

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

April 19, 1984

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

ORAL QUESTIONS

Raymond Contractors Ltd.

MR. KOSKIE: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Tourism and Small Business, the minister responsible for Sedco. My question has to do, Mr. Minister, regarding the awarding of a contract by Sedco to Raymond Contractors Ltd., to renovate Innovation mall in Saskatoon.

The minister will be no doubt aware that Raymond Contractors Ltd. is a transplanted B.C. company and only recently became registered to operate in Saskatchewan. The construction contract in total was \$460,000. Some progress payments have been made, in the amount of \$32,000 in February, and \$167,000 in March. I want to advise the minister that there are 16 Saskatchewan subcontractors owed over \$300,000 on that contract, and not one of them have received a cent. I want to ask the minister: are you aware of the desperate position that your inadequate administration of the funds in the operation of Sedco have placed these contractors, and that, indeed, many of them are on the verge of bankruptcy by the lack of progress payments?

HON. MR. KLEIN: — Mr. Speaker, no, I'm not aware of the desperate situation.

MR. KOSKIE: — A supplemental, Mr. Speaker. The desperateness of the situation is so bad, Mr. Minister, that this morning a press conference was held by the subtrades in Saskatoon at 8:30 this morning. They are on the verge of bankruptcy, and they are desperately wanting Sedco, and the minister of Sedco, to take immediate action to get some money in their hands. Are you prepared to take immediate action and start to administer Sedco in a business-like way?

HON. MR. KLEIN: — Mr. Speaker, I've been trying to administer Sedco in a business-like way for a long time now, but in view of its none the less the situation to which the members refer to has been brought to my attention, and we are dealing with the matter at this time.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Minister, are you aware of the desperate situation that the subcontractors are in relationship to the contract that has been extended to Raymond construction, formerly of British Columbia?

Are you aware of the problems that the subcontractors are having in respect to payments?

HON. MR. KLEIN: — Mr. Speaker, before I . . . I would like to inform you that I was not aware of a desperate situation to which you refer. All right, so let's clear that up. I am aware of the problems that are occurring. That has been brought to my attention, and we are addressing that.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Minister, supplemental. Would the minister be prepared to indicate what problems have been brought to his attention?

HON. MR. KLEIN: — I understand that the contractor that was awarded the contract is in financial difficulty, and we are presently dealing with it.

MR. KOSKIE: — New question. Mr. Minister, when you awarded the contract to this transplanted B.C. company, did you do any research into the financial affairs of the company to

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determine whether it was a reliable company? Because obviously there are many Saskatchewan companies that were willing and ready to provide the services to Saskatchewan. Did you check into it?

HON. MR. KLEIN: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Quill Lakes seems to think that there is a little bit of a political overtone in this contract. Yes, he called it a B.C. company. Don't frown at me . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . All right, let's clear something up. The contract was awarded by the management that was in place at the time of your administration, and it did not appear on my desk at all.

MR. KOSKIE: — I'd like to ask a further supplemental to the minister.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, please. Proceed.

MR. KOSKIE: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would appreciate some attention here.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister: are you aware of whether or not Sedco, when they left the contract to this B.C. . . . British Columbia, subplanted company into Saskatchewan, the contract . . . Did Sedco insist on the labour and material bonds at the time to protect, at least, the subcontractors in the event of financial disaster of this company, which you didn't check?

HON. MR. KLEIN: — Let's clarify something. Of course there is a bond in place. There is a guarantee in place for the . . . a performance bond in place. This has been the normal practice that Sedco has used for a long, long time. The management awarded the contract in the same way that contracts have been awarded in the past. We have not changed any systems, and it's all in place exactly the same as it was when we inherited it.

MR. KOSKIE: — A new question to the minister. Mr. Minister, you indicated that you had some knowledge in respect to the financial problems of this subplanted B.C. company which took over this contract. I ask you: have you been contacted by any of the subtrades, the subcontractors, the Saskatchewan subcontractors that are in financial problems? Have you been contacted by them, and could you indicate have you done anything?

HON. MR. KLEIN: — Mr. Speaker, I couldn't be happier with that question because, if it's such a desperate situation, no, nobody has contacted me. The first that I heard of it yesterday was through my officials at Sedco, and I can hardly see the desperate situation that you're referring to if the contractors have made no representation to me.

MR. KOSKIE: — A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I suppose that indicates the confidence that the people, the subcontractors have in the minister.

Mr. Minister, are you aware that these people, the subcontractors, eight or nine of them, had a press conference this morning in Saskatoon to release the facts of their desperate situation of not having received a single cent in progress payments, and they have owing to them over \$300,000?

HON. MR. KLEIN: — Mr. Speaker, no, I'm not aware of any press conference that they called, and I'm rather disappointed that they choose to go that route rather than contact me first, because I was not aware of any problem.

Sale of SPC Generating Plants

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I direct a question to the Minister of Labour, the minister in charge of Saskatchewan Power Corporation. Two weeks ago, in Crown Corporations Committee, the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Power Corporation told me that the power corporation was not considering the sale of any generating plants

I will quote the *Hansard*, on page 772 and 773. The minister says, "We are looking into any measures that can improve the efficiencies and lower the debt." (I'm paraphrasing slightly.) And I say, "Including the selling of generating capacity?" The minister says, "No, not including the selling of generating plants." Then I say, "that is, you're not planning the sale of a generating plant?" The minister: "No."

Mr. Minister, are you prepared to tell this House today that you are not planning the sale of any generating plant owned by the Saskatchewan Power Corporation, or that you have not been planning the sale of any generating plant of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation during the last, say, six months?

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker, in the time frame that the hon. member was asking the questions, we were talking the year under review. As of today, there is no negotiations or talks going on about selling any generation plants of Saskatchewan Power Corporation.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Minister, have there, during the last six months, been any negotiations going on for the sale of a generating plant for the Saskatchewan Power Corporation?

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker, yes, there were some negotiations the last couple or six or seven months, but those have all failed, and we have no intention, at this time, to continue with any sale of generation plants.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Minister, in the Manitoba legislature on Monday of this week, Mr. Gary Filmon, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative party, a good man and a very frank man, is quoted as saying as follows:

The Saskatchewan government is giving consideration to selling back the Island Falls power plant to Flin Flon.

That's a direct quote from what he said. Is it accurate, Mr. Minister, that during the past several months you have been negotiating to sell the Island Falls plant to Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company Limited, or a subsidiary thereof?

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker. Let's go back a little bit. At the time we took over office, the Island Falls plant situation was in the courts, or heading into the court situation under your administration. We were fortunate enough to arrive at a settlement as far as the Island Falls project was concerned, out of court, and saved the Saskatchewan Power Corporation a substantial sum of money like — maybe, \$20 million.

In that agreement, we left the door open for a few months for the Hudson Bay mining that if they so choose to take the plant back again, which was theirs initially until you people wouldn't renew the water rights. We negotiated. They came to us in that time period and said the possibility existed that they may like to negotiate, which we did. We, as of today, and I'm telling the member opposite that negotiations broke down. There are no more talks, the deal is finished, and Saskatchewan Power owns Island Falls.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — You are then, Mr. Minister, telling us that Mr. Gary Filmon is inaccurate and out of date in his comments, that you are not considering the selling of the Island Falls Dam to Hudson Bay Mining & Smelting. Is that what you're saying, Mr. Minister?

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I just finished telling the member opposite that talks are finished.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, we're well aware of the minister's very careful phrasing here. In the Crown Corporations Committee he didn't mention these talks. He's now telling me

they are finished. Have you any intention of restarting the talks which would involve the sale of the Island Falls Dam to Hudson Bay Mining & Smelting?

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member opposite that we were . . . when I was making those kinds of statements, it was under the year in review that we were doing with Sask Power at that time. As of today, there are no more talks going on as far as Island Falls. I don't know what can happen in the future. If there are savings for Saskatchewan Power and the people of Saskatchewan, we'll look at anything down the road. But as of today . . . (inaudible) . . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — I want to establish this point, Mr. Speaker. If, in the opinion of the minister, and if, in the opinion of the chairman of the board, one George Hill, there are savings for the people of Saskatchewan, you then will sell the Island Falls power dam. That's what you're saying?

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not saying that at all. There are circumstances that come about down the road, and we can't foresee what may come. We could change our minds, but right now the deal with Island Falls is off. There are no more negotiations going on, and it's finished. As of today, there are no more talks.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Further supplementary, Mr. Minister. Did you receive, as minister in charge, a recommendation from the president of the corporation, or anyone pointing to him, a recommendation in writing that the sale of the Island Falls Dam would be in the best interests of Saskatchewan Power Corporation?

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker, there are no more talks going on, and I'm not going to try and look into the future as to what might happen. Anything can happen. But, as of today and any future plans at the moment, we are not looking at selling Island Falls.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, supplementary. Does the minister deny that there have been negotiations in the past, that these were carried on over the objection of the technical staff of Sask Power, and that they were carried on at the political level by Mr. George Hill and members of cabinet, and not by any technical people in Sask Power? Do you deny that?

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker, yes, I deny that. We get recommendations, and negotiations went on because of the court case started by you people across the way. And we had that in our negotiations and agreement with Hudson Bay. They chose to act on that point in the agreement. We did talk with the company for some five, six, seven months. And it all ended that there was no agreement. We could not reach an agreement, and talks have failed.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — One final point, Mr. Speaker. Will you indicate whether or not there is any date in the future at which you expect talks to resume?

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker, there is no date to my mind, nor to my knowledge, set for any future meetings.

Increases for Public Services Superannuates

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday the Leader of the Opposition asked me a question that I took notice of, and I would like to provide him with the answer today. The question was: will there be a supplemental cost-of-living increases for retired persons on provincial government pensions? My answer to the question, Mr. Speaker, is that an ad hoc adjustment has been granted in each year

for the past 18 years, except for 1967-68 and 1970-71, and this year there will be no exception, and legislation is being drafted to provide for an adjustment on the customary date of May 1, 1984. Further to that, Mr. Speaker. The Superannuation Act will be amended twice this session on the advice of the legislative counsel, who felt that the amendment for the early retirement program should be introduced at an earlier date.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Brief supplementary, Mr. Speaker. While I can understand why the earlier retirement material might be introduced at an earlier date, and was introduced a couple of weeks ago, what has stopped you from introducing the supplement for superannuates a couple of weeks ago? Surely you knew that six months ago you were going to do that. Why didn't you put it in the same deal? Why are you cluttering up the order paper with a couple of bills?

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — Well, Mr. Speaker, simply put, it was because we followed tradition and decided to introduce it at the same time as we normally do every year.

Closing of Regional Culture and Recreation Offices

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. I have a question for the Minister of Culture and Recreation. Mr. Minister, your department's decision recently to centralize its operation in the process, and close a number of offices in smaller communities, recreation offices in smaller communities — can you tell me how many offices you've closed, or are about to close, or are attempting to close, regional offices throughout Saskatchewan.

HON. MR. FOLK: — Mr. Speaker, the number of offices across the province that will be closed amount to zero.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ENGEL: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. New question. Indian Head-Wolseley *News* clipping says,

The *News* has learned that the Department of Culture and Recreation is moving their regional office from Wolseley, effective the end of this month. Notice has been served.

And do you deny that notice has been served to move the culture and recreation director from Assiniboia to Moose Jaw? He is moving to Moose Jaw. Or have you withdrawn that notice?

HON. MR. FOLK: — I will not confirm that there is any movement taking place. It was contemplated at one time, but it is no longer contemplated. And the regional offices will remain as before April 1.

MR. ENGEL: — Will the minister assure me that Johnston's job will be secure, and that they are staying in Assiniboia, or are they being transferred to Moose Jaw?

HON. MR. FOLK: — Mr. Speaker, I didn't catch the question there. Will I assure you of which?

MR. ENGEL: — I'll repeat the question. Will you assure me that the Johnstons, the Johnston family, Mr. and Mrs. Johnston — he is the recreation director in Assiniboia. He has been asked to move, and had a letter, and was transferred to Moose Jaw. The family prefers to live in Assiniboia. Are you telling me that you are not closing that office and moving to Moose Jaw — that they can now stay in Assiniboia? Are you giving me that assurance?

HON. MR. FOLK: — Mr. Speaker, I thought I made it quite clear that the offices are going to remain as the 19 regional offices around the provinces. Therefore, Mr. Johnston will be remaining in Assiniboia serving that area.

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Now I might want to add at this point, Mr. Speaker, that the number one priority of the Department of Culture and Recreation is to provide the best service possible around the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. FOLK: — And I am very surprised that it has taken the opposition this long to ask these questions. Mr. Johnston will be staying to serve that area, and he will be serving it as good as he has in the past, probably even better.

MR. ENGEL: — Just one final question. Are you waiting for the opposition to make the decisions? We have a copy of a letter that was written from the South West Recreation and Parks Association. We let those people make the decisions and decide. And he writes, and for the record, and as a baseline information for this new question, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read just two short paragraphs into the record:

On behalf of the South West Recreation and Parks Association, I would like to express our deepest concern over the Department of Culture and Recreation's proposed centralization of regional culture and recreational consultants.

The decision by your department seems to have been made without any consultation with the people being served by the Department of Culture and Recreation.

Are you now going to admit that when the pressure came on, you changed your mind and you decided to leave them there, like what was originally put in place and have been there for a long time and serving the people well without – without, I say – any political influence? We didn't get involved because we wanted these people to decide. Are you saying you changed your mind, you're going to stay with the former plan?

HON. MR. FOLK: — Mr. Speaker, once again I will confirm that those offices are going to remain. And once again I will state that, as always, the Department of Culture and Recreation's policy is to provide the best service possible. And as far as not being consulted, our department keeps in touch with every recreation association, and there is input going on . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I see your lips are moving, but your legs are not working very well, I guess, Mr. Speaker.

If I can go on there, service is a number one priority, and we have been in touch with people all across the province. And as far as the closings are concerned, they are not going to occur. Indeed, it was contemplated at one time, but because of strong representation by various groups around the province, and strong representation by some of their elected members – and I might reiterate at this point that this government is willing to listen to representation, keep our doors open, and quite a change from that government there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KOSKIE: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct a question to the Minister of culture and Recreation. I have here, Mr. Minister, your letter that was sent out to the recreation regional boards, and the policy that you state here is: "another component that facilitates this new thrust will be a consolidation of our regional offices into eight zones." I ask you: when you sent these letters out, was that the policy, and are you saying that now it is no longer the policy?

HON. MR. FOLK: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times I have to cover this. At one time that was proposed, very correctly, and right now the regional offices are remaining open as before.

MR. KOSKIE: — In respect to the . . . As recently as April 5th . . . I guess my supplementary question to you, Mr. Minister, because I've been getting representations from the various . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, please. It's very difficult to hear in the Chamber. I'd ask for order.

MR. KOSKIE: — What I'm asking you: when did you advise the regional offices that the policy which you put into effect is no longer policy? Because we are getting letters and concern as recently as April 5th in regard to the consolidation of the Humboldt culture and recreation offices. When did you renege your policy and state a new policy?

HON. MR. FOLK: — Mr. Speaker, every community involved and every recreation board involved should be aware of that by now and probably quite some time ago.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Tabling of SGI Annual Report

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to table this morning the 1983 annual report for SGI. The record of operations will show a very good year indeed on both the compulsory and general side of the corporation's business.

I am pleased to announce to this Assembly that the Saskatchewan auto fund, which used to be called the AAIA, recorded a surplus of \$27.5 million for 1983.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Speaker, this totally eliminated the accumulated deficit of \$12.6 million and, in fact, established a reserve of \$14.9 million. That reserve is the first since 1978. The auto fund, which operates on a break-even-over-time basis, has finally recovered from the very severe losses of 1979 and 1980.

I am especially pleased at this performance in light of the fact that under this government Saskatchewan motorists experienced the smallest increase to licence plate insurance in many, many years — 3 per cent in 1983, Mr. Speaker. And what's more, as I indicated last month, we will not apply to the Public Utilities Review Commission for an across-the-board increase for 1984.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — But I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't mention that Saskatchewan drivers had much to do with this good performance. The number of claims in 1983 decreased by 9 per cent. The weather was mild and there were fewer accidents. This proves to me that Saskatchewan drivers are generally safe and responsible drivers.

Good management of the fund also contributed to the positive showing, Mr. Speaker. Decreased administrative expenses in 1983 played no small role in the auto fund's bottom line. And on the competitive side of the business, there was also good news. SGI's general business has recorded a profit of \$9.8 million after record losses in 1982. That profit, Mr. Speaker, came about after SGI settled an important part of a large international reinsurance contract, the details of which are all too well-known to members of this Assembly. The settlement which, by the way, was very skilfully negotiated by SGI management, allowed SGI to reduce its claims liabilities by more than \$20 million. This, in turn, was responsible for the positive net result—the \$9.8 million profit. I think it's clear to all members that the new management of SGI has started to turn that corporation around.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — That management and those employees have worked very hard to get SGI back on a solid and profitable footing. And I think these results speak for themselves. I want to personally congratulate all SGI employees for a very successful year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I reply very briefly to the remarks of the minister. Not having had an opportunity to study the report, we will obviously have more detailed comments at a later time.

We are naturally very pleased that the automobile accident insurance fund, the automobile fund as it's now called, has had a good year. That was virtually inevitable with the increase in the deductible to \$500. The number of claims must be down very, very substantially. The administration costs are not remarkably down.

Because of the fact that the number of claims are down, you have eliminated many, many small claims from the fund. They are now dealt with by Sask Government Insurance in another way, if the person's had a package policy, or by other insurers. The expenses are still there, but they're simply not being paid by the fund because the fund has withdrawn the substantial amount of coverage.

With respect to the general business, we are seeing exactly what was predicted a year ago. The loss of a year go was purely fictitious. As I recall it, that particular report I said ought to be a strong contender for the Governor General's Award for fiction.

The minister has now confirmed that, and tells us that of all of these losses, which never had been incurred but he said were going to be incurred last year, have not, in fact, been incurred. In fact, 20 million of the losses have evaporated, were never there, but are now gone, and he is able to declare a profit.

It is, indeed, a result which everyone fully expected, since nobody believed his last year's report. Nobody really believes his this year's report, in the sense that the \$20 million recovery was not a recovery because there was no real loss. Once those two years of pure fiction are eliminated, we will see how the minister gets along when he is not moving fictitious sums from one year to the other, as he has done in this report.

I am glad to have him acknowledge that his last year's figure was pure fiction. And I am glad that the report will now reflect some measure of reality, and we can find out what's going in this report, and we will not have it clouded by allegations, purely spurious allegations, that massive sums have been lost in some reinsurance contract, which he now freely and fully acknowledges were false allegations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hepworth that Bill No. 49 – **An Act to provide Counselling Assistance and Loan Guarantees to Farmers** be now read a second time.

MR. ENGEL: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a matter of serious importance to the farmers of Saskatchewan that we're dealing with today. I received a copy, requested a copy from the agricultural minister's office this morning, and I have here an application form that's entitled:

Application Form, Counselling and Assistance Service, and Assistance for Farmers.

Instruction: This form must be completed in ink. Read, sign, and date. The declaration and application will not be processed without the signature. Counselling and Assistance for Farmers, Room 106, Walter Scott Building, Albert Street, Regina.

And there's a toll-free number.

This application, Mr. Speaker, has 2, 4, 6, 7 pages of questions that ask everything that can be asked about a farmer and his family and their affairs that exists. They omit a few aspects of his very, very private life, and that's about all.

Like Mr. Trudeau once said, he has no business in the bedrooms of the nation. That's about the only area that's left out of this application form. It is got to be . . . If you've looked at this application form, and I've made copies of it . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — I have. It's a good application form.

