

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the Assembly, five patients from the cancer lodge here in Regina in the Elphinstone constituency. They are here in Regina, I believe all of them from out of town, from various places around the province, taking treatment at the cancer clinic. And I know that we're going to be meeting later on for refreshments, and I wish them all an enjoyable stay here in the House, the first question period of this session. And I know that all members will want to join with me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, I too would like to extend, on behalf of the opposition, a welcome to the patients from the cancer clinic. It's been a part of my history in my family that cancer has affected us, and I know that it's a very serious illness. It takes a lot of courage to wrestle with all of the aspects of cancer, and we just wish you well in all of your treatments and then your diagnosis and hope you enjoy the afternoon here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce today to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, to all members of the Assembly, five educators who are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, two from the Palliser campus of SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) and three who are visiting from Thailand.

First of all, from the Palliser campus, Marlyce Searcy and Lutz Streitel, who are accompanying our guests from Thailand. The three guests from Thailand, Mr. Speaker, are educators from the Faculty of Management Science of Surat Thani Teachers' College in Thailand. And they come to Canada and to Saskatchewan sponsored and funded by CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges as part of an ongoing exchange for education between our province and Thailand.

I would ask the three guests from Thailand to stand as I introduce them, Mr. Speaker. An instructor of communications and public relations, Mr. Pongsak Sonsank.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — An instructor of management organizational behaviour and journalism, Mr. Thongchai Wankaew.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — An instructor of economics, Faculty of Management Science at Surat Thani Teachers' College,

Miss Nantawan Changkit.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I look forward to meeting with this visiting delegation after they finish their tour following question period.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too, on behalf of the official opposition, would like to express our warmest gratitude to the members from Thailand for coming and visiting us here today. I can speak from personal experience from other CIDA projects, particularly one in northern Malaysia, which the Government of Saskatchewan has participated in, that it is very worthwhile when we exchange information between countries to the betterment of all.

I'm looking forward to the opportunity that Mrs. Searcy and I have discussed earlier of perhaps even having a visit by our guests from Thailand to my farm later this week. And I hope that that has the ability to come about. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Rolfes: — At this time I would like to introduce a former MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from the province of Manitoba who served from 1973 to 1977. He was the legislative assistant to premier Ed Schreyer. I believe he is seated in the Speaker's gallery — Mr. Ken Dillen. I ask members to welcome Mr. Dillen, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Changes to GRIP

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after months of hiding, after months of breaking promises to the Saskatchewan electorate, it's nice to see that the government has finally screwed up its courage and has now entered the legislature.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, for the people of this province, I believe the government opposite feels that it can be less than honest at times with its intentions about the future of this province.

Mr. Speaker, on September 20, 1991, the now Premier was quoted as saying: we will make no promises we cannot keep. Will the Leader of the NDP (New Democratic Party) tell this legislature why he has broken . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. We do not recognize the leaders of parties. If you have a question to direct to any members on the opposite side, I will accept your question.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly I should have said the member from Riversdale, the Premier — why he has broken his promise to 60,000 farmers in this province and rural residents by virtually

destroying the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program, just to save money on the backs of people who are already in a strict financial situation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize that the member opposite forgets the process by which this flawed program was established under their government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The committee which established the GRIP program had its recommendations ignored because they said such a program could not work without adequate federal support through a third line of defence.

You, the members opposite, supported the introduction of a program that was fundamentally flawed from the outset and that costs farmers too much money with too little support.

Farmers in Saskatchewan have been . . . have had, and the province of Saskatchewan have had, federal support on both crop insurance and other programs off-loaded onto Saskatchewan to the tune that we now pay 60 per cent of our own costs in our agricultural stabilization programs. The cost of the program last year, as you will recall, in order to snooker farmers into joining it, was subsidized by the federal government to the tune of 25 per cent of farmers' premiums and 10 per cent of the province's premiums — \$78 million that they have not put forward this year.

There was a promise when the program was introduced last year, there was a promise that the federal government would have a third line of defence program. So that when there . . .

The Speaker: — Before we proceed to the next question, I want to ask members please not to yell "order." I'm keeping time of the questions that are asked. The member took 1 minute and 35 seconds. The member now has taken 1 minute and 40 seconds to answer the question, and I wish you'd give the minister time to answer the questions and I'll give you opportunities to ask the questions. Next question. Order. Next question.

Mr. Swenson: — Thousands of farmers around this province have been rallying, telling you that they are not happy with the proposition put forward by your Minister of Agriculture.

In your throne speech you say:

A community that has lost faith in (its) elected representatives will not flourish. People want my government to be open, honest and fully accountable.

And yet yesterday when they shouted down your minister, sir, you would not give them 5 minutes.

Mr. Premier, will you now do the proper thing and say to the farmers of Saskatchewan before the courts force you to do it, that you will give them an option — either 1991

GRIP or 1992. Will you do that, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Let me remind the members opposite that last year when the program was introduced it was promised, because they knew it was flawed from the outset, that it would be reviewed within the first year. It was in the federal-provincial agreement that it would be reviewed within the first year. That word was broken this winter when they concluded they would not.

