got some things on the table that we could talk about, Mr. Speaker, and I think we better get to work on those things.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you might ask . . . people in urban Saskatchewan might ask why should we really be so concerned about this whole issue and this whole crisis?

And, Mr. Speaker, on every occasion that I get I like to go into the retailers in my constituency and talk to them about how their business is, how the sales are, are sales up this year over last year — those sorts of things. Every one of those retailers in my constituency will say to me at some time during the course of the conversation, they'll ask me the question: when are you going to get some money for our farmers so that they can come into my store and buy something?

And that sentiment is not only in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. If you take some time and go and talk to some of the small retailers in the larger centres in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, and those centres, they'll tell you the same thing. I recall a recent conversation with the owners of a paint and wallpaper store. Now you would think how would a store like that be affected by the crisis in agriculture. And they assured me, they said they could see by their sales and the volume of business that they do, they know exactly the state of the rural economy, Mr. Speaker.

So I don't think the members opposite should delude

themselves in thinking that this agriculture crisis won't impact on the cities because it's already happening, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — I'd like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the former premier and members opposite like to stand up in this House and brag and crow about the rate of growth that happened in this province in the middle '90s. Saskatchewan experienced some record economic growth.

And there is a reason for that, Mr. Speaker. Part of the reason, I think a large part of that reason is that if you look at what was happening in agriculture, agriculture was doing fairly well at that time. Canola prices were up around 8, \$9 a bushel, lentil prices were 20 cents a pound, wheat prices were fairly strong, and the impact was immediate and direct on the whole economy of Saskatchewan.

And in fact today the Premier said that one of the reasons why the Saskatchewan economy isn't performing the way it should, is because of the crisis in agriculture, Mr. Speaker. So it is important to every citizen living in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I would call upon all members of this Legislative Assembly to quit playing political games with people's lives and . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — And pull together, Mr. Speaker, and find a solution that will work to solve this crisis. And I think part of the solution to at least address the short term is to get on board, for all of us to get on a plane, go down to Ottawa, and stand at Mr. Chrétien's door and say; look, we've got a problem here, we're not leaving until you do something about it. And let's then see how arrogant Mr. Chrétien's going to be, Mr. Speaker.

Can you imagine if we extend that invitation to Manitoba and Manitoba comes on board and then if Manitoba comes on board, maybe Alberta will come on board and then as someone mentioned, maybe Ontario will come on board. Then we've got a movement, Mr. Speaker. We could have 200 and 300 elected members on Mr. Chrétien's door saying; we've got a crisis in agriculture and you've got to do something about it, we'll do our part but you've got to do your part, Mr. Speaker.

So I say to members opposite, get on the plane and let's get down there and get the job done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 5:51 p.m. until 5:53 p.m.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 27

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Boyd	Gantfoer	Toth
Stewart	Eagles	Wall
Bakken	McMorris	D'Autremont

Bjornerud	Weekes	Kwiatkowski
Brkich	Harpauer	Wakefield
Wiberg	Hart	Allchurch
Peters	Huyghebaert	Hillson

Nays — 30

Calvert	Trew	Hagel
Lautermilch	Atkinson	Serby
Melenchuk	Cline	Sonntag
Goulet	Van Mulligen	MacKinnon
Wartman	Thomson	Belanger
McCall	Crofford	Axworthy
Nilson	Hamilton	Junor
Prebble	Jones	Higgins
Harper	Lorjé	Osika
Kasperski	Yates	Addley

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — By leave of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, I would move that . . . and it would be seconded by the member from Cannington:

That the Speaker, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly transmit copies and verbatim transcripts of the rule 46 motion and debate with respect to the farm income security crisis now facing Canadian farmers, to the Prime Minister of Canada, the federal Minister of Agriculture, the federal Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, and all opposition party leaders.

I so move.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

The Assembly adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