MR. ENGEL: — The member for Kelvington-Wadena says it's a good application, and so I well can imagine, because this application form is going to be, according to the legislation, is going to be sent to . . . Well, let me read from Clause 6(1), application for assistance:

6(1) Any farmer may apply to the program chairman, in the form required by him, for counselling assistance.

A farmer whose financial situation has deteriorated to the point where he is unable to obtain sufficient operating funds and who: (a) is a resident of Saskatchewan and (b) his net worth is not less than 500,000 and (ii) 50 per cent of the value of his assets; may apply to the program chairman, in the form required by him, for counselling assistance or a guaranteed operating loan and counselling assistance.

7(1) If the program chairman is satisfied that an applicant is eligible for counselling assistance, or a guaranteed operating loan and counselling assistance, he shall, taking into account the applicant's specific situation, geographic location, designate (here's the point that we're worried about) designate any three or more members of the committee to sit as a panel to review the application, one of whom he shall designate a chairman of the panel.

The program chairman shall advise the applicant in writing of the name, address and phone number of the chairman of the panel established to review his application.

(3) the applicant shall . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, please. We're in second reading on this bill, and in second reading we deal with the overall intent of the bill. We don't deal with specifics such as you're getting into at this point. I think those specifics would be better dealt with in committee of the whole where amendments could be proposed. I would ask the member to deal with second reading items.

MR. ENGEL: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This piece of legislation, the general principle of a farmer making an application and saying that he is in distress, he needs some assistance, is very imminent. If we watched the news last night, and if you reviewed the situation that Art Jones

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reviewed up in the area of north-eastern Saskatchewan, where in one R.M., Mr. Speaker, on last night's news, 50 per cent of the land is up for sale – 50 per cent; 40,000 acres of cultivated land in one R.M. is up for sale. I am saying to this House that this piece of legislation, and there's only one specific item I wanted to get into, Mr. Speaker – I don't want to deal with all the aspects of this bill, I'm not going to go into it – but there's one little area that I have to read from the bill, and I wish you would give me permission to read from clause 7, to say when the farmer fills out this application form he fills out everything – everything. There is not a question left unanswered about his personal affairs; and his investments, his income, his entire background is on this form.

This form is then made public to a local committee. This form is given to a local committee, Mr. Chairman, and the local committee that's appointed by the government opposite reviews this application, and I wanted to read into the record to make sure I wasn't misreading it. I started by saying this is a very important piece of legislation. Mr. House Leader, Mr. deputy deputy house leader, the Minister of Health, is likely going to be piloting this bill today. This bill isn't important enough for the agriculture minister to sit here. They want to rush this bill through, and where is the Minister of Agriculture this morning? We're accused of dragging our feet on this bill, and the Agriculture minister hasn't got time . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — The member has been in this House for a long time, and I'm certain that he is aware that to draw attention to members that are not here is not within his right when he is speaking on any piece of legislation or any item in the bill, or any bill.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Speaker, as far as the rules of this House are concerned, I don't want to question your authority and your rulings. You have the right to run this House as you please.

I felt that this is such an important bill. I was being accused by heckles across the floor yesterday for asking for leave to study this bill overnight last night. I was accused of dragging my feet and not hurrying through this bill. And today when we're supposed to be discussing it, I get sat down because I'm concerned because the minister isn't here to discuss it with me and to listen to my concerns. If he doesn't answer my concerns immediately, I am directly my direction to the Minister of Health who likely will be piloting the bill through . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Okay, he says he will, so I have the right source. So I will be dealing with you, and you will be held accountable by the farmers for the kind of bill you're passing.

Now the thing that concerns us the most and is the specific line that I want to talk about (and I'm just going to refer to one more line – if you rule me out of order I'll sit down again and listen to your ruling) . . . but the establishment of the panel is the key, is the key in this operation.

Manitoba had this same kind of legislation in place for eight months. This legislation is in place in Manitoba. It isn't costing the government one cent. It's not costing them \$4 million like it's costing you here. The \$4 million here is going to go to hire some political people in each constituency, and in each town, and in each area. And I can go to Gravelbourg and I'd say to my farming friends, "Who are you going to have to go to?" And they'll all tell me the same name. And I would make a little wager whose name will be on that committee panel that will be reviewing the applications in Gravelbourg. And there are farmers around today.

I want to make one more point to the sharp young lawyer from Saskatoon. I want to make one more young point to you. And I want to tell you why some of your neighbours in Vanguard . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Are you listening, or are you wagging your lips? I want to tell the member, Mr. Speaker – now that it's quiet that he can hear me – I want to tell the member that there are farmers in the Vanguard area that will not deal with the credit union because they don't want the three members on the credit union board to know their business. So they go to the bank. So they go to a bank. That's why those farmers don't deal with the credit union.

I know Vanguard as well as he does, because I dug a house connection into every house in Vanguard. I know how many banks are in Vanguard and I know there's no credit union there. And that's why I told him that. And people all across this province are not making credit union loans, which are good, and I'm not putting any aspirations or any . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: — State your point of order.

MR. YOUNG: — My point is, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member is misleading the House when he advises the House that there's a credit union in the town of Vanguard. There is not one. I think that that's a proper point, Mr. speaker. There's not one within 20 miles, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: — We cannot deal with a dispute of fact in the Chamber. A member has the right to speak, and if he is wrong, you have a right to correct him when you speak. But for me to deal with points of fact, whether or not a member is dealing with fact, is very difficult and is not part of my duty as chairman here.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. Mr. Speaker, if the member will read the record, he will find out exactly that. I said the people in Vanguard aren't dealing with a credit union. I never once said there was a credit union. In fact, I told him before he got up that I'd dug a house connection to every house in Vanguard, and I said there wasn't — there was not. He doesn't even listen, he's wagging his mouth instead of haying his ears open.

Mr. Speaker, there is an issue at stake here in this piece of legislation, and as far as the second reading of this legislation is concerned. There is an issue at stake that we're concerned with. We think you can introduce a farm loan guarantee program without putting \$4 million into oiling the political machine. You don't need to oil your political machine to introduce a farm loan program because as I said earlier, in Hudson Bay there are 30,000 acres of land for sale today.

It was on the news last night. And those farmers are in trouble; they couldn't wait for this loan program. You didn't move ahead with a piece of legislation that was in place to affect those farmers, so they are putting the farms up for sale. And do you know what they told Art Jones last night? How many of you listen to the news? Did the member for Maple Creek listen? Because her constituency is next. Your constituency is dry — your constituency is next.

But do you know what they told Art Jones? The rich are going to buy it. We'll still farm it; we'll still farm it but we won't be our own masters; we'll be serfs. That's what they told Mr. Jones last night on the television news.

And this piece of legislation . . . These applications, Mr. Speaker, are out in the country. I got my copy this morning because I suggested to the agriculture ministers' office, "they're available all over; I'd like one for this speech this morning." So they were good enough to give me a copy. These pieces of application are all across the country already. The Minister of Agriculture is like Rip van Winkle. He's been sleeping for 40 days since this program has been announced, and now all of a sudden he wants to railroad it through and say the opposition are holding it up. They won't give us the weekend to consult with the farmers and see if they like it because they went out with these applications — out into the country — and said the NDP are holding it up. That's the kind of way . . . That's the respect you have for this legislature.

And then when we go to deal with it in the House, where's the Minister of Agriculture? Is he here to answer the questions? Is he here to talk about this bill? No, he's not; he's going to put somebody else up. I think it's a serious matter. My colleagues have much to contribute to some of the points that are in here and that we could be raising.

I think this legislation is geared to help the right people. It's there. It can do so much good.

There's so much good it could do if they wouldn't have to go through those committees, if the farmer would go and make this application. He'd take it to his credit union or to his bank; the banker would review it and say okay, if you can get a government guarantee on this, I think you can make a go. They'd sign and he'd have his loan – he'd have his guaranteed loan.

The other thing this legislation doesn't do, and that doesn't spell out an interest rate. If you're so anxious to help the farmers, and you're so anxious, and you believe that the interest rate's a big thing, Mr. Minister of Health, why don't you put into this legislation an 8 per cent ceiling on the interest? Why don't you put your money where your mouth is, and spend that \$4 million for some good, rather than spend it on oiling your political machine? Make some changes to the bill that will make it useful, that will prove to the farmers of Hudson Bay, and to the farmers of Moosomin, and to the farmers of Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, that you mean business, and we'll support it 100 per cent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MULLER: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a very short few points that I want to make on Bill 49. I think this is a very important piece of legislation, and I know that the farmers out in the eastern part of my area, and certainly in the Hudson Bay area, are certainly waiting for this.

This legislation will allow \$4 million to be utilized as the base fund to support the loans for Saskatchewan farmers who are having difficulty financially. There are some very good farmers in this province and find themselves in a bind this year, and I think especially of some of the farmers in my constituency who have to battle frost, wheat midge, or glume blotch. Through no fault of their own, these farmers haven't been able to raise sufficient crops to meet their expenses and, because of the opposition's friends in Ottawa, these same farmers are now facing high freight rates, lower grain prices, which will prohibit a fast financial turn-around even if they could get a bumper crop.

This program will be operated by a group of farmers, not a group of bureaucrats, or bankers, or politicians, but a group of farmers. This ensures that every farmer who is a good operator will remain in business. Mr. Speaker, some of these opposites have been suggesting that, rather than providing an excellent legislation, maybe we should propose some form of debt control. Of course this is typical of the NDP approach: control, control, control.

But I remember back during the early 1970s when the operation LIFT (Lower Inventory for Tomorrow) was in force. I'm a mixed farmer. I'm not a mixed-up farmer like some of them across the way. The banks and credit institutions had a lot of farm loans arrears during that period. The federal government refused to allow banks to foreclose on farmers who had borrowed under the farm improvement loan plan. What happened? The banks and credit unions simply quit lending money to farmers. I remember going to my banker in those days and being refused simply because I was a farmer. If we had chosen that route I suggest the same situation would occur today, and soon we would have no farmers purchasing seed, fertilizer, equipment. While they couldn't be foreclosed upon, no one would extend them credit. Mr. Speaker, I think that's very, very serious.

This legislation is more realistic. It exhibits, once again, that this government is truly in touch with the needs of Saskatchewan farmers. It proves this government is responsive to the requirements of Saskatchewan's most valued industry – agriculture.

And I'd like to just mention one more little point that was brought up by the member opposite. I see he's left, the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, one of the mixed-up farmers. He's claiming that this farmer board of real good Saskatchewan farmers that have been appointed to look into the financial problems of Saskatchewan farmers, that these people aren't going to be sincere in their job. Does he realize – and I think he does – that every credit union in Saskatchewan has elected members that look into financial problems and look at farmers' finances every time they come to a credit union for a loan? And now he's trying to turn it around and say that nobody

should be able to look at farmers' financial positions before they're handed out money on a guarantee.

I don't think me, as a farmer, I wouldn't expect that, and I don't think the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg would expect the taxpayers' money to be spent by giving it out. I think the Minister of Health made a good motion here one day in the House when he said, "by the pailful." I think we have to look into the financial situations of farmers before we guarantee their loans with taxpayers' dollars, and I want to compliment the Minister of Agriculture for the job he's doing, and he's out doing it today. He's not sitting in here. He's out talking to farmers. We're doing it. We're in the country, and I'll support this bill all the way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TUSA: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise this morning in the legislature, to add a few words regarding this bill which we are presently debating, and on a day which I believe is a very, very historic and important day for the farmers of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we're well aware that the conditions today place many farmers in this province in a position where some of them are having some problems carrying on their operations. Mr. Speaker, we're aware of that, and this unfortunately is not unlike some times we have experienced in the past here in Saskatchewan. And we all know, farming in Saskatchewan very often goes in cycles, and that being the case, Mr. Speaker, it is the responsibility of a caring and compassionate government to take steps at times to help alleviate the condition the farmers find themselves in. This bill, Mr. Speaker, is a reflection of the compassion that the Progressive Conservative government is showing the farmers of Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . We know, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, please. If the members would like to get into the debate, I'll give you plenty of opportunity. But I would ask for order while the member is speaking.

MR. TUSA: —Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we realize that the farmers in Saskatchewan, in some case, are facing difficult circumstances. And let's look at some of the factors which have caused this to happen. Those of us in this House who are farmers — and I must say that on the government benches there are many, many of us who are farmers, and are not only farmer, but, in fact, active farmers, Mr. Speaker, such as myself — realize some of the reasons why some farmers are having difficulties. And, of course, some of these reasons are: the high cost of equipment, which has happened over the period of the last 10 years due to inflation. The high cost of repairs, Mr. Speaker, is another factor for this; the increased cost of fertilizers, chemicals and, indeed, of fuel.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this has been going on while, at the same time, the price that farmers have been receiving for their product has, in fact, been either remaining stable or declining, as it has this year.

For example, we were informed just a few days ago by the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board that most products, Mr. Speaker, that the farmer grows, will in fact decline in the coming crop year. These are the reasons. May I quote some of the figures that the farmers can expect to receive and what has happened . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . A great deal, a great deal. Just listen.

The price of wheat, Mr. Speaker, will decline by 28 cents a bushel in the coming crop year. The price of durum will decline by 55 cents. The price of barley will be down 11 cents, and so on and so forth.

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So, Mr. Speaker, the cost of production has been going up; the price received for the product has been declining. And, therefore, you will recognize that there are some farmers in this province facing financial difficulty.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, is in response to the very real difficulty some of these farmers are facing, a bill brought on by concern, compassion, and brought in, Mr. Speaker, with consultation with the farming community.

I would like to contrast this, Mr. Speaker, with the measures taken by the former government when they faced similar circumstances after they became government in 1971. And we all know in 1971, Mr. Speaker – and I remember very clearly myself, having begun farming in those years – that in 1971 there was a 4-bushel quota. The price of no. 1 grain was approximately \$1.25 a bushel and the outlook looked extremely bleak – much more bleak than now.

And what was the response of the hon. members' government when they were elected in 1972? The people who stand here today, Mr. Speaker, and criticize us for this bill which is going to help a great many farmers, what was their response? How were they going to help the farmers of Saskatchewan?

They were going to help the farmers of Saskatchewan in 1972 by bringing in that infamous land bank policy. That's how they . . . That was their response, Mr. Speaker. And they told the farmers of Saskatchewan, "We're going to help you by buying your land, and we're going to buy their land by bidding against your brother farmers, your neighbours. That's how we're going to help you." Mr. Speaker, that was their compassionate response – to bid against my neighbour so he can't buy it, and the all-powerful state, all-powerful big brother, who has unlimited access to funds can say, "Well, we're going to buy your land. Then you can lease it back forever, and meanwhile, we'll outbid your neighbours."

That was their response, Mr. Speaker. What was another response they had? The fuel rebate program, which they seemed to bring in conveniently before the election and conveniently remove after the election. At the same time they stand and criticize us for not doing the same thing.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have done our share in that regard. We have removed the fuel tax in Saskatchewan – the largest single tax cut in the history of this province. And even though the hon. members do not wish to recognize it, many, many farmers have been helped by this. And the federal Conservatives in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of Brian Mulroney, are fighting to have the federal sales tax removed on fuels, which will help all farmers again in the whole country.

So those are some of their responses, Mr. Speaker. Manipulation of the farmer. In short, manipulation and contempt for the farmers in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have introduced this bill in the legislature to take into account the fact that farmers need help, that there are some farmers in desperate straits through no fault of their own. They are farmers who are hard-working, down-to-earth farmers, who are not overly extravagant, who are doing their absolute best to survive. And even with their very, very best efforts, they find themselves facing difficulty.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, having recognized our responsibility to those farmers in this province, we have introduced this bill. And we have also done other things, Mr. Speaker, to assist farmers generally in Saskatchewan to get through this period of difficult times which, unfortunately, has begun in the last few years and is kind of reaching a culmination.

We have introduced the farm purchase program, Mr. Speaker, to help farmers get low-interest loans to purchase land. We have a livestock investment plan to help farmers save some money,

so that they can carry on. We have introduced in this budget the removal of the education tax on the home quarter which, once again, will help all these farmers, including the farmers who are facing these difficult circumstances.

And, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and mention many other things we've done. But today we're talking about the farm assistance act, and this act is directed towards helping farmers who face the most severe difficulties. Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who preceded me talked about Manitoba's plan. He said in Manitoba they don't have any of these farmer committees. He says it's not going to cost them a nickel. The government's going to run it in Manitoba.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member from Quill Lake well knows, this government also ran The Land Bank Act, and we all know who got the land under this government's administration of The Land Bank Act.

I suppose, Mr. Speaker, that's what happening in Manitoba. Same thing, Mr. Speaker, their attitude towards farmers is reflected by that member's comment from Shaunavon or Assiniboia-Gravelbourg who claims that it's good that Manitoba hasn't consulted the farmers. That's what he's saying. He's saying it's a great thing that the Manitoba government doesn't consult the farmers. That's their attitude towards the farming community, and I would like the farmers of Saskatchewan to take note of that.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, has set up committees made up of farmers — farmers who understand the actual day-to-day problems on the farm — so the farmer who's having problems will go before fellow farmers, Mr. Speaker, not bureaucrats.

The hon. members opposite would like to see the farmers of Saskatchewan . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — Don't include me in that statement. Don't include me.

MR. TUSA: — I will not include the member from Regina North West who wishes to be disassociated from the hon. members opposite. I don't blame him. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, he didn't think about that quickly enough. Unfortunately, he never thought about that quickly enough because, about a week ago, he stood up and he said, "I'm against you and I'm with the NDP," and he walked over there. He says, "I oppose you, like the NDP do." And today, he sits in this House beside the hon. members.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the attitude of the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg who said that it's a good thing in Manitoba that farmers who are having problems have to go before bureaucrats instead of farmers. Well, we disagree with that, Mr. Speaker. Here in Saskatchewan the farm assistance act, our farmers who have problems are going to go before farmers, not bureaucrats. You see, there's the fundamental difference.

Well, the hon. members opposite always make a big show of caring about the farmers. In actual fact, they never do it. For example, about a few days ago, they stood up in this House and they voted against the dairy producers, and we hope you all remember that. They're the same people who got up next day and made a big show about caring about farmers. They're the same people who stand in the House today and criticize the Progressive Conservative government for trying to do something to help farmers in distress. That's the kind of double-talk we see here in this legislature.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I have amply pointed out that our government is extremely concerned that those farmers who need it most receive help. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I think it should be clear to the people of Saskatchewan that, while the members opposite, the official opposition, pretend to care about farmers, when the chips are down they actually have no faith in Saskatchewan farmers at all. None at all. They stand here in the legislature and vote against the farmers. They stand right here in the legislature and vote against the farmers, and today we saw

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the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg stand in this House and say that the Manitoba method of farmers going before . . . (inaudible) . . . bureaucrats, the farmers going before bureaucrats for assistance, is superior to farmers going before farmers, which we have in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, for that and many, many other reasons, because we recognize the importance of farmers, and the ability of farmers to make decisions for other farmers . . . for that and other reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will be most happy to support this bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KOSKIE: — I want to begin by saying that in our caucus and by the efforts of the agricultural critic, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, certainly it illustrates that our caucus is indeed concerned with the plight of the farmers in this province. I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the minister, the critic for agriculture came in with a five-point platform which would in meaningful way address the problems confronting farmers.

We on this side, as I said, indeed indicate our support for measures which will assist the farmers in the difficult times, the importance of some action which would assist, indeed, one of the most important economic sectors in this province. But I want to ask this House and the people and the Saskatchewan farmers: what are the Tory government trying to do here?