We re-established your review committee from last summer because you called the election late, which didn't allow us the time to re-establish a broader committee. We re-established your review committee which gave to us the same report they would likely have given to you. They represented the farm organizations across the province. They heard the concerns farmers had expressed — and you know as well as we do the flaws of that program in terms of cost and sliding prices. You know the weaknesses of that program.

And they suggested the alternatives which have been put forward. And farmers know that this is going to be a better program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — New question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, when your Minister of Agriculture gave that response yesterday the farmers on that lawn of the legislature shouted him down.

Mr. Premier, you have broken contracts with civil servants in this province; you appear to be breaking contracts with 60,000 farmers. I wonder who is next.

Mr. Premier, if your Minister of Agriculture is so sure of himself and the changes that he has made, will you not then, sir, say to the farmers of this province, I am extending the deadline and I will give you the option. You can either take 1991 GRIP rules or 1992. Let's have the proof in the pudding from your Minister of Agriculture. Let's see if he's done his homework, Mr. Premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The member opposite is very aware of the problems that were inherent in last year's GRIP program. If you've been listening to the news in Manitoba the last couple of days, there is a potential cost of tens of millions of dollars because of a fundamental design flaw in the program. We know you can't make a good program out of this mess that you created last year. You can't make a . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and you should be ashamed for what you began.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — We're going to have to try to fix this

bloody thing on the run because it's so badly flawed. You know what's happening in Manitoba, tens of millions of dollars threat to the program, and all because of the design that you people forced through without thinking about it while taking on massive amounts of money for the province and letting the federal government off the hook. Shame.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question for the Leader of the Government, the Premier. And if the Minister of Agriculture wants to answer, that's fine.

The interesting thing, Mr. Speaker, is that they have said that they don't want to give the farmers a choice. Are you prepared to live under the observations that the representative of the Queen made here this morning? Are you prepared to live under those kinds of observations that she made in your throne speech and allow the farmers a choice between '91 and '92 GRIP?

You're indicating to us in this Assembly — and I don't think it's the truth — that Manitoba farmers had an option the same as Saskatchewan on their lentil production. You're misleading the people. You misled the people out on the lawn there yesterday. And my question to you is this: are you prepared to allow the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan to choose between '91 and '92 GRIP?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The member opposite should familiarize himself with the programs both here and in Manitoba before he begins to speak.

The fact is that when the program introduced by the government last year was introduced, a central part of the promise to farmers was a third line of defence commitment. That was the choice. That was the choice farmers needed to top up a program which does not provide adequate support.

You know about the fundamental flaws of the old program and you know that the delivery of adequate income support is what is the most serious problem of the GRIP program. And the federal government has, with your co-operation and consent, off-loaded and reneged on its responsibility. Put the heat where it belongs — on your friends in Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, this morning in a Melville court room the government displayed its incompetence for all the province to see. In the hearing dealing with the GRIP contract, the government argued that the case should be delayed until Friday. That just happens to be the day after the crop insurance deadline of April 30.

When this was challenged by the lawyer defending the farmers as unreasonable, the judge agreed and only delayed until tomorrow. When asked by the judge what the government wanted to do, either extend the GRIP deadline so the case could be heard or not delay the case, the government lawyer said he didn't know.

Now the question is this: will the minister make the government's position clear by stating whether or not they are attempting to delay any consideration by the courts until after the deadline, or will they extend the deadline so proper judicial process can be determined?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite knows full well that I am not about to comment on a matter before the courts. You might want to just check your legal advice though when you get back home.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, a community without compassion will not know true progress. Compassion deals with what you saw out on the lawn here yesterday. Talk to them about whether they want '91 or '92 GRIP. And I want to challenge you to go out into the country to talk to the farmers like I did a year ago and ask them what they want to have. Will you be prepared to change your agenda so that you have '91 and '92 GRIP, a choice for the farmers? Will you allow that to happen?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I've been out in Saskatchewan from one corner to the other for the last 10 days talking to farmers and listening to farmers and hearing their concerns.

You know what their concerns are and they're all related to the fundamental design of a program you've put in place against the advice of your own committee and you should be ashamed of it.

The cost of this program is determined by methodologies to which you agreed.

The Speaker: — Order. I will ask the members please, if you want the minister to answer, not to interrupt and let the minister speak.

And the same thing applies to the government members when they're asking questions. Let's have quiet so that people can ask their questions and we can receive the answers.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The cost of the program is determined by formulas that you agreed to last year. And you know that farmers have experienced premium increases and it's as of 50 per cent this year. The pay-outs from this program — you talk about cash flow — farmers aren't going to get the last of their money from last year's program for a year yet. And you look at the April payment — according to the formula you agreed to, they got bills instead of cheques.

You talk about fundamental design flaws. You designed a program that's left farmers hanging and you better bloody well participate in the fix of it.

The Speaker: — Order. I want to caution the minister that those are very unparliamentary expressions that he uses.