I want to say it's fluff, it's rhetoric, and it's not fully meaningful. I want to say that when they dealt with the oil industry to get it going, \$350 million of write-off royalties and taxation, that's what they have done.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order. Order, order. The member from Quill Lakes seems to be getting quite a ways off the bill. The bill deals with the counselling assistance loan guarantees to farmers, and I would ask the member to stay on the bill.

MR. KOSKIE: — I respect your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm going to stick to the bill. And I'm going to say that what they're putting up here as fudge, fluff, to address the problems of the farmers of this province, is \$4 million they say. And that's what they say. That's the magnitude of what they're prepared to put up to protect the farmers of this province — \$4 million!

And what did they do the oil companies? This is a contrast that I have to be able, be allowed to put in here — \$350 million to the foreign oil companies.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order. I've already ruled on this. Is the member from Quill Lakes challenging the ruling of the Chair? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The bill before the House is Bill No. 49. I would ask the member to stay on the bill.

MR. KOSKIE: — I'm not challenging, but here in this bill I'm talking about the principle of this bill. And within this bill and within the budget there is a financial package which is put forward to the people of this province.

Agriculture, I think we can agree, is one of the most important economic segments in s. You know what this program is initiated, is supposedly to cost? Four million dollars. And all I am saying is that in other priorities they have had substantial amounts, and the oil companies is the example.

I want to go on further, that this government attempts to indicate how important that they bring in this legislation right away. Do you know what? We've had the budget. We've had the problem developing over the course of the year. Farmer after farmer that I've talked to has indicated the problems that he's having. And this government stood and did nothing. And today, two days, introduced on Tuesday, and today they are saying they want it passed.

I would have thought that what we would have heard in this debate is the members get up and not talk about the past, but talk about the magnitude of the problem. I thought they would come forward with a total analysis of the problems out there. I thought that they would have gone to the Farm Credit Corporation, and that the minister would have been able to indicate how many have financial problems. I thought that they would have provided to this House, the statistics of how many are having problems with other financial institutions.

But we get no analysis of the problem; we get no opportunity to discuss the nature and the direction of this bill with farm groups, as an opposition. I say further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to know exactly how much of this money the estimate will be spent, and I ask: how many farmers are they really going to help? I think that there should have been before this House that analysis, and they have failed to do it. This is just a baloney sandwich as I said in my . . . wrapped up to sell to the farmers and try to satisfy them, but it's not going to satisfy the needs, I'll tell you.

The problems are real. The farm problems are very real. The cash flow, lack of delivery of quotas. There are increased rising costs in all the input, and a decrease in the return on the sale of the commodities produced by the farmer. And one other aspect is the farmer's facing increased cost of transportation.

Those are the essential problems that are out there. And I am amazed at the position that this government takes. Here we have a very serious problem, as the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood has indicated. He said it was serious, and I agree, but although they haven't brought any analysis, but we have done our own analysis. And he says, "You know, we have been helping farmers and we're continuing." He said, "We put in the farm purchase program, and we subsidized the interest rate for farmers to purchase land." And we agreed with that when that bill was passed.

But just look. Here we have a major problem of already established and active farmers, many of who are going under, and you know what the best they can do in this bill? They said, "We'll come forward and we'll only guarantee the interest that you can get at a financial institution." Won't subsidize to save farmers, but apparently will continue to subsidize to expand farmers. Doesn't make sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'll tell you that there's an area over in Hudson Bay where there's a desperate situation taking place. Hundreds of quarters are going to be sold. Farmers are going to be driven off their land, not by their lack of effort, but by the whims of nature and the difficulties that they've had in respect to . . . (inaudible) . . . conditions and disease to their grains. That problem has been going on. The farmers have organized. They have met with the opposition. They have pleaded with the government opposite to address that problem, and they haven't address it. And here they come forward and they say, in the words again of that would-be member from Last Mountain-Touchwood, that this is a historic bill.

Well it doesn't take much to become historic when the Tory puts forward such . . . This bill, we are going to go along with it. It doesn't, in fact, meet the basic problem that is there and which has been outlined by my colleague, the critic for agriculture.

But I want to put forward these application forms, Mr. Minister of Energy — the one that gives the money away to the oil companies. He's chatting. These forms have been out, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Some of the farmers have already been trying to see whether they can get assistance. Do you know what happened? I had a phone call this morning. I was in my office this morning at 7 o'clock. At a quarter to 8, a concerned farmer from Riceton phoned me, and he said, "I have gone to see whether I can get assistance under this program."

He said, "I have a half section of land." He said, "I only wanted \$5,000 to \$7,000." He said, "They told me to get out of the office." He said, "First, they said, you haven't got an economic unit; half section you can't live on." (Despite the fact that he does, and supports his family. He's an

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intensive farmer.)

They told him that he might as well get out of the office; this program wasn't for him. He asked for 5 to \$7,000, and they told him literally it wasn't for him . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Right. Turned him away.

Do you know what they said? Do you know what they further said in respect to this program to him? "Why, you'll get only \$5,000. By the time the legal fees are paid for by you, there won't be anything left. This program you can't go under \$25,000," they said, because the legal fees to draw up the documents to put it into effect, they said, would eat up the revenue.

I want to say that there's also another farmer in that same area, three-quarters of a section of land—three-quarters of a section of land – and I'll tell you he received the same treatment.

This program . . . I'd like the Minister of Agriculture to be here. I want to know who he consulted with. Who drew up this plan for him? I have talked to a number of farm organizations, and I'll tell you they are saying they haven't been consulted. And by forcing this bill through today, that's what you want to do.

On one day, two days it's been before us, I'll tell you we're going to let it go through. We're going to let it go through, but the deficiencies lie on your back. Your deficiencies lies on your back. Can you feature, can you feature, one member stands up and says, a historic bill, a historic bill. And when we look around this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker – no Deputy Premier, no Premier, no Minister of Agriculture, no Minister of Parks. Can't find, can't find, can't find an agricultural spokesman.

Do you know who we're going to deal with, with this historic bill? I'm going to deal with the Minister of Health. Just imagine. And they're trying to tell us that this is historic and important bill.

Well I'm telling you, out in Saskatchewan today, awareness – a new awareness – is suddenly developing. A new awareness, and this here fudge and puffery that is being put forward here is not going to do the job that needs to be done.

I urge the members opposite to consider, consider seriously what I've said. I ask you not to laugh at the miserable pittance that you're putting out towards pretending to help farmers. I ask you not to laugh. I ask you take this problem serious – very, very serious. And I ask you to look at the programs of financial assistance to farmers in agriculture in Alberta and in Manitoba. I ask you to look at the five-point platform that was put forward by my colleague, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, on behalf of our caucus.

I want to conclude, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by saying that I am disappointed, disappointed in the slowness with which the minister addressed the problem. I am disappointed in the way and the magnitude with which he is attempting to resolve the problem. What he has in this bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will not resolve the problem.

Secondly, the whole process is very long. It's very complicated, and I don't think there'll be many farmers availing themselves of it.

I conclude by saying that what we need is action, substance, and immediately. This bill fails to provide substance in the way of help to farmers and it's much later than it should have been.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. YOUNG: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I've been listening to the debate this morning on the second reading, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and certainly with some amazement. Particularly

the members opposite who have spoken have really got my interest up on just how they would imagine any program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to run.

The member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg would presumably, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the former owner of Allen Engel Construction Ltd., would have farmers come in, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and cross their hearts as to being in need of assistance. He'd have them come in and saying, "I promise I need some help." He certainly wouldn't have them disclose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, their particular financial plight in the circumstances of their operation. No, he wouldn't have them do that. He'd have them come in and make a Cub's honour that they needed the money. That's how he would have it.

His friends in Manitoba, he says, don't provide any money and it's going to cost us 4 million. And he lauds his friends the Pawley NDP government in Manitoba for not spending any money. Certainly that's the NDP track record and I could see how he would like to see that come to pass here.

But, Mr. Speaker, we're going to spend money, we're going to spend 4 million to help out viable farmers in need of assistance. I think that's quite a key word that hasn't been addressed to any great length today. And by that, Mr. Speaker, if we refer to the Minister of Agriculture's speech on this second reading bill yesterday, he points out that there's a third of the farmers who are in virtually no debt.

There are apparently two-thirds of them that have some degree of debt. Certainly, all the farmers in debt are not viable. All the farmers in debt are . . . Some are viable, some are non-viable, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and what we're trying to address in this legislation is viable farm operations who, because of things beyond their control, weather, wheat midge, flooding, whatever, have found themselves in the situation where they're in an immediate squeeze where they cannot get their operations in. The banker reviews his security file, and he says, "Sorry, Mr. Farmer, my bank policy is I can't extend you any further credit."

We come in with a government guarantee which is going to satisfy bankers. They're quite convinced that with a guarantee that the loan will be paid, they'll help out these viable farmers. Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Quill Lakes stands up and he says that if there's \$5,000 in loan that would come from this program, it would all be eaten up in legal fees. And I just don't understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how any legal fees at all would be involved in this situation. With a government guarantee, Mr. Speaker, I would put it to you that — and I'd put it to the member from Regina North West — that the banker will not require anything more than the government guarantee to help out the viable farmer in need of assistance.

Mr. Speaker, some of the salient points here that I think are worth noting is that the program is going to be farmer-run, and the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, the Allen Engel Construction Ltd. man, he gets up and he says that, he says that this is real bad because it's going to be all Tories giving loans to Tories. And I think if we note here, his record in the legislature is such that he continually makes reference to possible pork-barrelling.

Now that is obviously foremost in his mind. When he was a member of the Liberal party for years, his construction company went from town to town — went to Vanguard, put in the sewer and water under the Liberal administration. I think he is well versed in pork-barrelling and, accordingly, that is first and foremost in his mind. He brings that point up time after time after time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's going to be a farmer-run program, run by farmers, and run fairly, and I think we can all count on that, Mr. Speaker.

It's worth noting I think, as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the program does allow 5 per cent of the loan to go to capital projects, and certainly one can see how some small capital item could

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be of great assistance to the farmers. We have a situation if your grain auger motor went on you, and you couldn't put your crop in, that would be a capital purchase you'd have to make, and it would shut you right down if you couldn't make a small capital purchase.

Some of the people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who are not deemed to be viable, and there's certainly going to be lots of those people who have not run their farms in a fiscally responsible manner, have bought up too much farmland so that their revenues, at any sort of a yield – at 50 bushels per acre – would not pay for their land.

Those people could only be considered to be land speculators, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and accordingly, not being viable, will not qualify for this program. I think, Mr. Speaker, what we're targeting here is what should be targeted, being the viable operations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to state that this program, in my view, will be very well received in the Hudson Bay, north and east end of the country, where they've had considerable problems with all sorts of wheat midges and floods and gosh knows what.

Some of the other areas of the province haven't been hit as hard, but it's certainly a provincial program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and all farmers who are turned down by the customary money lenders, and who are viable, will be able to make application to this program, have their situation reviewed by their peers and, if viable and if in need, certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will qualify for the program.

I think for any farmers watching the program . . . Certainly me, coming from a city seat, I look at my voters' lists and there's probably one out of 15 or one out of 20 voters in my constituency of Saskatoon Eastview, which is an urban constituency, have on the voters list, farmers. And any of those watching, the forms can be picked up at the ag rep offices.

I would certainly urge any farmers who feel they have a viable operation, and who are in need of immediate assistance, to get the crop in, in what looks to be an early spring this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should get themselves down to their local ag rep offices and get on with our program.

I would also, as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like to commend the officials, as was done by the Minister of Agriculture in the Department of Agriculture, for putting this program together so swiftly, and in such a fine form, and so well thought out.

There's nothing in the legislation that I can see, Mr. Speaker, that requires any sort of reconsideration or amendment on third reading. It all looks good to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will certainly be keeping my speech short. I don't want to be condemned, as the NDP are, for filibustering any farm legislation, as they stalled the much needed dairy legislation.

With these short remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will sit down and let any other members of the House who want to, speak on this matter today. I certainly hope we get it through. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SVEINSON: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, today I would like to express the Liberal position on an initiative that was addressed into this legislature, called The Counselling Assistance and Loan Guarantees Act. Our position is that it lacks the initiative the farmers require who are having trouble out in rural Saskatchewan. It lacks the initiatives to address the problem of capital which they require in many parts of this province just to buy the seed and get it in the ground, so they can, in fact, look at a return on their investment in 1984.

Counselling services – most farmers are very independent individuals. They are on the land because they want to be a small businessman with responsibility to nobody but themselves, and

their abilities have proven that they are right in that respect. And over the last 50 to 100 years in this province they have been the most successful, the most successful economic community in Saskatchewan. They have proven their ability to manage their business. And this government is saying they don't have that ability. They're going to counsel these farmers. And what's it going to cost to counsel these farmers? They've got \$4 million that they're addressing to this problem, and of that \$4 million, most of it, I would assume, will be counselling.

The cost of loan guarantees to the government was absolutely nil until we have bankruptcies within the farm community, and the loans are called. They pay nothing until these loans are called. And I think their lack of initiative with respect to the capital into the project is indicative of their lack of knowledge of what's happening in the farming community in some sectors in this province.

We will, out of hand, be forced to support this legislation simply because it's better than absolutely nothing. But it does bring to mind the old picture you see (and I saw it recently in a Royal Bank), where a farmer was leaning on a post with his wizened-up horse. His belt was pulled right to the last loop, and he said, "You know," he says, "we're a day late and a dollar short." And that's exactly what this government is with respect to this bill. They're longer than a day late and they're more than a dollar short. And while we're going to have to support the bill, with respect to the farmers, I hope the government has a little broader initiative to address the problems out there.

Bankruptcies in the farming communities – and the member from Shaunavon indicates that everything is well in her constituency – bankruptcies in the farming community are at an all-time high in Saskatchewan. It's time that we addressed those problems as a government, as a government. Talk to some of your back-benchers. Realize that there are problems out there. The front benches have exhausted that avenue of input within that government.

So I will sit, and I will say I will support this legislation, but the caveat of support is that this government promise that they address the problems of the farmers out there and not just address the political cream puff that they feel is important to get into a budget that's basically bankrupt of new ideas for farmers in Saskatchewan.

MR. PETERSEN: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The opposition has once again show their total lack of understanding of a government program. They've been grandstanding, playing political games, trying to get little points across.

I'm quite upset with the attack that the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg had yesterday on the Minister of Agriculture. Once again the opposition has just shown their total negative attitude, another display of negativism – total and complete. They showed it when we brought in the farm purchase program that has helped so many farmers. Over 2,500 farmers out there have been helped by that program. They showed it when we brought in the agricultural credit corporation bill. They voted against a lot of good programs. They stood up and they filibustered time and again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Time and again they held up this House when needed legislation was on the floor.

They did the same thing again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, yesterday – another filibuster. They're doing it today again. To et back to the milk strike situation we had a week ago, they did then as well. Negativism – time and time and time and time again. And do you know why, Mr. Speaker? Do you know why they are opposing this bill? Do you know why they are holding it up? They must be opposing it. I haven't heard any of them stand up and say that they agreed with it. Do you now why they are holding this bill up? They want farmers to go broke. They want farmers to fail. They don't want program s to be successful. And do you know why?

AN HON. MEMBER: — On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: — Order. The member from Quill Lakes.

MR. KOSKIE: — We're not talking about the principles of the bill. I would like to ask whether that . . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: — Order, order. I'm trying to hear a point of order by the member from Quill Lakes, and the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg is interrupting. The member from Quill Lakes.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was called to order twice for veering off of the principles of the bill, the content, what it does, and its proposals. You allowed the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood to go into land bank and all over. Now you are allowing this member to go into every conceivable thing that he wants to. Nothing on the bill. And I think if it's fair that we follow those rules, I think it's fair that he follows them.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: — The point of order is well taken. I would ask the member from Kelvington-Wadena to stay on Bill No. 49, An Act to provide Counselling Assistance and Loan Guarantees to Farmers.

MR. PETERSEN: — I accept your ruling, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. And I would like to continue my remarks, making some comments on the opposition's comments on the bill. In order to do that, I have to go back to some of their comments about the bill.

Yesterday, the hon. member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg said that the Manitoba program was a better program than the one we've initiated. I ask him who endorses that program? Who endorses that program? In his own words, and I'd like to quote from *Hansard*, April 18, 1984, page 1879. In his own words:

All a farmer in Manitoba has to do is, he has to fill out his application form. He goes to his bank or his credit union. The bank or credit union decides whether he qualifies under the terms of it. They send it in and they get an endorsement from the government, whether they are going to back that loan or not.

An endorsement from that government, Mr. Speaker, our bill puts a framework in place of farmers assessing that application. And who should know farmers' problems better than other farmers? Obviously the member wants us to come along and say, okay, fine, we won't put that in place, we'll let bureaucrats decide it. We'll put another department in place to decide it. He wants us to spend more money, hire more people, but not doing one thing for the farmers. Farmers know farmers' problems the very best.

If the member opposite had taken time to read the bill, the bill that's before us today, he would have seen that the thrust of this bill is not only towards providing a hand-out. He has suggested that the farmer who is experiencing the cost-price squeeze should come in and, as one of my colleagues said, give Cub's honour or Scout's honour that he really needs it, or I need it, I need it bad.

He doesn't want them to have to lay out their financial situation. I don't know why. When I go to a bank or a credit union, I have to lay out my entire financial situation. I have to lay out the assets I have, the debts I have, the amount of money that people owe me — those are relevant things. And that application form that the hon. member held up earlier today, and was so derisive about, has those things in there in a very simple form; not complicated and hard to understand. It's very clear, concise, and direct.

If you take a look at our program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it not only provides hand-outs, it provides counselling. The act is an act to provide counselling assistance and loan guarantees to farmers. That's the very title of the act. We are not simply giving out hand-outs, Mr. Speaker. We are

giving out much more than that. We are providing education, consultation, rather than the confrontation that the opposition would have us set up.

Let's work together. Let's get the farmer and the financial institution talking to one another. That's what this government wants. That's not what the opposition wants, Mr. Speaker. They have attempted time, and time, and time again to set up a confrontation atmosphere between the financial institutions and farmers. Why, Mr. Speaker? They want unrest, they want instability, they want strikes – that's the very essence of their being – socialism at any cost, at any cost. It doesn't matter that a number of innocent farmers are going to be damaged. It doesn't matter about the lives of ordinary people – socialism at any and all costs, time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and on. Other people in this Assembly today on our side of the House have outlined the program, have explained the program in some detail, and have tried to point out where the opposition is mistaken in some of their misconceptions. I ask, once again, that the hon. members opposite quite playing their little political games and get on with the job at hand. Quit holding up the House. Quit filibustering. Let's get on with it. The farmers out there are waiting for something. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LUSNEY: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to many of the members on the government side today talking about this very important bill. And I agree it is an important bill, but not necessarily in the form that they introduced it in. They criticize us for holding it up for the last two days. They had since last fall to introduce a bill. They knew the situation that farmers were in. They knew the situation in the Hudson Bay area and all across the North.

But what did they do? They waited until the end or the middle of April to introduce a bill that might give some support to these farmers. Where were they since last fall? Where were they all winter and all this spring? Why wasn't this bill introduced at the beginning of this session when they knew what the problems were? And now they bring this bill in, and they say, "We have to get it through in a hurry, without having an opportunity to look at it, because the farmers need this assistance now." The farmers needed that assistance a long time ago; they needed it months ago. And that's when this government should have acted. But did this government act? No, they didn't.

This bill is so important that we don't see any ministers in this House that are concerned with agriculture today. We have to deal with the Minister of Health or may be some other minister in this House today. And I think it's unfortunate when a government feels that it's of so little importance to provide some necessary assistance to the farmers of Saskatchewan that the Minister of Agriculture refused to be here to debate this bill today and to make some changes if necessary?