And I ask him to refrain in the future.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, I have another question for the Minister of Agriculture.

Yesterday Her Honour read this:

A community divided will not succeed. People want my government to rekindle the Saskatchewan spirit of community and co-operation.

You went around this province and you invited special guests of the Sask Wheat Pool to attend your meetings. That's what you did. That's what you did, sir, and that is not speaking to all the people of the province of Saskatchewan. That, Mr. Speaker, is only a part of what he needs to do. He needs to ask all of the people in the province of Saskatchewan: which do you want to have, '91 or '92?

Now I'm asking you again — you haven't answered the question — are you prepared to choose . . . to allow the farmers to choose for '91 and '92?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite know what it is to rule by dividing people and putting chips between people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — For nine years you create a division and you've got your appropriate rewards for doing it. Now if the member opposite knows anything about rural Saskatchewan, he knows there is not a farmer in Saskatchewan that's not a member of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. So when they're invited to meetings, people from all over can come and we talk to farmers across the province.

I want to tell you about designing the programs. The consultation process you put into your legislation and we continued because of the time frame, has resulted in the recommendations we've been given.

We know that what farmers wanted from the outset was a program that was simple, deliverable at the elevator, cost-of-production based. You designed a program that had no relationship to cost of production, no relationship to the market, no relationship to anything that every farmer knows to be sensible. And again you should be ashamed for the design and the capitulation you did to the federal government in designing your program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, another question to the Minister of Agriculture. In light of open, honest, fully accountable, fair, compassionate, community spirit and one of co-operation, will you do the proper thing and ask those farmers what they want to have — '91 or '92? And they will tell you overwhelmingly that they want '91. They want it fixed, Mr. Speaker, but you let them have a choice. And I challenge you to go out there and do that for

them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Farmers of Saskatchewan are suffering from an income shortfall that results from an international trade war where the countries with whom they're competing are having their costs paid by the federal governments, both in the United States and in the European Community. In Canada, we've experience an off-loading in the last four years of your term of \$260 million to the province of Saskatchewan per year in agricultural stabilization. Farmers want programs they can afford and that give them reasonable protection. Your federal counterparts promised third line of defence when this program was designed. They've come through with none of it. So we've got a flawed program designed by you with a broken word from your federal counterparts.

And you talk about integrity and co-operation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister. Will you tell the people of the province of Saskatchewan and this Assembly how much off-loading you're doing by allowing the federal government to reduce its spending to the province of Saskatchewan on a '92 GRIP? How much is that money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The committee that established the review for this process designed a program that delivered some improvements to a very flawed program you have already designed. You, for nine years, created a financial ruin that every citizen of Saskatchewan, every farmer, every home-maker, every child still growing up is going to be participating and paying for.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I want to suggest to the members opposite that last year there were program features that attracted between 50 and \$60 million of federal money to Manitoba and Alberta that this government did not attract — did not choose to put in. Why? Because they probably had the books in such rotten shape, they couldn't put the money forward.

Well I want to know . . . I want you to realize the financial constraints you've put on this province. The fact is that we have designed a program that's tried to fix some major flaws.

The Speaker: — Order. Next question.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, 500 farmers brought a hanging rope to the lawn and the steps of the legislature yesterday.

Mr. Premier, your minister has obviously blown it. He has no confidence in the Saskatchewan farmers' ability to do what's right, and they in turn are saying to you, Mr. Premier, that they have no confidence in your Minister of

Agriculture.

Mr. Premier, you have been given choices by the Saskatchewan farmers on the steps of this legislature yesterday. Mr. Premier, will you do the right thing and order your minister to give them a choice or give us a new minister of Agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan farmers are amongst the most hard-working, most innovative farmers in the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Since 1990 they have been living on poverty wages on what you describe as a good relation between you and the federal government as you dismantle their income supports to the point where they were living on between 4 and 5 and \$6,000 per family.

We are committed to a program that will be simple and understandable and deliverable, and we will invite you to come with us and design such a program. I'm telling you from the base you've created within the time frame that we had for a review, you cannot fix this mess that you created last year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. There is no question that the original GRIP program was flawed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Minister, it was unilaterally negotiated by the previous government. You, sir, have unilaterally changed the GRIP program and I want you to explain how two wrongs can make a right.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I'd like to remind the member opposite of the process that we engaged in, in review of 1991 GRIP for 1992. It was in the context of the federal-provincial agreement that the review was to occur this year. The Saskatchewan legislation provided for a review committee which we reinstated after the election.

The committee representing Sask Wheat Pool, SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), UGG (United Grain Growers Limited), canola growers, wheat growers, barley growers, cattle feeders, National Farmers Union, and I don't know if I missed soil conservation association, participated in the review, invited farmers to respond, dealt with all the responses they had, and brought forward recommendations which were supported by seven out of ten provinces when the federal minister would not take the recommendations forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, what indeed has happened is this. Because of

the unilateral changing of the GRIP program we are no longer just in competition in the international trade wars, sir, we are now in competition with our neighbours in Alberta and Manitoba who are working on the old GRIP program, as flawed as it is.