Mr. Speaker, the member for Kelvington-Wadena talked about the lack of understanding of this party on this side, the opposition of the House. Well, Mr. Speaker, there's no lack of understanding as to the problems of agriculture on this side of the House. Because if they didn't lack that kind of understanding on the government side of the House. Because if they didn't lack that kind of understanding, this bill wouldn't be before us today. It would have been here 30 days ago. That's when it would have been here. But it's not here. It didn't come in here at that time. It comes in here now. It comes in at a time where it's going to be very difficult for some of these farmers to be able to get the loans in order to keep farming this year. They've come to that point where they have either given up or they will not be able to get that loan processed in time.

What did this government do? They went and they sent out applications forms. I don't know when. There's no dates on them. But they sent out the application forms to the ag reps in the

country and to farmers, and there was no bill in the House – no bill in the House for the opposition to discuss or for the opposition to be able to take to the farmers of Saskatchewan to have a look at. But they had the application forms all out. They had those out there.

This is a government that says they're in touch with people. Well, if they were in touch with people, Mr. Speaker, they would have introduced a bill and then put out an application form that would have been maybe a better application form, one that would be a little simpler and one that would allow the farmers to get that loan long before seeding is over. Because that's what they're going to be faced with now.

This government doesn't do what they say. Most of the time they try to make people do as they say, and that's what they are doing, that's what they are doing with this bill. They are now trying to criticize the opposition for holding it up, which the opposition isn't. We get into this debate and we will be passing a bill that we feel is inadequate, but we will pass it because it's better than nothing. And that's about all this government has ever introduced for agriculture is a bill that's maybe just a little better than nothing, but far from being adequate.

Mr. Speaker, they say that the farmers are waiting for this legislation. Well, they are waiting for it; they are waiting to get some money. But what do they have to do first? They have to send in an application form which has about half a dozen pages to it. And in the bill it says that in order for this farmer to get a loan, he is going to have to send his application to the program chairman and the program chairman will advise the applicant in writing as to the names of the panel and the committee members on that panel. He's going to have to advise that applicant then of these panel members and then they will decide as to whether his application is valid or not. It will be reviewed and then will be forwarded back to the chairman. And it's going to have to take about two or three or four different transactions before that applicant is going to know if he will qualify for a loan. Well, Mr. Speaker, the way bureaucracy works, that applicant is going to be finished seeding – if he's going to be able to – long before he gets his loan. So he won't know whether he's going to get a loan, and if he doesn't know if he's going to get a loan, the bank isn't going to give him any money to get his crop in.

And all that is saying that this government is not introducing a bill that is going to help the majority of the farmers. It is introducing a bill that is going to allow this government to appoint some political hacks out in the country to that panel to decide which farmers are going to continue in agriculture. That is what this bill is going to do. Some political hacks are going to decide who is going to remain in agriculture. They're going to do it at a time when those that won't get the loan in time are going to have to drop off and give up farming.

AN HON. MEMBER: — It's a membership drive.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Speaker, as the member for Regina North West suggested a minute ago, all this is is a membership drive. Well, Mr. Speaker, that might be true. However, I wouldn't suggest that he was right in what he is saying. But it is definitely going to be a problem for farmers to get this loan through in time to do their seeding.

In introducing that, I'm not sure that they are interested in looking at the situation that's out there and interested in doing it in a very serious fashion, because if they were, they wouldn't be trying to eliminate a good number of the farmers, and this bill is definitely going to do that. It's going to eliminate a lot of farmers.

As my colleague from Quill Lakes said, this bill is nothing more than a baloney sandwich. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think as some of the colleagues were saying here, it's going to be awful difficult for some of these farmers to even find that baloney in that sandwich. Because all it is, is just a lot of talk – a lot of talk as we have heard from this government in the past that tries to make it look good, that somehow the farmer is going to see some benefits and some advantages. But when he gets down to trying to receive some of this money and to receive it in time, those farmers are

going to be very disappointed – disappointed because many of them will not qualify. The government, the panel, and the people that they appoint to it are the ones that are going to decide who qualifies, who is a viable farmer, and who is going to get the loan.

We see a good number of farmers in the Hudson Bay area that do not have the resources to continue farming right now, have put their land up for sale, without this loan will not be able to continue, and I would suppose that a panel in that are would then say that those farmers are not viable because of their financial situation now, and that they will not qualify for this loan. So what kind of assistance is it going to give those farmers?

This bill could have made it very clear as to who will qualify and who won't. They could have made it very clear, that the farmers know just what to expect and whether they could go ahead with some preparations for this spring's work and maybe try to make some financial arrangements, knowing that they will get some assistance. But there's nothing in the bill that makes it clear as to who will or won't get it. It's all at the discretion of the panel and of the minister, the minister who won't even be here for the debate today. That's whose discretion it's at.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's unfortunate that this government would have so little interest in agriculture and put so little effort into trying to come up with a bill and then to do some legislation that will try to keep as many as the farmers as possible on the farms and continue to farm and continue in agriculture. Some of them have been there for years and, because of situations beyond their control and circumstances beyond their control, they are finding some difficulties in farming. And all they need is one or two good years to be able to continue, and they will continue for a good number of years then. And it is the responsibility of a government to see an industry as large as agriculture, to see that this industry can continue. It is the responsibility of any government, because a strong agricultural sector, a strong agricultural industry means that there is going to be some strength in our economy, some strength for small business people, and those are also going to suffer as the farms diminish.

And this government doesn't seem to care. It doesn't seem to care the effect that a lack of introducing a bill in time or in introducing a bill that would be adequate for the purposes of agriculture, they don't seem to care as to what's going to happen to rural Saskatchewan. And that becomes more and more obvious, as you see who is in this House today debating this bill and the ministers that are here trying to push this bill through. The Minister of Agriculture doesn't seem to care. I don't see any other rural members that care. The Premier isn't even here – that concerned about it. And yet agriculture is the most important industry in this province.

And I can only say, while we are going to support this bill, we are going to support this bill but not because we think it's adequate. As I said, it is not adequate, but it is better than nothing. But this government wants to know everything about the farmer, and they're going to want to know everything that he does, and that might be fair, but when you talk about a panel of people that they hand-pick out in the country, good friends of theirs, to tell his neighbour whether he is going to exist in farming or not, I think, is the wrong direction to be going in.

They put the money in – \$4 million to introduce a bill and to assist farmers. Four million dollars is only going to be for the purposes of counselling, Mr. Speaker, for the purposes of counselling because that's what he bill was first designed to do. The farmer doesn't have to be told what his problem is. He doesn't have to be told that the wheat midge created some difficulties for him or that the rains last year drowned his crop out, and he doesn't have the finances to continue at this point or find some difficulties in it. He doesn't 'have to be told that by some lawyer or some teacher or some bureaucrat. He knows the problems. He knows his problem. He knows that equipment is going up. He knows that the chemicals are going up. And he knows that he is going to have to pay higher freight rates to move his grain. And he doesn't need assistance — \$4 million assistance of the taxpayers' dollars – to have someone tell him that those are his problems and to tell him, because he has these problems, that he is not viable; he's too small a

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farmer. As my colleague has mentioned, one farmer tried to get a loan, but he is too small and you shouldn't be farming. We, as a government, will give you the freedom to go out there and look for a job because we don't consider you to be a farmer.

That's what they are telling the small farmers of Saskatchewan. And yet the small farmers of Saskatchewan were the ones that built this province to what it is. It was the small farmers of Saskatchewan. And yet they're saying – like they've told a lot of other people in this province – we are now going to give you the freedom to go and look for a job because we don't consider you to be a viable farmer. And because of circumstances beyond your control, you've got yourself in some financial difficulties, we're going to tell you that you're going to have to leave and somebody else is going to have to take over your farm.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is not the kind of assistance the farmers are looking for. The farmers are looking for some assistance that will give them an opportunity to continue farming, to get their farm back on track, and to make – not a large profit; they don't look for a large profit – just a half decent living, usually below the poverty line. They look for a half decent living as long as they can continue to be productive and to put a lot of hard work into that farm. That's all they ask for.

But none of that is addressed in here. All that this government wants to do is set up even a larger bureaucracy to control that farmer and to get more information about that individual. And not only the government. We could understand if they dealt directly – the banks, the farmer, and the government department. That would be understandable. And that would be a lot simpler than what they've introduced in this bill.

Why not make it very simple, where you can have the farmer, the bank, and the government department decide as to how large a loan this farmer could get? The banker knows the situation quite well. He's probably been borrowing money to that farmer for years. But all the banker needs is a little bit of assurance that if the wheat midge hits another year, that this government will stand behind agriculture, that they will protect that industry, and that they will guarantee that loan, if necessary. But in most cases I would suggest, Mr. speaker, that not too many farmers will default on those loans that they get.

If at all possible, barring any unforeseen circumstances, those farmers will come back and they will continue farming, they will continue producing, and they will pay those loans off. So it could fully likely cost the government nothing.

And yet this government does not see that, does not provide legislation to this House that will see this process go through quickly and allow that farmer to get this year's crop and hope that everything goes good for him. And then he could start paying back some of these loans.

No, they wouldn't do that. They want to put together an application that wants to know everything about the farmer, and not only the government knowing it. They want their panel members, their good Tory people that they're going to appoint out there, to know everything about every farmer that applies for a loan. That's the kind of information they're looking for.

I'm looking at this application form, Mr. Speaker. It says – and they want the farmer to sign this form, to give them that permission that the farmer consents to personal investigation . . . (inaudible) . . . and the program panel . . . (inaudible) . . . or his designate. He could designate anyone to go out there and investigate every farmer and find out all the information he wants about him. Why would a group of political appointees out there, why should they be allowed to have this kind of information?

Why doesn't the minister do like he's done in some other departments and say that that kind of information only comes to his department and he is responsible for it and it will be kept confidential in his department? He did it in other areas, but he won't do it for the farmers. He

wants a panel to know everything that's going on, a panel of appointed farmers, so he says, out in the country.

I saw the other night a former candidate – a PC member who ran for candidacy in my constituency and was defeated – in this House the other day when this bill was introduced. Now maybe he is looking for one of these jobs. And if that's what we're saying, Mr. Speaker, I say that this is wrong. I say that the farmers are not going to accept that.

But with the time that the government has given us to look at this bill, they are forcing us to introduce and to pass this kind of legislation – legislation that will not be adequate to assist the farmers for this crop year.

If they do appoint a group of farmers out there, as they indicate in the bill, to sit on that panel, and if they're good, active farmers, I wonder, at a time like this, when we're into April 18 or 19, when we're getting to the end of April and some farmers are out in the field seeding now, how many of those farmers are going to have time to spend for the next month or two reviewing all the applications that come in? How much time will those farmers have to spend on those applications? Or are they just going to sit on those applications because they're too busy doing their own work in order to survive, and the poor farmer that makes that application is going to have no opportunity to get it processed in a hurry?

That is only one of the problems. The other is what's stated in the bill – the number of times that it has to go back and forth and get approval from different people. So, Mr. Speaker, this bill is very, very inadequate for what was being proposed.

We have given, from this side of the House, a suggestion to this government that could have provided assistance for these farmers without all the rigmarole that's being proposed now – would have got them some money in a short period of time. But this government, because of their foolish pride, wouldn't take any of the suggestions we made. They come forward with a bill that's so complicated that nobody will benefit from it. And there's no real help in that bill for the farmers. They're going to counsel the farmers as to what their problems are.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I can only say that I'm very disappointed in this government for not taking some positive action in helping the farmers. I'm very disappointed that they wouldn't take some suggestions of the opposition and put it into their own bill, and one that would help agriculture, and they would get our total support for it. And we wouldn't have to saddle the farmers of this province with a bill like what's being introduced now. That takes away all their dignity, takes away all their pride, and is going to leave them with nothing. But some bureaucrat is going to tell him that you're not viable and you can get off the farm, and it's certainly not going to help the farmers that need that help at this point.

Mr. Speaker, with great disappointment, I am going to support this bill, but I only wish we had a government that could have been a little more positive in drafting this kind of bill.

AN HON. MEMBER: — How's the logging going down there?

MR. SAUDER: — Excellent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise in this Assembly to join in the debate which is dealing with one of the most important pieces of legislation before the House at this time a bill to . . . I realize our member from Quill Lakes doesn't feel that dealing with farmers' problems is important. He would sooner be dealing with other party partisan issues. Doesn't feel that solving and aiding the farmers with their problems is important.

This government clearly recognizes that there is a problem out there and has introduced this legislation which is going to help many of those farmers. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spent a lot of time over the last number of months talking with the farmers in my area, in my constituency, and listening to their problems. And the bottom line always was that: we don't want a hand-out; we

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just want the opportunity to be able to continue farming and to put another crop in the ground.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SAUDER: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that speaks for the attitude and the initiative of those farmers. They want to be able to produce something on their own, and yet when they get into a situation which is beyond their control, they've asked us for some form of assistance. And our Minister of Agriculture has paid attention to their requests and has brought forward this bill, and now we have the opportunity to deal with it in this House.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me . . . causes me a great deal of distress to see the members of the opposition once again displaying their lack of real interest, real genuine interest in the farmers and in the agriculture community of this province. They sooner want to deal with the petty issues, looking for some cheap political gains. Last week they demonstrated — as we dealt with the difficulties in the dairy industry in this province — they demonstrated that they weren't interested in helping the farmers. In three and one-half hours they never mentioned it.

Once again today, the agriculture critic, the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, gets up, does not deal with the substance of the bill, but only deals with the fact that the farmers, to get assistance, is going to have to disclose information regarding his financial situation.

AN HON. MEMBER: — To his neighbours — say it all.

MR. SAUDER: — He says: only to his neighbours. I do not see anywheres in the legislation where the farmer is going to have to disclose it to his neighbours. It says, "to a committee of farmers." It doesn't say that it's going to be his neighbours.

Mr. Speaker, if he can show me one financial institution in this province or in this country where I can get operating money for my farm without disclosing my financial situation, I would love to deal with them, because I could certainly have a heyday dealing with those type of people.

The farmers tell me that it's their neighbours. It is farmers who understand their problems, and they would gladly deal with them and present their case to them to have them consider their financial situation and recommend assistance for them.

I think we must recognize that he said they should go to the banks like they do in Manitoba. These people are farmers who the banks and the financial institutions and credit unions have already refused credit to. He says they should go to them. Well, once they've already went that route this is a panel who can look at their situation and deal with it and recommend that the government will guarantee operating loans. By guaranteeing operating loans, they are going to be able to multiply the benefit of that \$4 million many times over. And I think it's indicative of the responsibility which this government has taken to provide assistance to these farmers.

For another, he tries to slur this government by using innuendoes as to what we've done. Another example, regarding the news last night, he suggests that there's 30,000 acres in one municipality for sale. I believe if he'd have paid attention to what was on the newscast, he'd have seen that there's 30,000 acres in the north-east region of the province for sale, not in one municipality. Another thing they brought up as a small concern was the fact that the forms were sent out . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, please. Order. Many of the members have had an opportunity to speak, and I think that the House gave you that opportunity. At this point there's another member has the opportunity, and I would ask that you give him his chance.

MR. SAUDER: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another criticism they had was the fact that the application forms had been sent out as soon as possible. They felt that we should have waited. I

think if they'd recognize and look at the record, they would see that the forms were sent out some time after the bill was on the floor of this legislature. I think they would find that they were only sent out yesterday, after this bill was in second reading debate . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It's maybe time that Canada Post did something right.

Mr. Speaker, another thing they suggest is that the land bank system helped the farmers. As I go through the records of most of the farmers who come to me with their problems, I find that it is the ones who are in a land bank situation who are in financial trouble. The biggest majority are former land bank tenants, people who have no equity in their operation, and therefore have nothing to offer for security to the banks or the credit unions, to secure their loans.

Mr. Speaker, we've addressed the problems of agriculture in many responsive ways previously, and we're going to continue on addressing them in the future. This is one more responsible piece of legislation which is going to do that.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to be able to commend our Minister of Agriculture for bringing this forward. And it also gives me great pleasure to be able to go out and explain to the farmers how this bill and how this legislation is going to help them. And it's good when they thank us for what we have done so far.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly will be supporting it, and I appreciate that all (begrudgingly) the members opposite recognize that it is going to address the situation. It is going to provide assistance to those farmers, and they also feel they should acknowledge that and should also support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GERICH: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the bill.

Many farmers in the Redberry constituency are in need of such a program. And the agriculture economy is in a very stressful situation in the rural Saskatchewan area. This is a direct result of poor grain prices and quotas for red spring wheat, and the farmers have quite a bit on hand. Trying to pay the bills with a 5.8 bushel quota from August '83 through now until April — and in the last week have raised it to 8.7 bushels quota in some areas — is fairly hard to do. This hardly covers the interest on operating loans since last spring. And these small quotas hardly pay the fuel bills, let alone pay, or even start paying, on the fertilizer bills. The dropping of the grain prices last week by the Canadian Wheat Board is just an added stress to the farmers.

The removal of the Crow's Nest Rate by the federal Liberal government, with the help of the five NDP MPs from the province of Saskatchewan, again added extra stress in the higher transportation costs.

The fuel costs are also hurting the farmers. With the removal of the federal fuel tax, it would put millions of dollars back into the pockets of the Saskatchewan farmers.

We, as the Government of Saskatchewan, have been trying to help the agricultural economy wherever we can. We removed the provincial gas tax on the fuel, saving the farmers and the people of Saskatchewan \$135 million or so per year — unlike the NDP who had a 20 per cent sliding tax instituted on their fuel. This government has approached the federal Department of Agriculture on numerous occasions, with no avail, to have the federal tax removed. We also have removed the sales tax on electricity to help out on the rural sector. We're unlike the NDP who put a 5 per cent sales tax on the power bills.

Mr. Speaker, over the past few years the input costs in farming have overshoot the return on the profits. Also the interest rates, high interest rates, have added an extra burden to the farmer. The

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financial problems and circumstances are hurting many of the farmers in my area.

Mr. Speaker, in regard to Bill 49, it will provide help to farmers in the Redberry constituency. It is a move, a move to help in some way solve part of the problem, the financial problem of the Saskatchewan farmer. We are trying to address the problem out there with no help from the federal government or even the NDP opposition.

The very NDP across the way, who are holding up Bill 49, just over a week ago voted with the unions to have the dairy farmers pour their milk on the ground and suffer financially, for an extra four hours. Now this totally, and I say totally, shows the two-faced attitude of the NDP opposition and the unprincipled attitude of the MLA from Regina North West in showing their unconcern, showing their unconcern for the farmers of Saskatchewan. They are steadily arguing political rhetoric in their concern for the farmer by not supporting this bill. Being the member from Redberry, I will support Bill 49.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to, bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a committee of the whole later this day.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

BILL NO. 49 – An Act to provide Counselling Assistance and Loan Guarantees to Farmers

Clause 1

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Is the minister ready to introduce his officials?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this time to introduce the officials. Seated to my right is the deputy minister of agriculture, Jack Drew; beside me is Doug Maley, the director of economic division of the Department of Agriculture; and behind me is Henry Zilm, the assistant deputy. Henry isn't in yet, but he'll be here in a moment.

MR. ENGEL: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I think we'll proceed a little better today than we did in estimates yesterday because yesterday the minister just didn't bother consulting with his officials. Today, I think we've got a situation where we'll have some consultative process and maybe we'll get some answers.

If you look at the record yesterday, we tried in the estimates for two and a half hours and we didn't get one answer. You look at *Hansard* yesterday. And we just didn't get any answers at all.