And I am asking you today: would you please consider to put on hold any changes to GRIP, work with our neighbours to work along side and go to the federal table and renegotiate changes on the old, flawed GRIP program for the benefit of all farmers across the nation.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member of our intentions. We intend to renegotiate good farm programs and GRIP is not a base for that kind of a renegotiation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I want to also remind the member of the mess that's created in the other provinces by some of the corrections that were done by not fixing some of the corrections that were made in Saskatchewan.

The Manitoba lentil crisis translated to Saskatchewan alone could cost our program in excess of \$200 million — one crop. We simply cannot continue with a program that has that kind of serious problem. I agree with you; it needs renegotiation. We will.

And we need to get the federal government to take financing responsibility. We need to get rational market signals and rational support for farmers. And we will work with you and anyone else who has got the courage to come with us to design a good farm program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. Mr. Minister, I am wondering if indeed you are willing to put on hold this program and to work in concert with other people. Because whether or not you are correct in the changes that you have made to this program, it is the farmers of Saskatchewan who are going to suffer when people in Alberta and Manitoba are going to be doing all of the things that were of concern to us with the old GRIP program, while our farmers here can no longer do it.

And I also wish for you to be able to tell the taxpayers of this province how you can justify changing these programs. And you're going to have to spend money on law suits as a result of changing contracts with people, in essence.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I want to, Mr. Speaker, remind the member opposite that Saskatchewan farmers are suffering because of the changes that were not made in the other provinces. Saskatchewan farmers are suffering in their lentil contracts which are now down to 8 cents a pound. The difference between the twenty-one and a half cent guarantee and the 8 cents a pound costs the program — net — \$11 million for 100,000 acres seeded. Saskatchewan, if they had multiplied their acreage of lentils by the same proportions as Manitoba, would have had two million acres. Twenty times 11 million is in

excess of \$200 million on one program alone.

Not only that, but we are now being threatened by the American Congress and by American farmers for interfering unfairly with trading practices with this program design. This program simply cannot continue. It is too seriously flawed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before we begin with the next item on our agenda, I just want to . . . This is our first question period, and I simply want to indicate to members that I will not, I will simply not, accept the interventions that I have seen today from both sides of the House when a person is asking a question or when a minister is answering a question. We simply cannot accept that, and I won't. So I'm asking members to please keep that in mind when you enter question period tomorrow.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Day of Commemoration

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, as the Minister of Labour, to report to members of this Assembly on the progress being made by the government in solving a major problem facing Saskatchewan workers: proper enforcement of The Workers' Compensation Act.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to briefly preface my remarks by reminding members of the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan that we recognize this day, April 28, as a day of mourning in remembrance of workers killed, injured, or disabled in work-place accidents.

Flags on all government buildings are at half-mast today in remembrance of these workers and their sacrifice. Mr. Speaker, that is right and proper. A special day of mourning flag, a gift to the province from the Canadian Labour Congress, will fly at half-mast atop the Legislative Building today.

It is unfortunate but true, Mr. Speaker, that each year thousands of workers are injured on the job in Saskatchewan alone. Many die. That is, indeed, cause for major concern.

The annual report of the Workers' Compensation Board which I have tabled today reports that the board settled more than 32,000 injury claims last year, nearly 13,000 of which involved time lost from work. And it reports that tragically 40 workers were killed last year in work-place accidents in this province.

This need not happen, Mr. Speaker. Most work-place accidents are preventable. Safety education and increased enforcement of safety regulations are key to improving Saskatchewan's safety record.

My government is committed to increasing safety in the work place and to ensuring that, when injuries do happen, workers and their families receive fair treatment from the Workers' Compensation Board.

To that end, I am tabling today at the conclusion of my remarks the interim report of The Workers' Compensation Act review committee.

The report outlines a number of concerns with the current administration of the Act. It states that appointments to the Workers' Compensation Board are political in nature and that the board is not accountable to the group that it is meant to serve. There are no well-defined and readily accessible rules governing board practices and procedures. There are conflicting interpretations of the section of the Act dealing with injured workers who had pre-existing injuries. And the credibility of the review process has been questioned because a significant number of previous recommendations have not been implemented.

The review committee makes a number of recommendations in its report. It recommends that workers and employers be involved in the appointment of board members and that the chairperson be neutral; the authority of the committee of review be enshrined in legislation; the current committee of review's mandate be extended until the next committee is appointed, to allow it to fulfil its obligation to assess issues and monitor the compensation system; and that section 50 of the Act, dealing with injured workers who have previous injuries, be clarified.

Mr. Speaker, the committee also made several financial recommendations urging that the compensation to dependants be adjusted to include \$5,000 to pay for death expenses such as burial. It is further recommended that the widow and widower pension at age 65 be increased from \$530 per month to \$630 per month.