Today we want to go into this bill. I'm going to be asking some specific questions and, if you can come up with some answers, we won't have to stop the clock a long time. But if you're going to play politics and you're going to talk on and on and on, like the minister did yesterday, then this is going to be a . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order! The question before the committee is Bill 49, item 1, short title, and not Agriculture estimates. Could the member please get on with the debate on item 1?

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Chairman, I'm just trying to take 30 seconds to establish a few ground rules. And I'm saying that I wasted, yesterday, two and a half hours of my time. Today . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order! The chairman has just ruled that we're not going to talk about yesterday. The topic is today. Does the member have any debate on today's topic?

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Chairman, I'm going to ignore what your colleagues are sitting there that

wag their mouths and never have their ears open. I'm going to go straight into this bill.

Mr. Minister, how long has this material been available, and how long has it been printed? When was it off the press?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — In reply to the member — and I want to say I would like to see this move along because certainly the intent of this bill is to help people out there, people that many of the members of this House have been talking about for some time . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . If you could keep your colleague in his seat quiet, I will answer your questions briefly: 3 o'clock Tuesday.

MR. ENGEL: — Are you saying this application was printed and available since 3 o'clock Tuesday?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Off the press at 3 o'clock Tuesday.

MR. ENGEL: — Was information similar to this, or the information contained in this form, or similar information like this, circulated to the ag reps in the ag rep districts prior to this past Tuesday?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — No.

MR. ENGEL: — Are you sure that the ag reps had no understanding or no awareness of what this legislation was going to contain?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — No, they haven't been sent out to them at this point in time. They're going to be sent out to them today. So what information they may have had, the official tell me, they're very similar to the ag corporation forms. It may have been that they speculated that's the type of form . . .

MR. ENGEL: — Maybe I was being a little too specific as to the exact nature of it. But were you in the process of discussing and informing your ag reps? Have you had them into a meeting, or have you run a circular letter? Is there any way you've notified or talked about what the content might be so they would have a general knowledge of the kind of legislation we're getting into?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — No, there hasn't been a consultation with them as regards the form. The only discussion was when we were selecting people for the panels that you were quite concerned about earlier and making allegations, and making allegations of political appointments and indicating that the people that select them were politically . . . I remember the member from Pelly indicating this. The names for the panels, for your information, have come from the ag reps. Now if you think they're all political appointments, you go out there and you tell them that.

MR. ENGEL: — How would the ag reps know to talk about setting up panels? If information regarding this bill and the literature hasn't gone out to them till Tuesday, what are you trying to tell this House, Mr. Minister?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Certainly, if you remember back to the budget, there was an announcement that there was going to be a package of this type. The ag reps were asked to nominate people who had good farm management capabilities in their areas, and that's what has taken place.

MR. ENGEL: — I haven't asked any questions at this point, Mr. Chairman, about the political people involved or the people involved or the chairman or anything. I'm asking about information that relates to Bill 49. When was that information first related to the ag reps, and when was that discussion process started that the ag reps were being familiarized with the

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content of the bill and with the material that we're going to be discussing here?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Officials indicate to me that there have been no direct discussions with the ag reps as to the content of the bill other than asking for the nomination of suitable people for panel members.

MR. ENGEL: — You're being as evasive as the Minister of Agriculture was yesterday. What kind of panel members . . . (inaudible) . . . but I am asking . . . In the March budget you indicated that there was going to be \$4 million for a counselling and loan guarantee program. Now this information on the content and the kind of program that you were foreseeing and the portrayal of that has taken place and started sometime along the way, because we know that counsellors have been selected, and people have been involved, and chairmen are in the process of the selection that has taken place some time ago.

But I was wondering . . . I'm trying to determine if you've had a consultation process, and I wondered when this started. You know, surely you must have started at some time. Did you start this prior to the budget?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Well, I think the member knows that probably the most important thing to get this all into motion is to get the bill passed. That's what we're doing here today. I understand that there have been candidates suggested – shall I say that? – by the ag reps, people with good farm management backgrounds . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I think that's part and parcel of our discussion. And that these people have been in and had a discussion, but there has been no selection yet of who those panel members are. But everything is in place pending the passage of the bill.

MR. ENGEL: — That leads me to the key point. You come along, the day before Easter, and you have second reading of a bill – the day before the Easter break. You come along and you come to this House with second reading of the bill and say, "We can't go with this bill until that blankety-blank opposition lets it go." A member stands up in this House and says that he's supporting the bill, but when we speak on it, we're filibustering and we're holding it up.

Now, Mr. Minister, when we look at the time today, this bill has been filibustered longer by members on the government side than it has on this side, if you're talking about filibuster.

We're trying to get some answers. What we're saying Is the Minister of Agriculture has been a Rip Van Winkle. He could have brought this bill down the day after the budget, and we could have discussed it, and we would have had months – a month and a half – to go through it. But, no, you try and put us on a time frame, when the material was out, when the material was available for your ag reps for more than two weeks, and you know that everybody had this material except this legislature.

And really what you're doing is thumbing your noses at this legislative process. Then you use it as a weapon and say the opposition's filibustering the bill. When you filibustered it, you created some deadline so you could get through the political flack, so you'd have a time limit so we wouldn't have time to consult.

I think it's very unfair that we didn't have this material three and four weeks ago, so we could have consulted with the farmers and said: is this the kind of program you like? Is this how it should be implemented? Do you want it? They need a program; they've been asking for programs. They've been asking for loan guarantee programs.

But I'm not sure they want a program that you're so anxious to get talking about, you're so anxious to get involved in. Let's talk about the counsellors that have been appointed and how we're selecting them. And you want to try and assure me . . . Before I even asked about it you're standing up and trying to assure me that the ag reps appointed him. What have you got in the

back of your mind? Why did you raise that issue before I did? I never even asked about him yet. I've never questioned that yet here, and yet you stand up and start raising that issue before . . . And Mr. Minister, you're just as political as the Agriculture minister was yesterday, and I think that's the seriousness of this government.

I am trying to determine: when was this material available? How long have you had it? How come you waited for us? I waited for a piece of material as far as a report was concerned. We got it from the mail before we did on the order paper. And I think the minister is very, very cute in answering the questions that I've asked, in being evasive as to how long they've known what the content of the bill was, and when they decided to bring it forward in this House. And yesterday was the first opportunity we had to debate it.

Yesterday was the first time it was called to the floor. Yesterday was a short day. Yesterday was a day we had the chance to debate and talk about it. Overnight is all the time we've had to consult with our farmers. Last night is the first night we've had a chance, since the minister has made his statement, to consult with and see if the farmers . . . And already we've had farmers phone in and say, "We were laughed out of their offices. If we were asking for a \$7,000 loan, we were laughed out of the offices."

Another farmer told me that he went in, and he went in and he asked for a loan, and he asked for a guarantee of a loan, and he said it's a joke. He isn't a good financial risk. That's what the member told me, the farmer told me.

So, Mr. Minister, this information has been out there. The ag reps have been counselling and been telling the farmers what they can do and what they can't do. They know what's going to be in this bill and yet this legislation didn't know.

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Well, Mr. Chairman, as you can see, the member opposite is talking about a filibuster. I think it's very evident to this House that I've been attempting to give crisp, short answers and to get this bill through. Because the purpose of this bill is to help people who are in financial need. And the member opposite continues to try and mislead, or maybe he is misinformed. I would be kinder and say, probably, he is misinformed.

Because there are no panels in place. There are no panels in place, so I don't know who was talking to you, your person who said you don't qualify, because it hasn't come into place yet because, as you well know, it cannot come into place until the legislation is passed. That's what I'm trying to do this afternoon, and that's what my members were speaking for: to express this concerns of the people of Saskatchewan, the farmers who need the help. So let's get on with the act.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, I'm sure that nobody in this House has wanted the government to get on with the act more fervently than the members on this side of the House . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . If I may, Mr. Chairman, I'll wait till they settle down. They seem to be somewhat uproarious this morning.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. There is serious business before this Assembly, and I would ask the co-operation of the members in getting on with this business.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, the circumstances that give rise to this bill are not new. They have been arising for some months. If the minister is not aware of them . . . I'm sure he knows that.

I have been around the province, and particularly in north-east Saskatchewan, hearing many, many stories of farmers who were in deep trouble. We all are aware of the difficulties of farmers

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in the Hudson Bay area, who have been beseeching this government to do something on their behalf because they have had a series of crop failures due to frosts and floods and, some of them on the west edge of that area, midge and the rest.

No fewer than five reeves joined together on behalf of their councils to try to meet with the Minister of Agriculture and then to meet with the Premier. And eventually, at the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention they met with the Premier, and I'm glad that sometimes someone was recognizing the problems. Mr. Minister, if you asked those officials and asked them how lease payments are coming in on Crown land in north-eastern Saskatchewan, they will say that arrears are very substantial and higher than they have been for a goodly number of years.

Mr. Chairman, I am asking the minister why, in the face of facts which were known to the government, certainly, and in the face of an announcement more than four weeks ago in the Speech from the Throne, why you have waited for four weeks to bring in this bill. You knew the problem. This particular approach of guaranteeing operating loans is not new in Canada. There are certainly other systems operated by governments in Canada for guaranteeing operating loans for farmers who are in difficulty, and members will know that. The minister will know that.

Why do you wait for four weeks and then suggest that it's absolutely urgent that it be passed in 48 hours or so? We agree that it's urgent that it be passed, but we would have thought it was urgent last week when you were still being Rip Van Winkle, when you people were still sitting around twiddling your thumbs, making up your speeches about how concerned you are for farmers. Why did you not bring in the bill sooner, so we could have had more opportunity to consult with farm groups, more opportunity to know whether the particular provisions of this bill we're now debating are what farmers believe they need, in order to get them over the current difficulty?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — The officials tell me that they have had a number of consultations regarding what type of format that the assistance should take, groups that they've met with and, as you know, this takes time to organize some of these meetings. The Wheat Pool have had input into this. SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), as you indicated earlier, the federation of Saskatchewan agriculture, that they were looking at this because . . . I think you must realize, and I'm sure you do, that if one is going to come forth with some assistance for people, or some help, that you want to at least find something that will best suit their needs. And one can come rushing in with hastily prepared legislation. In fact, I think if I just had a minute or two to think, I could remember some of those bills from years past.

But be that as it may, I think that they went through a commendable amount of consultation with some of the farm groups, which I believe is the right way to go, and today this bill is here and, as I say, the forms are there, the panel members, credible people, are ready to go into place, and all we're needing is Royal Assent to get this out there to help.

As you correctly indicate, the people in the Hudson Bay area and in some other areas of Saskatchewan — wheat midge, things of this nature, due to no man's control, can put you in a very tough financial position. This has happened to some very credible farmers. I don't think there is one better way than to have peers looking at the operation of their peers, to decide if they can continue, and if they can indicate to the financial institutions that these people deserve a loan to get started.

It was very interesting to hear the member from Pelly, a few minutes ago, saying it should be the bureaucrats and the bankers that make the decision. In his last discussions, as I remember, he was dead against the bankers. We're saying it should be the farmers. I think you must agree, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, that that is probably the best avenue, and the best way to go.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, acting, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, I note

that you have consulted with the farm organizations, and you consider that proper, and I consider that proper. Do you equally consider it proper that the opposition should have an opportunity to consult with farm organizations?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — I would say, if you're doing your job, you'd be consulting with farm organizations all the time.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — And do you feel it would be appropriate for the opposition to have an opportunity to consult with farm organizations concerning the terms of the bill which you have laid before the Legislature?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — I think that if the opposition, if they would follow the steps that we did when we were in opposition — those are rather successful ones as I remember back — that you would consult on a number of topics. Certainly I can remember nights in this Legislature when we spent virtually hour after hour on the phone talking to people. I can remember, very distinctly, a bill not too many years ago, in fact . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. Order! Order. The topic is Bill 49, item 1.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman, I was referring to Bill 49, not to a previous election or whatever this was . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, it depends on which election. I've had lots of them, some of which I remember rather fondly.

My question is rather simple, Mr. Minister. Do you feel the opposition ought to have an opportunity to consult with farm organizations with respect to the terms of Bill 409 which were made available to the legislature earlier this week?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Yes, I certainly do agree that you should have an opportunity to consult, and I would think, and had I been the Leader of the Opposition, the day that I saw the budget come down with a \$4 million package to help farmers I would have been out there consulting. I would have been visiting this province. I would have been talking to every farm organization, and I would have been coming forth for some solid suggestions as to the way that we could best help them.

Now I don't know if you took all those avenues, or did all those things. You're asking me if I thought that consultation should take place. That's the way I would have looked at it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, I take it then you feel that all of the information which would have been needed to carry on consultations was the statement in the budget, and that it is not necessary, or even desirable, for an opposition to be able to discuss the terms of the bill with the public prior to the bill being called for a vote. Is that your position?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Well, certainly you have every opportunity. The bill was tabled in this House. You saw the terms of the bill. You could contact . . . You must . . . I don't know if you have any contacts in the farm community any more, and maybe that is part of your problem.

And also, if there's some part of the bill that's objectionable . . . I've heard your members get up time after time and, judging from their discussion of the bill, they are adamantly opposed to the bill. And then they say, "Well, I guess I'll have to vote for it, anyways."

Now if there's something in there that really bothers you, you know the legislative process; you know it very well. Bring forth an amendment. That's part and parcel of it. And you've had opportunity to discuss with groups and, as I say, if you've been doing your homework, and if you do have any connections in the farm community, which I kind of doubt, then perhaps you would

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have had ample input to bring your points forward.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Well, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, I think we now have it clear that, in the judgment of the minister, the time frame in which they're operating is fully adequate to allow an opposition to consult with the members of widely dispersed farm groups. And I don't share your view, but I'm interested in knowing, just for the record, what the government feels the appropriate time frame for consulting with farm groups is.

We know when the bill came down; that's on the record. We know that there's a great deal of pressure to get it moved along. We know that you're having to bend the rules of the House in order to get it passed. We know that you're having to ask for leave when normally the rules call for a 24-hour lapse. We know that you have sat around for four weeks. We know that you have done nothing.

We're not going to hold up the farmers, but we suggest to you, we suggest to you that a better course of action would have been to make available in a more public way what you had in mind, so that there could have been much more extensive consultation, not only by the government, but also by farm organizations with whom you may not have consulted, or other farm groups who may well be interested in the terms of this bill.

We have 65 or 70,000 farmers in this province. They have many differing circumstances. Neither you nor I now whether or not the terms of this bill are appropriate for all of the different financial strictures that farmers are finding themselves in. I don't know why you put yourself in the position when the public cannot know the terms of your bill before it is passed, and that's, in effect, what you've done. There is no way that you can table a bill on Tuesday and have it passed on Thursday and expect that its terms will be understood in Loon Lake or in Climax. And it will not be, it cannot be. You know that. We know that.

In my judgement, a better course of action would have been for you to move after you announced it in the budget, not wait for four weeks as you did, not do the Rip Van Winkle bit, but indicate what you had in mind, and let the public who are vitally affected by this bill have some more opportunity to have comments on whether or not the strictures levelled by my colleague, the member for Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, are sound or unsound.

It may be that farmers don't worry about whether they give their social insurance number when they are applying for a farm loan. When that social insurance number was introduced, we were assured by all and sundry at Ottawa that it was not going to be a general identification number, and that it was not going to be used for identification purposes; and I believe a check of the act will show that you're not supposed to ask people for their social insurance number. I note your application form requires that. The people may not be concerned about that; then, again, they may. And what conceivable use the social insurance number could be for the Department of Agriculture when they already had the SHSP (Saskatchewan Hospital Services Plan) number. I know you will explain. I know you'll explain why you want both numbers. I can think of no other application form where you have to give both numbers. That application form errs on the side of asking for yet more and more information. And I know that you will have an adequate answer to that, but I don't know what it is, and I would be interested in knowing what it is. I wonder if the minister would open up, shall we say, by telling us why he felt it necessary to have both the SHSP numbers and the federal social insurance number.

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Well, I'd like to just go back and comment on a few of the member's observations. First and foremost, as to degree of consultation or people having a chance to know and have input, I just reiterate that it was announced right in this House the night of the budget. I go back through the steps and indicate that here was consultation with the farm groups, and you commend that.

The bill was tabled in the House. There is ample opportunity for people to look at the bill, discuss

it, talk to people in the field about this. And I think the thing that we should be looking at – and you have every right to question these things, and that's fine and dandy – but I think the emergency is out there, that people need help, and that before people can get help, the legislation must be put into place. And I think that's the paramount objective.

Now I think the second part of your line of questioning, if I recall correctly, was some concern – concern, I would say – for the requirement of the SHSP number and the social insurance number. The officials indicate to me that this is rather standard on many forms for loans, bank loans, things of this nature, but I would assure you, and the members of this legislature, and the people of Saskatchewan, if someone does not want to put their social insurance number on there, if that's really going to concern them, that's not going to prevent them from being considered by this good legislation.

MR. ENGEL: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, this is the second time since you're in government that you have come down with some earth-shaking legislation.

I can remember the praises that were used by the former minister of agriculture when he was talking about the original program that guaranteed 8 per cent. There's a little difference that time, compared to now. That time the opposition had a weekend to talk about it before the bill was jammed through. You had a little weekend.

And if you remember, the first time in Saskatchewan's history, when you were coming out with a program that was going to have earth-shattering results, what happened out in front of the building? Do you remember? Do you remember? Eleven hundred people were parading out here. The galleries were full, and that's why you're using this legislation through this time – because you don't want to give the farmers a chance to hear.

That's why you're in a hurry, and that's why you won't give us a weekend. Because, if you would have, you could have had this legislation and this bill, which isn't even printed in a proper order, you could have had this bill down just two days earlier, given us a weekend – last weekend.

But no, you said, we'll wait till the following Tuesday. I insisted that the Minister of Agriculture give us the information. We kept pressuring him in the question period. We kept saying, if you're not going to do your own bill, please do the farm security bill, Mr. Chairman. And I think you better comment on that because when the opposition talks to farmers, the farmers come back and respond, and that's what you were afraid of.

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Well, the hon. member opposite is quite correct. If there's a government that's brought some earth-shattering changes in to this province, it's certainly this one – such things as a mortgage program, a gas tax, and various other good programs that have benefited the people of Saskatchewan. And let me tell you, they're very pleased that they were brought in. So if you want to talk about that as earth-shattering, I'll agree with you, and I'll talk all day about those good, earth-shattering situations.

You're asking about more time for consultation. I rose in this House minutes ago and asked for leave to continue on with the debate of this bill. You agreed with that. Now you had the option, as you know in any democratic institution, to refuse that leave. You chose not to do that. So the debate is on about this bill. So let's not forget that when we get talking about wanting to be consulting.

Let me indicate something else to you. Let me indicate that since this bill was dropped, there have been 82 individual farmers have phoned the department already asking for these forms, and let's get on and see if I qualify for help. And that isn't counting, and that isn't counting the number of banks – the friends of the member of Pelly – the number of banks that have phoned in asking for forms and information as to how this can apply.

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Let me tell you gentlemen, out there in Saskatchewan today there are a lot of farmers that realize that there is some constructive help coming for them from this bill, and they want us, as their elected people, to get that bill through. And that's what we're here for today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, yesterday the Minister of Agriculture stood up in this House and said that things were 1,000 per cent better than they were when he took over — 1,000 per cent better. I think what you're starting to tell us is how good things really are. When he said that the budget was fine — I said it was so fine that even the Japanese technologists couldn't drill a hole through it. You know, I use that illustration. And that applies to the people that are in trouble today.

We've been urging your people, we've been urging you — do something; come up with a package. Come up with a loan guarantee program. And besides that, put in some legislation to prevent foreclosures, to save money in the courts. We've been urging you in saying there's trouble out there. Yesterday your officials knew how many people are in trouble, but the minister wouldn't tell us how many people are in trouble.