I would like to assure this House that the government will review the committee's report with the view to making any appropriate changes to The Workers' Compensation Act. We will also be consulting with workers and employers across the province to develop amendments to The Occupational Health and Safety Act. Saskatchewan workers are an integral part of our province, and we must do all we can to ensure their safety as we all work together to build a better Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it is my sincere hope that next year, on our day of mourning for killed and injured workers, this Assembly will be able to say that we have taken concrete steps toward making workers' compensation a stronger, better plan for the workers of our province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to lay on the Table for this Assembly the interim report of the Workers' Compensation Board review.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues and myself, we too would first of all like to express our deepest sympathy on this day of mourning to the workers and their families who have suffered and sacrificed so much as a result of injuries incurred through their efforts in the past year to build and create and work within our

province.

This day, we take time to symbolically pay our respects for the tremendous sacrifice of the workers throughout the entire province in all sectors of all parts of our economy.

The former government had a commission on the subject, and we're happy to hear today that the reports of that commission have come forward, and we are happy that they are going to be examined. We want you to know that we have just a few minutes ago received the copies and we haven't had time to study them yet. But we want the workers of this province to know that we heartily support any move that can be made to assist in preventing any kinds of accidents or injuries to any workers of any kind at any time.

It is ironic this morning that as a new member we sometimes don't know exactly what's going on yet. And I have to admit that when I walked up to the legislature this morning, I didn't realize that this important day was about to take place and that we were to honour the people who had been injured through the province.

I walked from my car and the sun shone warmly and I had a good feeling in my heart as I approached the building and looked up at its magnificent splendour in the sunlight. And in that warmth that came over me I looked up into the sky and noted that three flags floated at half-mast. It touched me because of course I know that flags at half-mast indicate that someone has died, and so I stopped at the desk to inquire as to what had happened. Then of course I was informed as to what we were about to do today, and I was just as deeply touched. Even though no specific person of grandeur had died, we symbolically were going to respect all of the people that helped throughout our province to keep things going and who suffer so greatly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — At this time of year, as all of you know, we have the biggest work force in Saskatchewan about to endeavour and begin their endeavours in another year of work, and that is the farmers of Saskatchewan.

The biggest — and I'm not going to say that they're more important than anyone else — but a very important segment of our society now hits to the fields to start their spring seeding operations. What happens is that in farming timeliness of operation is extremely important in order to predict the results.

As you sow you shall reap, it says in the good book, and it is exactly that way in farming. If you get out and get the job done and get it done right and timely, then you will probably have a better chance at a bountiful harvest.

These people go out and they work long, long hours — hours they're not quite used to yet in the spring, and they become very fatigued. And under the stress of fatigue along with today's pressures of mental anguish that the farmers are suffering as a result of debt loads and as a result of the confusion over our GRIP program and all those kinds of things, we find our farmers in a mental state

of not concentrating perhaps on their work and thinking of other things while they handle this very big and dangerous equipment.

I have personally had the experience in my lifetime of having my clothes caught in a grain auger and being wrapped up to the point where I thought I wasn't going to get out again, and only by the grace of someone else that I was able to survive without very much injury. So many are not so fortunate.

And because so many are not so fortunate, I have to conclude by saying to all of the workers of Saskatchewan that I have two words for you as we go into this season of work for another year, and those two words are, Mr. Speaker, be careful.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave of the House to make comment, a brief comment, on the same subject.

The Speaker: — Proceed.

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't see it as necessary to add many words to those made by the minister and the member opposite on this occasion. I do want to say, however, that I see it as most appropriate that the minister this day in bringing to the attention of the members of the Assembly the day of mourning for workers killed and injured on the job, at the same time introduce the interim report on workers' compensation. The reason being that this day, April 28, is honoured Canada-wide for the day of mourning because it was on April 28, 1914 that the first workers' compensation program was introduced in the nation.

Mr. Speaker, out of respect for those workers who have been killed and seriously disabled on the job and for their families, I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that this Assembly and the members, as a statement of our commitment to work towards improved occupational health and safety, take a moment to pause in silence out of respect, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Is it agreed that we take a moment of silence?

The Assembly observed a moment of silence.

Ms. Haverstock: — I'd like to add my words if I may, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Does the member have leave to add a few words? Agreed.

(1445)

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this day we really are talking about real people, and it is a day of mourning. My heart goes out to those such as Rhonda MacFarlane and her family who lost a loved one, and the many others who have experienced the tragedy of losing a partner, a parent, a sibling, or a child in a work-place accident. And as we mourn we must acknowledge that we have a chance to bring about meaningful change that

will prevent similar accidents in the future.

We can avoid the accidents that regrettably maim many of the working people in this province. Times of remembrance are also times to chart new paths; they are times to take action. We should use the opportunity to devise ways to prevent accidents, to better protect the working people who have so greatly contributed to our province.

And much can be done to promote occupational health; much can be done to provide diagnostic services, information, and rehabilitation to those around us who suffer.

I too would like to bring to the attention of this Assembly that many others are seriously injured or killed on the farms of rural Saskatchewan. Five times the numbers of accidents and injuries occur amongst farmers than any other occupational group in Canada, Mr. Speaker. That's five times on farms those who are in labour, those who work in forestry, mining, and so forth. And I do pray that the courage will be with those families who face the spring seeding with the added burden of coping with an injury or the loss of a valued family member.