I'm surprised that there's only 82, because the lines were busy. If the guys could have gotten through, and if the lines wouldn't have been busy, there would have been 822. I can assure you that there are a lot of people out there, 30,000 acres in north-east area alone are posted for sale, and they're saying there's nobody there to buy it. They've given up waiting.

But those people that are waiting want a form that is fast and simple and easy and handy to have them. They don't want to give away six and seven pages of detailed information. They can tell you, "Look, Mr., it's tough." The member phoned here, and said, "I need \$7,000," and he was laughed out of the ag rep's office. He phoned in and said, "I need \$7,000." He was laughed out of the office and said you're not a viable farmer, because with \$7,000 you're not going to hand in there.

AN HON. MEMBER: — What member phoned? You said a member phoned in.

MR. ENGEL: — I said, a member of this constituency phoned in — and if you can't hear — my farmers are members of my riding. They are important to me. They are people that are in trouble.

You, maybe, laughed at it, and maybe the Minister of Agriculture can stand up and say: things are so good, they've never been better, but, Mr. Minister . . . Mr. Minister, there are some areas in here that are pretty serious, and the only reason you didn't give us a weekend is you were afraid that they'd come bombarding into this place and saying, "Look, we don't want to go through a long, big process. We don't want to get involved with all kinds of your political committees. We don't want to get involved with your political committees to see whether we can get some operating loan. We want to take an application into our banks."

When you mentioned the banks are phoning, I think that's where the program's at. That's where the program's at.

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Well, again, we see the member dabbling in wild speculations — 82,820. No one knows that. You don't know that, so why are we wasting time with these whirling and wild words. You quoted my colleague as saying that it's a thousand times better. I want you to be exact, because misquotes are not the best sources.

What he said, if you will check, "that it's a thousand times better in this province than had you stayed in power." I believe that and so do a lot of other people believe that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Now, as trying to fill out these forms, again you are trying to make a big bugaboo out there, a big bogey man that's going to take a whole lot of time. If you're a farmer, you know very well that if you're in farming and have difficulty, don't tell me that these fellows don't have all their forms ready, all their material is ready, they are just waiting to come in and bring the information to see if they can qualify. They are ready.

And the farm specialists in the department will help them fill out the form. Look at . . . we're not going to put a whole bunch of problems and stumbling blocks in the way of these people, as I said when I rose to speak in here. We brought this legislation forward today. We want that legislation passed today so that these people can get their help immediately. So again I say: get your points, do our debate, let's get on with the show.

MR. KOSKIE: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to ask the minister: in view of the fact that you indicate that there is a considerable problem out there, and in view of the fact that the budget was brought down on March 21st outlining the general principles, and I want to ask you: you indicate that you think it's sufficient that we have a bill introduced — and today is the first time we got the official bill — introduced on Tuesday, and we are to pass it through on Thursday. I want to ask you: what were you doing from when the budget was brought down, setting out the broad principle, March 21, '84, until now, this Tuesday, and when you brought down the legislation? Could you indicate what took that length of time?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — I believe you missed the reply to the Leader of the Opposition who asked the same question . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and, well, maybe you were, and maybe you didn't hear it. I don't know. But I will repeat it: that there was a series of consultations with farm groups, and the ones that come to mind are the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the Saskatchewan Federation of Agriculture . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. I've heard that question asked three times and answered two times, and I don't think that the third answer is really in order because it sounds to me to be a repeat of the other two answers.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Minister, you indicated that the reason that you didn't bring it in before April 17, I believe, that you needed consultation. Now you are saying to this House that it took you from March 21 to April 17 to do your system of consultation . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — With the staff you've got.

MR. KOSKIE: — With the staff, and also knowing, going into the process of budgeting, that the problem was there, and you had adequate time that you could consult before the budget. You say you need from March 21 to April 17 to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. I caution the member to be seated when order is called. The debate must be relevant to some extent . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I caution the member to be quiet when order has been called . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I caution all members to be quiet when order is called. The question . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — . . . (inaudible) . . . ask questions on this bill, you can throw me out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order! If any members are asking to be thrown out, I suggest it is not necessary. There are two doors to this Chamber they could walk out if they wish. Now I'm calling order, and I'm cautioning the member.

The point here is that three members of the opposition have now asked virtually the same question, and it has been answered two and a half times now, and we have to have some relevance to the debate. The question really is . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — On the general principle, we can debate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Well, the question here is a question of relevancy, and the Chair allows some wavering from that rule when there is a filibuster in progress, but I don't understand that to be the case today.

So I caution the members to be relevant, and not ask the same questions over and over again, and to not debate the same points that have already been raised.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your ruling. And I want to be very succinct and very brief. March 21st the budget was introduced, Mr. Minister, with the general principle of this bill, which you said we were supposed to be able to consult on.

Now you come to the House, and you say: well it took us from the budget time up until April 17th to come in with a bill, to carry on the consultation. That's what you said. How can you stand up, Mr. Minister, and say it took you from March 21, '84 to April 17 to consult, and say it's adequate for the opposition to have it on the 17th and to pass it today?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — You know, Mr. Chairman, as I hear the members opposite, I think they are really concerned that what has come about is a very good bill, and they're trying to prevent that bill from being passed and help the people out there.

I want to indicate to you that there was notice of motion came forward on April 13th that the bill was coming forward. I want to indicate to you, also, that in the negotiations – and I think the Leader of the Opposition would realize this – that one of the important aspects of this bill, or any other type of bill that is going to give assistance or provide assistance for people who are in tough economic straits, is that the lending institutions must be willing to co-operate and go along with this type of a program. That type of negotiation takes time.

And I want to indicate that there were four meetings between the departmental officials and the banks and the credit unions, so that they would go along with the program as it was going to be designed. And I want to indicate that these meetings have brought together the support of these lending institutions, that they will go along, as best they can, where feasible, in helping these individuals who are facing tough times. Those are the kind of negotiations.

Sure you can rush in, bring it in quickly, not have your homework done, and create something that is a nightmare. The consultation has taken place, and the bill is here today for debate and passage.

MR. KOSKIE: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I take rare exception to the minister saying we're not prepared because he can't come with a shred of evidence that we aren't.

I want to ask him then: can you indicate to us the analysis of the problem relating to this bill, what analysis you have done? Can you indicate a breakdown of the number of farmers that you feel are in the difficult straits which you indicate that this bill is going to address? Can you give us a breakdown of the analysis that you have done in respect to this bill?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Well first of all, I wonder just what the importance of statistics are at this point in time. But in consulting with the officials, they indicate that this is confidential information with the banks, that they can't release this. Unless a farmer signs a formal release, it can't be given to the Department of Agriculture. I think we all know there are some people that need some assistance, and certainly that's the basis that we're going on. The exact numbers, as I say, is confidential information. There's no way of knowing at this time.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Minister, are you indicating to us that you're introducing a bill with \$4

million as the amount that you're putting up, or supposedly may put up? Are you saying you have put before this House a bill which you don't even have an idea as to how many farmers there are out there that, in fact, need the assistance as provided in this bill? Is that what you're saying?

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Well certainly we brought forth a bill that we feel are going to help a number of people out there who need help, and want help. We know that Ontario has a bill similar to this, and the numbers that were helped there was about 800, my officials tell me. Now Ontario is a little more intensive agriculture — you just can't compare that entirely to Saskatchewan. There can be difference in situations there. But to the exact number, no. but certainly, it was announced in the budget, and there's a considerable amount of dollars there, and it is a program to help people to see if they can get some more assistance from the lending institutions to let them get on with their spring operations; and I think that is what they're wanting, and I think that's what we should be moving toward, and not quibbling over mere statistics.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Chairman, it's not a matter of squibbling, or quibbling, over mere statistics. Today we are before this legislature with what they are claiming to be an important bill. An important assistance to the farmers. And here we have — not the Minister of Agriculture; he's not around — the Minister of Health, who is indicating that the Department of Agriculture has not even done an analysis to determine the magnitude of the problem.

How can you set up a program adequately to address the problems if you haven't analyzed the degree of it? How do you know it's properly funded? How do you know the guide-lines are proper? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You just absolutely haven't. I ask you: have you gone to the Farm Credit Corporation to determine the problems that farmers are having? Have you asked farmers in order to do an analysis? Have you sent out any survey of the farmers of Saskatchewan? Have you done an individual survey across the province? I ask you!

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Well I want to indicate to you, very plainly, because I'm soon going to be leaving the debate because my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, will be coming through the door — or is in here right now. I want to show you that this government is concerned with the farmers of Saskatchewan, and the Minister of Agriculture was out consulting with them today, and that's why I took on bringing this bill through here, so that the people would have help today, before the Easter holiday, to get out there and do their work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — My colleague will now answer your questions and, I want to tell you, that's reacting to the needs of people.

MR. KOSKIE: — I'd like to ask the Minister of Agriculture . . . We're very pleased that he saw fit to return to the House to add some knowledge to it, because it's rather difficult dealing with what they claim an important bill with the Minister of Health, who doesn't know anything about it.

What I want to ask you, Mr. Minister, is: can you indicate how many farmers are likely to get assistance under this program, and what would be the average amount that the average farmer will receive?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. colleague, first of all, I apologize for not being able to be here sooner. But I do want to thank my colleague, the Minister of Health, who also understands farming and farmers in this province. And I appreciate him filling in for me so ably while I was away.

Your question, as it relates to exact numbers that will be helped, the numbers that will be helped

will be based on the numbers of applications that come in, I suspect. And I don't know if we can be more specific than that, quite frankly.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Minister, the Minister of Health has indicated that you really didn't do a survey or a study of how many farmers will be affected. You're not aware of that. Have you consulted with the farm organizations? There's different farm organizations in this province that have close contact with the farmers. Have you been in contact with them to find out how many farmers are going to be affected by the problem that's out there, and how many farmers will be helped by your program.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — I suppose, Mr. Speaker, we could have studied this issue of the cost-price squeeze, and how severely it's affecting farmers — and to what degree it's affecting different areas, and different ages, and different categories of farmers. And as I said yesterday in the House, I could have, in fact, probably stood before this House and said: all is well in Saskatchewan. I could have pointed to bank reports, reports of economists that say, "Yes, in Saskatchewan, relatively speaking, things are not all that bad."

I could have pointed to the agricultural outlook conference report just last December, a meeting held in Ottawa, that suggested: in Saskatchewan, net realizable farm income for this year is going to rise substantially, whereas in Manitoba it's going to fall. I could have pointed to those kinds of statistics and those kinds of numbers and said, "all is well. All is well."

But instead, we've chosen to act. And we're acting responsively and responsibly based on, number one, first of all, what we hear farmers telling us. You can look at all the statistics you want in the world, but if you're out there in the country talking to the farmers — which all of these members have been, and it's unfortunate you haven't been. Because I was up last night, probably in an area of this province that's as hard hit as any area of the province — Chelan — and had a very good meeting with them.

It has been at meetings like that that I've been at over the last several months, and that my colleagues have been at, and out knocking on the farm doors hearing what's on their minds, that we've determined, in fact, that there is some need for a safety net out there.

As well, we've talked with the lending institutions on a regular basis, not only myself, but members of the agricultural caucus. And between those contacts that the MLAs make, and the talks with the farmers, and the talks with the lending institutions, we determined that there should be an additional safety net put in place for Saskatchewan farmers. In fact, rather than point to statistics and say, "All is well," rather to say to the people of Saskatchewan, the farmers of Saskatchewan, "It's a global economy and we've got nothing that we can do about it," instead, we chose to act, and act we will do.

MR. LUSNEY: — Well, Mr. Minister, yesterday you said that things were a thousand times better for the farmers in this province, than they were before. Today, you are saying there are some problems. You're finally admitting there are problems out there.

In all these consultations you say you're having with farmers, you must have run some kind of a survey to find out just how many farmers are affected. I think when you were talking about the thousands of times better yesterday, what you meant was that there are thousands of farmers out there that have this problem. Now how many do you think that this program is going to help? You've presented a bill to this House. How many of those farmers that are in trouble — there's thousands of farmers that are in trouble — is this bill going to really provide some assistance for?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — First of all, I disagree with on two points. Number one is what I said yesterday, is that Saskatchewan farmers are 1,000 times better off because there's a Tory administration in power than they would have been if you'd have been in power, buying up their

land. The big land grab of the history of this province, took place when you were in power. And the millions and millions and millions of dollars you spent buying their farmland would be to put it back into something productive, maybe we wouldn't be in this situation today.

And in so far as how many are in trouble and need this additional safety net, I would suggest to you the numbers are very small. But the important point is: we are going to have that safety net there, and if it's one farmer that we help, I'll be very pleased.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Minister, I think there are number, and a large number, of farmers who are having very, very serious problems, and that's what the farmers tell me. And that's the truth of the matter. And what I want to ask you is, if you're concerned with helping farmers, helping farmers in dire straits, because as has been indicated with the various reasons for it, why would you not introduce legislation which could give them a subsidized interest rate? You did that for the farm purchase program. You thought it was important to give a subsidized interest rate.

And so what I'm asking you now is: why would you not . . . Those who have spent a lifetime building a farm, who — no, not because of anything they have done — now find themselves in very serious financial problems. Why do you just simply turn them over to the banks, to high interest rates that have been foisted upon them, and not subsidize the interest rates in respect to the assistance in . . . Obviously there's a crisis, because that's what we are talking about addressing. Why won't you help them by giving them a subsidized interest rate?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, I would suggest to you that prime plus one is a preferred rate.

MR. KOSKIE: — I'd like to ask the minister: is prime plus one equivalent to what the farm purchase program — the benefits under farm purchase program?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — First of all, as you well know, the farm purchase program does provide assistance in a longer term nature as low as 8 per cent for the first five years, and a 12 per cent interest rate for the next five years. And based on what prime may or may not be today, I suppose we might be coming awful close to 12 per cent. So in some fashion we may be coming close to at least part of the preferred terms of farm purchase program.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Minister, I would presume that you find equally important to help farmers through difficult times to maintain their operation. And again I ask you: why can't you . . . Is it not as important to maintain family farms as it is to maintain a program during tough economic times which subsidizes substantially for purchasing? It just doesn't make logical sense that you will give substantial subsidy for purchasing in tough economic times, but you will not give subsidized interest rates, substantial subsidized or equal subsidized interest rates, to help farmers maintain an operation which they've spent their life at. But what is the rationale?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, the reason, in fact, that this program is here before us today is because we do, in fact, believe in the family farm concept and feel that there are some family farms in there that are in jeopardy, and that's why we provided the safety net.

MR. ENGEL: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You suggested that possibly the amount that will be held will be very small. What are your . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, how did you decide that that's going to be very small? What kind of an information gathering system have you in place that would determine how many people in that safety net are viable? How did you measure that to determine that you'd need \$4 million?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, I did not say that the numbers helped would not be great. What I said out there is I don't think the numbers facing a case of terminal

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cost-price squeeze are great. I do not believe they are great.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, in determining that, what process of consultation, or who have you been talking to, that you believe that that isn't a great number out there? Last night on the news, when we watched CBC, in RMs around Hudson Bay when they tell us there's 30,000 acres for sale, they are beyond your program. They've pulled ups takes, and the land's sitting there. Is this what you're saying that farmers should do, and so, consequently, they're not a problem? They're not farmers that require your safety net. Is this what you're saying that farmers should do, and so, consequently, they are not a problem? They're not farmers that require your safety net. Is this what you're saying? They are not a viable unit. So what are you really trying to tell this House? What kind of determination have you made? I think this is a key to if this program is going to work or not.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well the determination that we've made has been based on, as I said earlier, consultations with several sectors of rural Saskatchewan, and, as well, the lending institutions themselves. And over and above that, I think the key point in this whole program is that it'll be farmers helping farmers. And who better than one other farmer who is experienced, has demonstrated management abilities, has been through the ups and the downs, to determine where the safety net should be, and who the safety net should be for?

And I was up in that area last night, quite frankly, and the reading I got was a very positive one. I have never yet run into farmers — and you must know, surely; you're from a farming community — I have never yet, and I don't think any of these members on this side of the House have ever yet run into farmers that say, "Hey, we want government hand-outs." They have never ever suggested that. What they have suggested is that there should be a sensible, responsible, and responsive strategy — a net, a safety net. They have told us, and quite frankly some of the reeves that came in from that area have told us, throwing 10 or \$15,000 at the problem this year as a grant, or a subsidy, is not going to save somebody who is up on that high wire, stumbling, and in danger of crashing to the ground. He needs a safety net. He needs a long-term strategy for a solution.

I'm suggesting to you that we have covered the bases on interest rates. This augments that program for those who need that additional safety net. The judgements will be made by farmers — other farmers out there. It seems to me very common sense.

MR. ENGEL: — I can now see where your philosophy is coming from. I can now see why you had \$4 million in your budget, and the safety net that the oil companies required was quite a little bit of heftier material. Instead of using a net, a netting like people used to use when they made hair nets, the net for the oil companies was very well constructed, because there's quite a bit of difference between \$300 million and \$4 million; and I think the people of Saskatchewan will remember those statements. You say to the people of Saskatchewan that the farmers don't want a government hand-out. The oil companies will ask for it, so they get it. But the farmers aren't asking for it, so they're not getting it.

Mr. Minister, a senior vice-president, general manager for Saskatchewan for the Royal Bank of Canada, has written me a letter. It's my name on the letter-head, and the very first paragraph in the letter says, "In a recent meeting with the Minister of Agriculture," . . . So you've been consulting, you've been consulting with these people as early . . . He's written to me March the 19th, so your consultation was . . . Process started with the banks prior to that, and he seems to think and suggest and by listening — and you must have a list or a copy of this, because I think this is general mailing to all the MOAs, and I'm not seeing anything new — but he seems to think they have the province covered up pretty fair with people that are agrologists that are able to advise farmers.

I believe that the Royal Bank is going to pick up a lot of interest amongst farmers by being able to go to an agrologist, a qualified person, to get some consultative purpose, consultative

information regarding loaning, and they're saying that we have identified 79 farmers who financial circumstances have deteriorated over the past years to a state where, in our opinion, the best option will be to sell. And another line, they said that they may optimize their return from any sale of capital assets, as well as provide them an opportunity for the family farm to reassess their personal goals and objectives.

Now did you buy that hook, line, and sinker? And then you are setting up a . . . According to what some of your colleagues have been saying this morning, and I don't want to paraphrase because you can read into the record, but the member for . . . (inaudible) . . . and particularly the member for Kelvington-Wadena were stressing this counselling – counselling that farmers seem to need.

You seem to have the idea that the successful farmers, those farmers that know how to make it, those farmers that have accumulated some land at low prices, those people that are really in there pitching, they're going to provide a little counselling service, and they're going to sit down with the . . . (inaudible) . . . and say, "Look, Mister, I bought my land, and the most I ever paid was \$15,000 a quarter. You paid \$100,000 a quarter too much. Get out while the getting's ahead. Get out while the getting's ahead." And consequently, he won't be a problem. He won't be a problem. He won't have to declare his assets to his neighbours. He isn't going to have to fill out this form and detail all his information about himself. He isn't going to have to do that because he's going to know that you are going to decide that he is not a viable farmer.

Now, to fill you in, and I'm sorry you weren't here this morning, but we presented some very good arguments in second reading, and I'm going to almost have to stretch third reading rules a little bit to fill you in on the feeling we've got on this issue . . . And my colleagues have joined together as a team and are making this one approach. We're concerned with the tactics your bill is taking. You have taken from prior to the budget consultations, right through till this week, Tuesday, to determine what the legislation should be. You give us 48 hours and say, boy, today that bills got to go, or those farmers that are going to go under over the weekend are going to hang on your head; you're going to be responsible. We haven't had a chance to consult, and the point I made to the Minister of Agriculture when you weren't in here, the last time you presented a world-shattering piece of legislation that had to do with loaning for farmers, that wasn't accepted too well.

Those 1,100 people that paraded around this legislature – there were 1,100 people parading out in front of these buildings. The galleries were full of people that were saying to the minister of agriculture, the world globe-trotter, they were telling this minister, "Look, buddy, we don't like what you're doing." So consequently, this time around you thought, well, we'll consult with the agricultural community. We'll do our consultations, but we'll keep the opposition in the dark. Well I'm afraid, Mister, you've overstepped your bounds a little bit on this one, and by pushing it a little too far you are trying to force down the throat, on the farmers of Saskatchewan, a plan that was similar, a plan that was similar . . . (inaudible) . . .

The only other time we had Conservative government in this province, when they had programs in place, they called on chairmen as well. There was a chairman in every constituency, Mr. Minister, and there was a person there that he decided how much seed oats you could get. He decided what you could get, and this counsellor and this chairman and this bill is going to be the same, have the same role. He's going to be that same political person. He's not only going to tell you whether you need feedlots or not. He's going to be able to look at this application and say, "Oh, is that right now? Isn't that interesting? This guys' 4020 John Deere isn't even paid for yet."

And he's going to be able to go down the line and look at every line, and every stock and bond, every account receivable, all his personal loans; every term, everything that's ever been written and recorded about a farmer is going to be down on this little paper. And it's going to be reviewed first – not last, not as a resort, not as an appeal process because the lending institution turned him down. But he's going to look at it first and decided whether he could even carry it to a

lending institution.

I believe that Mr. Roberts would gladly tell you what you should do for these 79 farmers. And he would process them, and he'd say, "Hey, I have applications from these 79 guys. Maybe we can salvage them too. Maybe we can salvage them." He said that this is the people that are in trouble, and they need some salvaging.

I think their agrologists that they have in place in Regina, and Swift Current, and Saskatoon, and Yorkton, and commercial lenders for the North and the South, are there; and all the lending institutions have these advisors around. I don't think you ought to duplicate it. The \$4 million you're spending are going to be spent to oil your political machine, and that's what I'm worried about, Mr. Minister.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, you covered a number of points there, and I'll try and deal with them as concisely and precisely as I can.

First of all, as it relates to consulting with the banks, we consult with the banks, quite frankly, on a regular basis. And I do that, and my colleagues do that in the agriculture caucus along with me, because we like to have a feel for what their reading is as to the pulse of rural Saskatchewan related to credit matters, and just get a feel for what their view is on what the economic situation is out there. Not that we accept it as above anybody else's opinion, but certainly I think it's a source that we should stay in touch with.

Secondly, I'm very disappointed that you are, in fact, suggesting that these farmers that will sitting on those panels . . . I'm very disappointed that you would suggest that some of the finest farmers in Saskatchewan cannot be trusted. I think that is a black mark for you sitting in this legislature, as a farmer, telling the farmers of Saskatchewan that they are not to be trusted, that they can't keep confidential records confidential. Are you trying to tell the members of this legislature, and all the farmers of Saskatchewan, that you don't trust farmers; is that what you're trying to . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — Where does it say confidential?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — The Hon. Leader of the Opposition says, "Where does it say confidential?" When you get in to clause-by-clause, I think you'll find out where it says confidential. Secondly, if either one of you had been listening yesterday when I gave my second reading speech, I said the records would be kept confidential. I asked that that word be underlined. And you're on the verge of misleading the House when you say that they won't be kept confidential.

I'm telling you quite honestly, I'm disappointed in your attitude towards farmers in this House. You sit on your hands when they need you most. And then when you should be standing up behind them in terms of appreciating their judgement, you condemn them.

Furthermore, our consultations have not stopped with just the banks. As I mentioned earlier, our consultations (and it's unfortunate that yours aren't the same way), are constant with the entire farm community out there. I myself have probably talked with — not to, but talked with — probably something close to 4,000 people in the last three weeks; farms, rural people. And then you wonder where and how we get a feel for what the issues are in rural Saskatchewan. That's how you get that, and I could point to virtually every MLA in this legislature on this side of the legislature, and they would say the same story, because that's what they've been doing as well.

And finally, you are on the verge of misleading the House when you say 1,100 marching in the legislature — 1,100 people marching on the legislature, relative to the land bank repeal. You know, and I know, there was not 1,100 people out there, so I would suggest to you that you are on the verge of misleading this House, and I would think, as a responsible member, you

should correct that.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, I would ask you if you, in fact, believe that the land bank is the way to solve the ills, number one, of the cost-price squeeze out there facing some – few as they may be – some Saskatchewan farmers today. Stand up in this House and say so. If you believe that the land bank is the way to solve the intergenerational transfer of the family farm out there, stand up in this House, because you have never done it yet. You have picked your words very carefully. Yesterday afternoon you spent an hour reading from letters, but never once did you put your own views on the record, on the record in this House. Now stand up here today, stand up here today, stand up here today and tell the farmers of Saskatchewan that you believe land bank is the solution to those problems. Stand up here today.

MR. ENGEL: — I can appreciate the Minister of Agriculture getting in and wanting to discuss land bank. I can see that, because he has a little bill here. He has a little bill here that he says, there, the amount of farmers that are going to be helped by it are very small. Very small. He's applying a little safety net under there, and I might catch the odd guy that's going to fall. That's what he said. Those are the words you used. And if you want to get in and talk about yesterday and how you didn't answer one question, I can talk about that if you want, but I don't want to talk about that.

I spent an hour and a half yesterday trying to get an answer out of you, and today, when we started this, I was glad the Minister of Health was here. I thought we'd get some answers, but he didn't answer any questions either. He didn't answer any questions either.

So my question is: how many people – the member for Quill Lakes asked it, the member for Pelly asked it, the former premier asked it, and I'll ask it again for the third time – and we have to repeat it as we're not getting any answers, Mr. Chairman. How many people do you feel are in trouble in Saskatchewan? What percentage of the farmers? We asked that question yesterday under a different context, but today we're talking about a bill that is going to provide counselling assistance and loan guarantees. How many people are you prepared to provide loan guarantees to? What's the ceiling in this bill? How many people can get involved in a loan guarantee? Is it a first come, first served basis? Are the people supposed to start lining up tonight already, and stay lined up over the Easter holidays, and on Easter Sunday and on Easter Monday, so that when the office is open Tuesday morning, they'll be the first twelve in? Or how many people are you going to help?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, as I've said earlier, I can't give you a hard number as to, number one, how many should be served through the provision of this safety net. In fact, it's a voluntary thing; they can come forward if they desire. So you could have lots of farmers in a financial crisis out there, but they may not wish to access this safety net. That would be their decision. It's voluntary. It's not the style of this government to say: look, you must use it. It's totally voluntary.

But if we look at the experience of some other jurisdictions – for example, Ontario . . . And because I have faith in Saskatchewan farmers, it's my belief that those who need to be caught by this safety net will, in fact, not end up defaulting on their loan guarantees. And because of that, I believe that the \$4 million will not be the constraint, because I believe that \$4 million will translate into several more millions, based on the fact that it, in fact, has been a relatively small percentage that has defaulted. And we only have to look at . . .

And if we can use those other jurisdictions as a model: for example, my understanding is, in Ontario, it's been something less than 25 per cent that default. And I think, in fact, the number was down as low as 18. So you could . . . that \$4 million could translate into several millions of dollars more. So I don't believe that that will be a constraint, if you like, for this safety net. And if that's the point you're getting at, I would suggest to you that it's not a valid point.

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MR. ENGEL: — I'd suggest it's up to me to decide whether the points I'm making are valid or not, Mr. Minister. Your arrogance is showing, and blowing, but it's not up to you to decide whether a point I'm making is valid or not, Mr. Minister.

What percentage of the \$4 million will be spent on counselling, and how much are you reserving for a guarantee fund?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, our best estimate is that something probably less than 10 per cent would be spent on the administrative portion relative to the counselling side.

MR. ENGEL: — Will the people that are being put in place as counsellors, are they going to be paid on a per diem base? Are they going to be contracted with, or what kind of an operation are you planning putting in place there?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, per diem basis.

MR. ENGEL: — Are you dividing the province into districts similar to the ag rep districts where you're putting these counsellors in place, or have you smaller districts than that? How far away from the farm are you getting?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, it will be on an ad hoc basis with no fixed boundaries at this point in time.

MR. ENGEL: — How many people do you envision being involved in this counselling process?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, there will be three per panel, and I should probably make clear that neighbours will not sit in judgement of each other. For example, we would not have a fellow that lives a mile down the road looking at the application of his neighbour just down the road from him. We try and take people from this part of the province and put them in the review process some distance removed from his neighbours.

MR. ENGEL: — Have you a projection as to how many people are going to be involved? You haven't given me any kind of a number that's relevant any way at all. Are you looking at 20 people, 30 people, 70 people? What kind of projections are you looking at now?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — We have a pool, if you like, of farm panellists that are prepared to serve if asked, that probably is in the neighbourhood of 40, 50, 60 farmers.

MR. ENGEL: — You're suggesting that it's between 40 and 60 people. How soon will you be able to make this list available to us to indicate who these people are?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — There's no list of specific panellists, because what the view would be is that they put together based on the problem case, if you like, that they're dealing with. And an example I've used . . . for example, if it was a hog operation that was . . . a farmer running a hog operation that was part of that target group and had applied, you would draw from that pool somebody who has some expertise in that area. And so each panel would be different and would be put together as required, and so there is no list of formal three-member panels at this point in time. We just have a pool of people that we're prepared to draw from and who have agreed to serve should the need arise, quite frankly.

MR. ENGEL: — What you're basically saying is there's only going to be one provincial chairman. That is at provincial office. Is that person in place?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, the hon. member, yes, one program chairman, and he is in place.

MR. ENGEL: — Could you give us his name and his qualifications?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — I'm disappointed, quite frankly, that the hon. member wasn't listening to my second reading speech when I made mention of his name, and that's Barry Andrew.

MR. ENGEL: — I asked . . . (inaudible) . . . but there was more then one part of that question. How did you come about selecting him? What are his qualifications and background and so on?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, and before I answer the question, I would like to acknowledge a comment made by the hon. member from Quill Lakes from his seat. Why I couldn't give you that direct answer on to how he was hired is because I don't do the hiring in my department. It's done by a deputy minister.

The farmer that was selected to be program chairman, Barry Andrew, has been president of Canadian Western Agribition, president of the Saskatchewan Livestock Association, very involved in the shorthorn breed over the years, a grain farmer — amply experienced and qualified, I would suggest.

MR. ENGEL: — Is his office going to be located here in Regina?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman and hon. Member, yes, he'll be working out of the Walter Scott Building.

MR. ENGEL: — Can you give us what his per diem will be? You said these people are all on a per diem.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — The best information I have on that at this point in time, and I believe it to be correct — I would not want to mislead the House—I believe it's \$225 per day for the program chairman.

MR. ENGEL: — We can accept that. I appreciate the minister giving us that information. The panellists that will help and sit on there, how much are you intending to pay them?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, my best information there, as well, is that the chairman of the three-member panel would receive \$150 as a per diem, and the panellists would receive 110.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, do I understand the system to be that you're going to have this large committee, which may have 40 or 50 or 60 people, and that the provincial farmers counselling and assistance program committee, any number, and perhaps 40, 50, 60, and that that committee will really not do anything as a committee? They're not going to make decisions, but rather, the chairman is going to be an administrator, and out of that group will come panels who will, in groups of three, make decisions, probably in geographic locations, on applications which have been sent to the committee — in the form of the act to the chairman of the committee. Is that the administration, how it's going to work?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I don't know if your terminology in terms of committees, is an appropriate one. What I would suggest to you is we have a pool of expertise, if you like, that we can draw on to form these three-member panels, and I wouldn't . . . And I'm sure you didn't want to leave the impression that that pool is going to be drawing the per diem as they sit waiting for a phone call to sit on a case, because that is not the case. It's only those panellists who would be activated to look at a particular situation that would be receiving that per diem. And there would be a chairman of the three-member panel, and they would talk to and meet with the farmer applicant. And all those panellists would be

farmers. And we'd have one overall chairman of chairmans, if you like, a program chairman.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — I think I've got it right, then. We established, by the act, the provincial farmers counselling and assistance program committee, consisting of any number, and that number is probably from 40 to 60 of active or recently retired farmers, etc. That committee will probably never meet, or, if it meets, probably once, and make no decisions.

It is essentially, as you say, a list or a panel. The chairman of the committee will be active and will be on a per diem basis, but he will be near full-time for a while anyway. And thereafter, there will be panels of three drawn from this larger committee who will actually deal with the applications.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, Hon. Leader of the Opposition, yes.

MR. ENGEL: — The application as such, if we just want to run through a model, a farmer at Fir Mountain needs some help. He wants to put some feeders in his pasture, and he goes into the ag rep's office, picks up a sheet like this, all right? He fills out the entire form . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Follow these steps, Mr. Minister, even if, in spite of some of your cronies there trying to interrupt me . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Well, maybe it'd be a lot simpler if you'd run through that process and continue it so the position as to when the guy can take it back to his credit union and get a loan. Follow it through from the farmer that is . . . And we'll use an example. Let's use a fictitious example of a farmer at Fir Mountain. I could even give you his initials. But let's use a fictitious example of a farmer at Fir Mountain that comes in, picks up an application, and just wants to buy 30 head of cattle to put into his six quarters of pasture land he's got. And where does he go from there? He's got the application; he filled it out. What does he do next? Run it through us till he gets the money.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, the farmer would fill out this application which would be available, for the member of Quill lakes' information, where he would get it from — could get it from credit unions, banks, ag reps. He would take that, fill that application, get it into the program chairman who would verify it as complete and correct, program chairman would then can select a panel and the panel chairman, who would then meet with the farmer. That's the . . . You kind of wanted the step-by-step process — and that would be it.

With the panel chairman in place, then, would proceed to meet with and/or talk to the farmer. And the farmer, as well, would have the right to veto any panellist if he . . . Even if a guy come from 500 miles away, they might have had some dealings in the past, and it would not be in their best interest to review each others' records, and that would be his option as well.

. . . (inaudible interjection) . . . They will go over his strategy for a solution, if you like. Maybe they could then draw on additional expertise — accountants, if they wanted, if there was some additional expertise they thought they needed in the advice situation.

MR. ENGEL: — We've still got this application hanging in the meeting. There's still no working capital out there. Please finish the process.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — They'd meet with the farmer. They might draw in other expertise if they want it, meet with the lending institution and/or they might meet with them both together at some stage along the way. The bottom line here is we've got farmers, their peers, taking a look at the situation, seeing if there is a strategy for a solution here, and trying to come up with a judgement as to whether that is a strategy for a solution.

MR. ENGEL: — Just one more quick run through the . . . the farmer said to J.R. or whoever it was, picks up this application form on Tuesday — how long do you think it will be from that date until he can get it staffed, get it approved, and get the credit union or the bank or whoever actually

making the cheque? How many hoops, and how long, and what's the time lag that you consider would be an average of what this might take?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, it's a hypothetical question at best. But by gosh, I do have an answer, Mr. Hon. member from the Quill Lakes. We would suggest that possibly something in the range of three to seven days.

MR. ENGEL: — I think the only other thing that I would like . . . Can the minister assure us that we . . . The only name we have so far is a former director from Agribition, Barry Anderson. Can you provide us a list . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — Andrew.

MR. ENGEL: — Yes, I'm sorry. I can't even read my own writing.

Can the minister provide us with a list of the people that he'll be calling on to act as his regional chairmens? There's a framework of about 60 people that you have on that thing. I think it's only fair to squelch any hint — any hint — of the former allegations I've been making. If you want to squelch any hint that these people are not your key organizers and workers in the various constituencies, and that this isn't going to be an oiling process for your party, can you provide us with that entire list of people that will be on call, and will be involved and acting on these panels?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — First of all, Mr. Chairman, hon. member, the only paid person that sort of can be definitely identified at this point in time is, in fact, the program chairman. And that's because of the process I just described to you, because you will make a judgment on who would seem to make sensible panellists for a given case. And after that, we have a pool of farmers out there to draw on.

But I do want to definitely squelch any suggestion that you would make, or that your hon. colleague would make, that this is a political panel, because the method of the collection of these names has been through the vast ag rep network that you know exists out there, and that I know exists out there. They have submitted to us probably several hundred names. Not all could come in. Not all wanted to sit as panellists. And there may still be some who, because of other commitments, may not be able to sit on a given day.

But I do want to assure you, and all members of this House, I want to squelch, unequivocally, any suggestion that that's a political panel, because they were drawn based on our ag rep network out there. Please send us in names of farmers that fit this bill — experienced, actively or recently retired farmers, a proven track record. And I want that to be on the record for everyone in this House to be aware of.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, I suggested how you can do that, and that is by providing us with a list of people that you're going to be drawing from. You tell us there's a number of names been submitted to your office. You've weeded this down to about 40 or 60 from 100-and-some. We want that 40 or 60, and we want a list of all the names that are going to be used to draw on from time to time. And if you need to update it, it's no problem. Just send us an update list. But I think that's the smallest, that's the least guarantee you need to give us, is to at least provide us with that list of names, from time to time, that will be on call.

We don't want to know which three people travelled to Moosomin or to Maple Creek or to Vanguard or to Gravelbourg or wherever, but I think we should have the broad privilege of saying these are the people we're going to be drawing from. And I think that, then, is fair, and leaves it above reproach, and leaves it completely justifiable that here is truly a farm panel of retired and expert people that can rule on decisions. I like the idea that a farmer can veto any name that's on the list that's going to review his case. I think that's great. And if you can provide us with that list, we'll say then you are acting in the best interests of the farmers. If you're not

going to provide us with the list, then we know there is a little bit of a hanky-panky and a little oiling going on.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, I want to squelch it, I have given you my word but, more than that, we will give you the lists of who are the panellists as they are engaged, because we don't know who they are. To be quite honest with you, I haven't seen the lists. I didn't do the hiring. I have a deputy here who does the hiring. But as they are engaged, we will give you whoever. Because right now I couldn't even tell you who's going to sit, quite frankly, but, as they do sit, you can have a list of every panel of three that goes out there. Okay?

MR. ENGEL: — That is not quite what we were talking about. We were suggesting that you've got a list that you're going to be drawing from. If you send us a list after the fact, you actually may be telling us who you interviewed, and who you didn't. We don't want to know that. We don't want to know which farmers were interviewed, and which ones weren't. I think that is not what we're talking about.

We're talking about the people that are going to be the ones that are going to be pronouncing the death sentence on a farmer, or are going to be giving him a stay of execution in granting him a little working capital to carry on. And that is a tremendous amount of power. There's a tremendous amount of power in that committee there, Mr. Minister. And I think it's only fair that the list of 40 or 60 names that Barry has now that he can work with, plus what additional ones, I think it's wise to have those, that name of list made available to the opposition in such a way that it will tell the people of Saskatchewan, "Look, we're above reproach."

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, we are above reproach, and I have no doubt, no doubt whatsoever, and I don't know why you don't trust the farmers or don't trust the ag reps out there, but I have no doubt that all these farmers are above reproach out there, and they've been selected on the basis of expertise, not anything else.

And I have told you, and I will provide to you everything but the name of the farmer. I have told you that I will supply you with all the names of the panel members as they are struck and activated. It's a dynamic process out there. There's a pool out there. I suspect there's some coming and going all the time on it, based on commitments, desire, expertise in a given area. But I will show you every name of every panellist who, in fact, actively sits as a panellist.