I do commend the previous government for taking measures with groups like the Safety Council and our many talented agrologists who introduced programs to promote safety in the use of farm chemicals. And I hope that similar work will continue with our current government and ourselves, with the talented persons and organizations who work to improve occupational health and safety for the workers of our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLE OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, pursuant to section 14(b) of The Provincial Auditor Act, I would like to table the *Report of the Provincial Auditor* year ended March 31, 1991.

MOTION UNDER RULE 17

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, having dealt with a number of questions in question period this afternoon and feeling it a matter of urgency, I am going to ask the Assembly for leave to pursue to rule 17 and ask leave of the Assembly to discuss the gross revenue insurance plan and its various aspects.

I have brought forward to you and to the Leader of the Opposition and the independent member, a copy of the motion, and I'm going to ask the Assembly for leave. And the question that I would raise before the Assembly on the motion is:

That this Assembly recognizes the crisis in Saskatchewan agriculture and the continued high rate of farm losses, including in recent weeks alone hundreds of notices to realize security issued by the government itself through the lands branch; and recognizing in particular the emergency situation as it relates to the gross

revenue insurance program, and fully realizing this is the last opportunity this Hon. Assembly will have to express its will in a vote, directing the government in this matter before its deadline of Thursday, demands that the government extend the deadline indefinitely, until the question of the government's illegal conduct be resolved.

Secondly, honour the contracts that it entered into in the name of all Saskatchewan people with farm families, and accept the request of farmers to establish a review commission directly elected by affected farmers to redesign the GRIP program.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Assembly for leave to discuss this very important question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I . . .

The Speaker: — I'm sorry. I'm ahead of myself one step here. I have to . . . He has asked for leave and I will have to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Couldn't hear you.

An Hon. Member: — Point of order.

The Speaker: — What's your point of order?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The point of order is, Mr. Speaker, on this very crucial debate which we want to be involved in — obviously, we have a problem if we give up a day of the throne speech debate. It will then mean a delay in the budget which we have many things in process and setting in place for May 7. It's been publicly announced.

In receiving the letter a few hours ago, I by return mail gave a letter to the Opposition House Leader in which we said we would certainly agree to this debate if they would in turn agree to shorten the throne speech debate. We have since had a conversation in which we intend to split the day: part on this most important debate; part then turning to the throne speech debate. I just want to give that indication, in giving leave, that this is based on the commitment given by the House Leader for the opposition that in that sense we then would give leave.

Mr. Neudorf: — In response to the point of order that the Government House Leader raised, I did receive the letter, Mr. Speaker, where he makes the proposal as to how we could accommodate ourselves. I received the letter at 2 o'clock as proceedings for question period got under way, and subsequent to that, did have a discussion with the House Leader opposite and the conclusion that we reached is by and large exactly as he portrayed it.

My understanding, Mr. Speaker, if we proceed with this debate is that it would be approximately a 90-minute debate, where both sides would have opportunity to express their opinions at which time the debate would be drawn to a conclusion and then we would proceed back to the ordinary orders of the day, which I presume, in this case, is a condolence motion followed by the throne speech debate where I have given my guarantee that the members opposite will be allowed to have the mover and

the seconder speaking and we will put up one speaker as well. That is my understanding of the proceedings for the rest of the afternoon.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. If the members continue, you won't have to split the day; the day will be over. The Speaker finds himself in somewhat of a quandary because we are under rule 17. We either have to move out of rule 17 and proceed to rule 42 or the Speaker has to make a ruling on rule 17. There has to be ruling. And so either I have to have someone move that we go to rule 42 and move with leave, and then we can proceed. We can't proceed under rule 17 unless the Speaker makes a ruling first . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, I can't.

Mr. Neudorf: — This is a point of clarification, Mr. Speaker. We wanted this debate to proceed through rule 17 because that was basically the legitimate process under which we could pursue this. And the only reason that this is developing this way is because of the point of order that was raised, and I can understand why the member opposite did it to guarantee his place in it. But I would still prefer, Mr. Speaker, that you make the ruling on 17 and, if you concur with us, ask for the leave of the Assembly to develop this debate as outlined and then we can proceed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Pursuant to rule 17(6), I have reviewed the hon. member's notice and find the request to be in order and of urgent public importance. Therefore, being no other ordinary opportunity in the near future for the House to express a decision on this matter, I ask the House, shall the member have leave to proceed?

Leave granted.

The Speaker: — Then, under rule 17, I ask the members to skip one step in rule 17 and ask the member from Morse to go directly to the main motion and move the motion. Before he does so, I am given to understand that at 90 minutes I will call for the vote. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — What I want to be sure, Mr. Speaker, is that the 90-minute clause allows for other speakers than one, or perhaps two, to be involved in the debate. I'm not a suspicious person by nature, but there is the potential here, Mr. Speaker, of . . . And I guess what I need from the opposition is that we would have time to get into the debate, otherwise the operation is fruitless here today.

And it's my understanding, again from our conversation, that we would be splitting the time, basically.

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, all I can say is I'm very glad that the member opposite is not a suspicious person. But having said that, 90 divided by two is 45 minutes — we'll take 45 minutes and put up two or three speakers. Whether he wants to put up two or three or 20 with two minutes each is up to them. So it will be divided fairly.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, as I begin my discussion today I want to reiterate, and based on the three points that we have in this motion, I want to point out to the

people of the Assembly in the province of Saskatchewan that we would very much appreciate, and the farmers of the province of Saskatchewan would very much appreciate, the opportunity to have an extension of the '90-91 GRIP program in order that they would be able to deal with the concepts that they had in mind, and then be able to reflect in a way that would positively give them an opportunity to deal with the program and accepting some of the changes that are necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that in opening some of the challenges in the court, some of the statements of claim, I believe, are absolutely accurate. And I want to commend the people of Saskatchewan for their wisdom in determining that these statements of claim really are in fact accurate.

And I want to point out that these claims deal with allegations that the waiver and the alteration of the program is illegal because it deals with a date in the contract that is on March 15.

And, Mr. Speaker, the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan, through their agents, were not notified of these changes in a real way, which in a legal terminology would be the vehicle of a registered letter. They were not told that there were going to be changes made, and under an insurance contract in the province of Saskatchewan, alterations or adjustments must be made through registered mail on that basis. And extending the deadline indefinitely until the government's illegal conduct can be resolved, I think, is a way to bring relief to the province of Saskatchewan.

There have been people from all over this province who contend that the program as it was in 1991, Mr. Speaker, were not quite adequate. But that didn't mean that they wanted to get rid of the program; they wanted adjustments in the program.

And what we see in the program here today, in 1992 GRIP, is that the whole aspect has been totally turned upside down. Where people had a rigid agreement that they could go to the bank with, today they don't have that.

We had meetings down in Shaunavon where people from Richmond were at. They told me about land that they had on the Alberta side and also on the Saskatchewan side, and there was a \$55 per acre difference on the guarantee.

Mr. Speaker, those are the kinds of things that we say to the government of the province of Saskatchewan, hold off with making those decisions until the court can determine whether in fact they are even legal and whether they can change it because of the way it was implemented. Mr. Speaker, that's an important part of the changes that I think needs to be made.

(1500)

In dealing with the contracts as they related to the individual farmers, the Government of Saskatchewan, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, made an agreement with the farmers of Saskatchewan. And that's a

fundamental contract that the people of Saskatchewan made with the farmers of Saskatchewan — to pay them on the basis of a program that was clearly established. And this province, under the government of the province of Saskatchewan, has determined that they are going to change that. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why we don't feel that farmers are adequately listened to in what they perceive to be in their best interests.

And I would say to the people in this Assembly that under a spirit of open honesty and fully accountable, fair and compassionate, with a spirit of community and co-operation, that we need to have this established by the government voting in favour of this resolution and thereby determining whether they really have the courage to listen to what the law will state, and then also to determine what the farmers' wishes would be in relation to this.

Mr. Speaker, I have travelled this province and listened to people phone me from all over this province. This is not a problem that relates directly to those people south of the No. 1 Highway. Mr. Speaker, I have had phone calls from Porcupine Plain in the Tisdale constituency; I've had phone calls from Lloydminster, from Prince Albert, from Perdue, all over this province, asking me one very simple thing: how can we get back to the '91 GRIP?

And that is what they're asking and that's what they want to have. And I can't understand why the government would decide to change. In the meeting in Shaunavon, Mr. Speaker — I want to point out this to the Assembly — they showed that with the additions and the amount of money that the government has placed in the '92 program there is more money of the taxpayers' money going into this program in 1992 than there would have been in 1991. And that, Mr. Speaker, is where, when I do the addition in the volume of announcements that have been made in relation to the '92 GRIP, that's clearly what it says. And that's what the volume of dollars indicates. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why the farmers in the province don't feel comfortable with 1992 GRIP.

And I want to point out a couple of things that I think are absolutely necessary. And the changes made in the 1992 GRIP are absolutely the wrong way to go.

Number one, farmers all over this province told me that they wanted individual coverage for individual crops on their own individual farm. That's without a question that that was the fundamental belief that these farmers had.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — They wanted their own farm covered for the reasons that they believe that they can produce better than the average. And they will work to prove that they can produce better than the average by allowing themselves the freedom to do that on an individual basis.

But what have we got in 1992? We got area coverage; we got area averages; we've got area this. And what does it do to the independence of individuals? Not a thing. Individuals will not have the freedom to become independent of all of the aspects of the production of their neighbour under '92 GRIP. They can't; they won't.

Because in fact, Mr. Speaker, the province has reneged on its responsibility in dealing with it fairly to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

The volume of opportunity that is available to the government to correct it I think is there. They have a real opportunity to identify with the people of Saskatchewan in allowing this. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the people that was standing out on the lawn here yesterday I believe said it fairly. He said, this isn't a matter of politics; this is a matter of doing it right. And he said his family had voted NDP all of their lives. His father had — in fact has been a strong supporter of the government's position for years and years, of that government's position. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what he said: it goes beyond politics.