Now I don't think you can get much more open than that, given that we can't supply anything more concrete than that. I don't have anything more concrete than that.

MR. ENGEL: — I think the minister is avoiding the issue. When you explain the process, and when I look at this bill, when there's a number of requests coming from Assiniboia, for example, on a given week, they're going to go down, and you'll say that to save time and save money they're not going to run for every applicant.

So they have 10. And they'll have a little hearing down in Assiniboia. So one will come from Moosomin, one will come from North Battleford, and somebody else will come from Regina, and they'll come down. I don't want to know those three that are coming down there. I want to know the master list. There's a master list around, and there'll be of names that you . . . (inaudible) . . . And just send us that master list of: these are the people that are going to be out there on panels.

If, after a year down the road, we get a list saying that these people served 20 times, and this one only served once, and this one never showed up at all, that's fair pool. Bimonthly or biannual or whatever, twice a year, that's fair. But I think there should be a master list that indicates these are the people you're drawing from. If you update that master list from time to time . . . You update it, and I think that's the simplest for bookkeeping; it's the easiest for us to keep track of. I think there's no problem, then, to say that this group of farmers is above-board and above reproach,

and it includes a cross-section of the community and not a select few.

Because you have a track record, Mr. Minister. Your party has a track record and they lost, and they were in the boondocks for 50 years because of that very issue. If you talk about Tories, the first topic that comes up are those Tory people that were involved before. You have a track record to cover up, and you have to go specially far and make specially certain that that doesn't happen again. And this is the one area that we want to see you do.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — You, Mr. Chairman, hon. member, you want to know who is, in fact, going to be sitting there and controlling the destiny, if you like, of some farmers. I've told you, as those panellists are put in place, as a given person out of that pool confirms that he will sit on a given case on a given day, given that the program chairman suggests that we need your kind of expertise, I will give you that. I don't know how I can give you something before it exists, quite frankly.

And secondly, that pool is a dynamic one. We obviously got the foundation for it — the large part of the pool — based on recommendations that came in from agricultural representatives. Some, when they came in and listened to what the concept of the program was, decided not to allow their names to stand as panellists. Others may have to be brought in because of a particular type of expertise they may represent that we don't have there.

It probably is going to be somewhat dynamic. It doesn't exist. And until they're activated, I couldn't even tell you who would sit. I haven't seen the list. Quite frankly, I don't want to see it. But I know there is lots of farmers that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I will give it to you as they sit. I can do no more than that.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Minister, you've made a couple of statements here this afternoon that makes it a little difficult to believe everything you say. One, you say you've got a pool there that you're going to draw these people from, the panellists from. And then you say you don't know who is in that pool, you don't know how many people you are going to draw, or where they are going to come from. What kind of pool do you have that you are going to be drawing from? Surely if you've got a pool of people that are capable of doing this job, that have the expertise that you talk about, then you must have some names, and there must be a good number of those people on that pool. And that was all we were asking for, was the names of the people on that pool. And why don't you give us that list?

The other thing, Mr. Minister . . . or maybe I should get you to tell me . . . answer that question first: why won't you give us the list of the people on that pool?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Number one is: I don't have it. Number two is: it's dynamic and it's changing minute by minute. Thirdly, what you are interested in is who is sitting determining the destiny of farmers. And I will give you that list as they sit.

We don't operate like you, hon. member, when you were government. We don't operate on the basis of putting these fiercely independent people, like Terry Hanson, on boards; Harvey Abbells, son-in-law to you-know-who. We don't operate that way on this side of this House, and I think you are impugning the name of every farmer in Saskatchewan when you suggest that we are.

Those people have been called in, recommended by their ag reps as possible people that would sit because of their expertise and the respect that others in the community hold for them. I'm frankly very disappointed that you would even suggest that farmers don't have that kind of expertise out there. We don't believe in this political jiggy-pokery that you played for years and years and years. And the hon. member for Quill Lakes, I would like to see him stand up and say he doesn't believe that you didn't do that. Stand up and tell us.

MR. LUSNEY: — Well, Mr. Minister, you talk about what the former government did. Your record isn't much better, Mr. Speaker. In fact, your record is a lot worse. When you look at Staff Barootes, you look at George Hill, and you look at all the people you put on the different committees, that, Mr. Minister, is what we're concerned about.

You've got a pool of people. You say they're changing every minute. What sort of pool do you have that's changing every minute? Surely there must be only so many people in the province that would be willing to sit on this committee, or on the panels. And surely those people have to have the time to sit on there every day if necessary, for the next month.

So there must be a pool of people that you have some names of that, one, do have the expertise and the qualifications to sit on it; number two, will have the time to sit on that panel for the next while to process many of these claims or applications that'll be in there. And if you've got a pool of those people, why are you not giving us that list? Are you trying to hide names, or what? Why don't you just provide the names of the people that you will be drawing from that pool?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, you will see the name of every panellist that sits, absolutely every name. I've given you that in this House before this legislature. That is my commitment. That is what I will do — nothing more, nothing less.

MR. LUSNEY: — Well, Mr. Minister, I would hope that when you do that, that it will be coming in the near future, and not a year or two later.

One of the other things that you mentioned awhile ago, Mr. Minister, was that the farmer will have the right to veto any panel member. Now I've looked through this bill, and I don't see where it states in this bill that the farmer does have the right to veto a panel member that is appointed to review his application. Is there anywhere in that bill that this is possible? Is this just something else that you are saying to the farmers, that they have this right, but when they get down to it, they won't have that right?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — That will be part of the policy guide-lines for the program chairman to follow.

MR. LUSNEY: — Well, Mr. Minister, if you've got some policy guide-lines, could we see some of those policy guide-lines that they have to follow as to where the veto will be? Who is going to be providing this kind of policy? Surely you're not asking us that the program chairman is the one that's going to be making some of these decisions. If you have some guide-lines, what are they? Are they going to be in regulations, or is it just going to be a little note that you're going to hand the chairman, or what? Where are these guide-lines and what form are those guide-lines going to be there?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, you've been in this House long enough to know that for every piece of legislation, there's usually what they call "delegated legislation," or "regulations." And as well, after the regulations are set out there's usually a policy put in place after that. And surely to goodness you would know that that is the procedure, has been, and probably always will be the procedure, and I've just finished telling you what part of that policy will be.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Minister, when will we be able to get a copy of the regulations regarding this bill?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, that's a good question. And given how long you've stalled this bill, that some farmers out there might want because they might want to access this safety net, I can't give you a concrete answer. But with your assistance, it will be sooner than later.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Minister, if anybody's stalling this bill it was the minister himself, and not the opposition. You weren't in this House this morning when we started. You come in this House half-way through, and now you're saying we're stalling it. We want to get this bill passed — in as bad a form as it's set out in — but we want to know a little about what you're going to be doing to the farmers of this province. And we're not stalling the bill. We are just asking you for some very reasonable information, and asking you some reasonable questions. Do you have the regulations put together that you can send to us, and to send to your ag reps, or whoever is going to be responsible for the program?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, the regulations will be put together and approved through order in council, and made public in the normal route, as soon as possible, and in due course. And in so far as your view about me not being in the House and this bill not being able to proceed, obviously you're in error again, because my hon. colleague, the Minister of Health, in fact had the bill up and rolling when I arrived back here today, and I think that just indicates the kind of depth we've got on this side of the House, in that any one of these ministers can carry legislation related to the farm, because we have so many people here in touch with the farm.

And I think it's a real tribute, not only to my colleague here, but to this whole government side of this legislature. It's unfortunate you don't have that kind of depth.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Minister, with the kind of legislation that you brought into this House today, when you talk about being in touch with the farms, I can tell you about the only thing you're in touch with is a lot of fresh air, and not in touch with the farmers of this province nor do seem to be too many of your other members.

Asking the Minister of Health to pilot this bill through the House this morning while you were away doesn't mean that he knows everything about the bill. It's easy to do just about anything when you have a good group of support staff with you. We are asking for information without having your support staff here, and we are hoping that your support staff will provide us with some of this information.

You are saying that you're passing this bill, and the farmers are going to be filling out the applications; and you're saying, if we get this thing through fast, they'll be able to start filing out those applications. And you haven't met as cabinet, from what you just said a few minutes ago, to put together any regulations yet regarding this bill. So you're going to get the applications, then in the future your cabinet is going to put together regulations regarding this bill.

Surely, Mr. Speaker, you have, or Mr. Minister, you have some regulations put together that are going to affect this bill, where you will be able to instruct your staff out in the field, that will know just what the regulations are, what they can or can't do.

You mentioned the veto, you mentioned the veto that's going to be in regulations. And yet you say you've got no such regulations anywhere. Yet there's going to be a veto available to the applicant. Surely you've got some idea of what's going to be in those regulations.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, one other unique feature about this legislation which you probably haven't noticed, maybe because you haven't particularly looked at the bill, is that very much of the detail is, in fact, right in the legislation itself.

And I know when your party, the NDP party, was the government in this legislature, that you tried to hide everything in regulation so that you could do it in the dark of night with the cabinet — change the rules and jiggery-pokery and all that kind of stuff.

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We believe in being up front. This bill clearly states who, what, when, where, why. There will not be need for any great deal of regulation, because it's in there. It's spelled out in detail. The numbers are there. Virtually everything is there. I know that's, for Saskatchewan people and Saskatchewan farmers, a refreshing change.

But regulations, I mentioned, will come as soon as possible through the normal channels. We want to get this program up and running. Don't jeopardize all farmers in Saskatchewan who might want to use this safety net like you jeopardized the dairy farmers of Saskatchewan. We beseech you not to do that.

MR. ENGEL: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Members from across the way are heckling and pushing and calling us filibuster.

When is the cabinet meeting going to be held? Are you having a cabinet meeting today to pass the regulations that will make this thing law? Are you meeting today to finalize this bill and get the regulations in place so that the farmers can qualify under this? Are those regulations and are those orders in council . . . Are those orders ready? Have you got your preparation done that that cabinet meeting can be held the minute this House finishes this bill?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — The provision for the guarantees, Mr. Chairman and hon. member, is in the act. We get that through, the provision will be there. As soon as it receives Royal Assent would be my understanding.

MR. ENGEL: — Are you saying that the last line of this bill:

For the purpose of carrying out this Act according to its intent, the Lieutenant Governor in council may make regulations prescribing any matter or thing that is required or authorized by this Act to be prescribed in the regulations.

Are you trying to tell me that that application and that Barry can call together his committee without a cabinet meeting? Is this what you're saying?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — I'm saying, Mr. Chairman, hon. member, that the provision providing loan guarantees is right in the act itself, and let's get on with it.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, you're avoiding the question. You insisted that we pass this part in our little part here before Easter so there won't be a delay. And I'm suggesting that your cabinet isn't meeting before Easter, and that this was just a big charade to make it look as though we're stalling. And the farmers aren't going to be in any way, shape, or form, accommodated any sooner than if we'd have come back next Tuesday. And we would have had the long weekend to find out if there had been some farmer reaction to this bill.

You rushed this through. You've had since prior to budget processing. It took you a whole month to get it ready, and yet we're supposed to agree, and if we take more than 245 hours, you're saying we're filibustering. Now come clean on this one. Are you telling me that this bill will give some money to farmers without a cabinet meeting and without an order in council approving it? Is this what you're telling me?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — The provision for guarantees will be there the minute this bill receives Royal Assent. The panellists can go, be up and running, etc., etc. . . . Now whose side are you on? Are you on the side of the farmer, or you're not? Come clean.

MR. ENGEL: — You know I'm on the side of the farmer. Now you're telling me that if a farmer picks up his application this afternoon, the credit unions are open on Saturday — the credit unions are open on Saturday. Are you saying there's going to be some farmers ready to have an application by Saturday? If they're not, we could have come back and finished it on Tuesday.

And you railroaded something through that isn't going to do the farmer one iota of good, because you're not going to deal with this until next Wednesday's cabinet meeting. That's what's happening.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, I'm suggesting to you that we can start having farmers put the mechanism in place to have their interviews, their applications received, the provision for loan guarantees, by the passage of this act. That is my best understanding.

As well, you know full well (at least I would presume you would know) that you can't pass regulations before. And I'm suggesting to you as well, that to get things up and running in terms of providing loan guarantees, because the act is relatively detailed and specific (which is refreshing to the people of Saskatchewan, I might add) that by the mere passage of this we will, in fact, be well on our way to putting that safety net in place.

MR. ENGEL: — I think we have our answer from a non-answer like we've had yesterday, that you are saying that none of this is going to be in place before Wednesday's cabinet meeting.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — No, I'm not saying that, Mr. Chairman, and hon. member.

MR. ENGEL: — In other words, you're saying that some farmer, if I take his application along home tonight — this afternoon — could fill it out. On Saturday he can go to this credit union and get a loan guarantee. Is this what you're telling me?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — I'm saying that if we get this bill through the House, he'll be able to get his application in to the program chairman and have his panel selected and get on the road, that three-to-seven road I suggested in so far as meeting with the panellists and having a decision made, so that, in fact, if they do recommend that he should have a guarantee, he can, in fact, get that guarantee.

I went through that process step by step for you. The hon. member from Quill Lakes asked the time frame. I gave it to you. And your delaying it is going to make it later than sooner, quite frankly.

MR. ENGEL: — I don't know why the minister is so sensitive about asking questions. We agreed to continue and get some details on this through the bill, and I'm prepared to move into clause-by-clause. I have two amendments I'm going to offer.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 6

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Chairman, in section 6, I would like to move an amendment that would add a point (3):

That clause 6 be amended by adding the following words:

(3) Notwithstanding subsection 3, a farmer may apply to a lending institution for a guaranteed operating loan, and if the lending institution reports to the program chairman that is satisfied with the farm plan, the program chairman shall authorize the making of a guaranteed operating loan pursuant to clause 11(1)(a).

I so move, seconded by my colleague from Pelly.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: — It is the ruling of the Chair that the amendment is out of order for the following reason, as quoted from *Beauschesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, page 233:

An amendment is out of order if it imposes a charge upon the Public Treasury, if it extends the objects and purposes, or relaxes the conditions and qualifications as expressed in the Royal Recommendation.

For that reason, because this amendment could lead to the expenditure of sums of money out of the public purse in excess of what's contemplated in the bill, I rule that it's out of order.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Chairman, I think if you read the ruling, all this does is eliminate a lot of red tape. It eliminates a lot of red tape for the farmers, should the credit union . . . The same loan guarantee is in place. If the lending institution feels it's great, that motion just says that it saves money. It saves the public purse money from bringing that committee together, having a special hearing when it's not even necessary.

If it's a straightforward, above-the-board case that the lending institution sends in, they send it to the program chairman. The program chairman looks at it, and he says, okay, this is one I don't have to call my committee together on, and we can rule on it.

So it doesn't draw on the public purse. It doesn't change the intent. It save you some money and some red tape. And I think that's what the farmers want.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. The amendment has been ruled out of order. The next item of business is section 6, Application for assistance.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 10 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 11

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Chairman, on this section here, I think it's very important that the government . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Section 11. And I think it's very important that the government follows through with what they've been saying and what they're recommending, and it's similar to what other programs are in place.

I think it's very unfortunate when the Chairman doesn't give the minister a chance to respond and rules it out of order just to . . . (inaudible) . . .

And in this one here, I am sure you will consider very favourable, because section 11(3) was amended by adding clause (f) and that clause 11(3)(f), and if I could have a page . . . And that we want to add in a section to make this as fair as the Farm Purchase Plan was, and that it established a rate that the farmers can count on.

And so we amend it by striking out the words "the prescribed maximum rate" and substituting the word:

8 per cent.

I so move.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. If the members of the opposition wish to have the amendment read, we will have to have some order.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. members, what I've been hearing and what other members of the legislature have been hearing, and what farmers have been telling us is, in fact, that there are some out there who, in fact, are not able to get an additional operating loan. They're not able to get additional money, period.

So the first thing we're doing here is making a provision so that they can get that additional operating funds. That's what they've asked for. And over and above that, we have said that we are prepared, in fact, to make it available or have as a condition of the loan guarantee that it be made available at a preferred rate. So they are already, in fact, receiving a preferred rate.

I would suggest to you that compared to some programs in other jurisdictions, that rate today is not much different than what operates in some of those other jurisdictions. So I would be voting against the amendment.

Amendment negated on the following recorded division.

YEAS

Blakeney	Koskie	Lusney
Engel		

— 4

NAYS

Birkbeck	Embury	Rybchuk
Taylor	Dirks	Caswell
Rousseau	Maxwell	Hampton
Katzman	Young	Gerich
McLaren	Domotor	Tusa
Baker	Folk	Meagher
Hepworth	Muirhead	Glauser
Schoenhals	Petersen	Sauder
Duncan	Sutor	Zazelenchuk
Sandberg	Parker	Martens
Klein	Smith (Moose Jaw South)	Weiman
Dutchak	Myers	Sveinson

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Clause 11 agreed to.

Clauses 12 to 17 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 18

MR. ENGEL: — Section 18, Mr. Minister. When are you going to have this meeting, and have this regulation, this order in council meeting. When is that cabinet meeting going to be?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, Mr. Chairman, hon. member, in due course.

MR. ENGEL: — Big rush now, but in due course, after the bill is passed. Thank you.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — You're welcome, Mr. Chairman, hon. member, it would be very highly, and very highly irregular to pass regulations before a bill is put in place, I would suggest.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Section 19, coming into force . . .

MR. ENGEL: — We're still on 18, Mr. Chairman. It wasn't carried. We still hadn't voted on 18. Are you going to call a special cabinet meeting tonight to pass this?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, number one is I don't call the cabinet meetings. Number two is, as I've already indicated, the specifics in this bill, because it is very specific, allow for this thing to get up and rolling, and for the provision of guarantees that process to start taking place. It is the regulations . . . It is my understanding the regulations that we would, in fact, need, would be to do with the payment of default claims. So everything we need to get the safety net put in place will occur with the passage of this bill. That's my best understanding.

MR. ENGEL: — Just one more question. While the Premier's away skiing, who did he put in the position that could call a special cabinet meeting to pass this bill, so it's expedited immediately, like today?

Clause 18 agreed to.

Clause 19 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the bill.

THIRD READING

Bill No. 49 – An Act to provide Counselling Assistance and Loan Guarantees to Farmers

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Chairman, I move that the bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

YEAS

Birkbeck	Maxwell	Schmidt
Taylor	Young	Tusa
Rousseau	Domotor	Meagher
Katzman	Folk	Glauser
McLaren	Muirhead	Sauder
Baker	Petersen	Zazelenchuk
Hepworth	Sutor	Martens
Schoenhals	Parker	Weiman
Duncan	Smith (Moose Jaw South)	Blakeney
Sandberg	Myers	Engel
Klein	Rybchuk	Koskie
Dutchak	Caswell	Lusney
Embury	Hampton	Sveinson
Dirks	Gerich	

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NAYS – Nil

Bill read a third time.

ROYAL ASSENT TO BILLS

At 2:57 p.m. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following bill:

Bill No. 49 – An Act to provide Counselling Assistance and Loan Guarantees to Farmers

His Honour retired from the Chamber at 2:58 p.m.

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Speaker, before adjourning the House today, we've had a long session today. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all members of the House – both sides – yourself, Mr. Speaker, and your staff, a Happy New Year. I think we should strike that from the record. And have a Happy Easter. It has been a long day.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, it's been a longer day than I think any of us have been quite aware of, and I join with the House Leader in expressing the hope that we have a short respite over the Easter holiday, that we refresh ourselves, and come back invigorated to do the public weal.

The Assembly adjourned at 3:00 p.m.