As a matter of fact, the people who led the meeting down in Shaunavon, Mr. Speaker, did not vote for this political party. But they said, we want '91 GRIP. And that's as fundamental as it gets. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what we're discussing here. It's not a matter of politics; it's a matter of economics.

I want to point out some other things that are very, very interesting in this whole debate on why farmers want to have it. They want to have 1991 GRIP because they could go to the bank and they knew exactly what their bottom line was going to be — exactly. And what do they do with this one? Mr. Speaker, they don't know.

In fact the government doesn't know what it will be till after the middle of July or the middle of August. That's when this government is going to know the real cost of this program. They don't know it today. They don't know it at all. And, Mr. Speaker, that's an important part of what they're trying to tell the people, the public of the province of Saskatchewan, that they know? They don't know.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's an important part of the question that we have here before the Assembly today. It's not bankable; it's not given an opportunity to provide to the farmers a way that they can identify what their volume of benefits are going to be.

I noticed, Mr. Speaker, farmers aren't the only ones that are caught in this. I want to read a letter that was written to *The Southwest Booster* dated April 20, a little over a week ago. And it says: "Chamber seeks GRIP revisions."

This is addressed to the Hon. Bernhard Wiens, Minister of Agriculture, Room 348, Legislative Building, Regina, Saskatchewan. And it's an open letter, and it says:

Dear Sir:

Re: 1992 G.R.I.P. After a recent meeting with farmers representing Southwest Saskatchewan, we are deeply concerned with implications of the proposed 1992 G.R.I.P. program, specifically (in six areas):

- 1) Farmers were not given adequate written notice of the program . . .
- 2) The program has undergone major alterations . . .

And I noticed in the Speech from The Throne, Mr. Speaker, that the volume of interjections on the basis of GRIP said that these were minor alternations. The public don't perceive them to be minor alterations. They're an upheaval of the whole system. Secondly:

3) The program only offers maximum coverage (on crop insurance) equal to 80 per cent . . .

Mr. Speaker, GRIP '91 covered for 100 per cent. And that, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what the farmers are asking for.

Going back to where this '92 GRIP came from, I want to show to the people of Saskatchewan where it came from. It came from Ontario. Ontario's program is based on two components: one is the yield component and the other is the price component.

And if the members opposite don't believe me, they should just go and look in the GRIP advisory committee's report and they will find that the Ontario GRIP program is what they identified as the way that they wanted to go.

Mr. Speaker, in Ontario, they have had a constant increase in production over the last 20 years — it amounts to 1 per cent a year. And that, Mr. Speaker, is why Ontario doesn't need a yield protection, but in Saskatchewan they do.

When I have had calls from Porcupine Plain, they have clearly identified to me that the people of the farming community, for the first time in those areas, received a guarantee that they could count on.

And, Mr. Speaker, they said to me as a southerner, they said, up here we have frost that bothers us all the time. This is the first time that I got a guarantee that was equivalent to a real value. And that, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what this chamber of commerce report says as an open letter to the Minister of Agriculture.

4) G.R.I.P. premiums have increased drastically from the 1991 levels. Some areas of Southwest Saskatchewan are experiencing 60-70% increases due to high risk of drought in our area.

Mr. Speaker, the price went up and the coverage went down. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a part of the problem.

This is from the Chamber of Commerce in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker.

5) (The) provinces of Alberta and Manitoba elected to maintain the 1991 G.R.I.P. program as originally designed.

Now if you wanted to have the farmer be protected from production over and above their average, then, Mr. Speaker, there was an easy way to do it. Just go to Alberta and find out how their program works because the province of Saskatchewan had that program for irrigators in here. And we did have that program right identified in crop insurance. You could have easily taken that and identified what you needed to do and move from there.

That, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what the Chamber of Commerce says in Swift Current.

6) G.R.I.P. premiums are becoming the largest input cost for farmers at a time when grain prices are severely depressed.

Seventy per cent up, 30, 40 per cent down in coverage. That, Mr. Speaker, is why the farmers of Saskatchewan don't want GRIP '92.

In conclusion, (Mr. Speaker, the letter goes on) we ask that the Government of Saskatchewan review this situation and we offer the following recommendation.

And this is signed by the second vice-president of the Swift Current Chamber of Commerce.

1) The 1991 G.R.I.P. program should be restored in 1992 for those who wish to participate in the program.

He didn't come to me and ask me what he should write, but that's what he was hearing all over and that's, Mr. Speaker, exactly what they wanted to have.

2) Farmers who wished to opt out of the G.R.I.P. program should be able to do so without penalty.

That, Mr. Speaker, is also part of what I agree with.

3) A new review committee should be organized to consider further modifications to G.R.I.P. This committee should not implement any policies until thorough public consultation with the farm sector have occurred.

An open letter in *The Southwest Booster*. Now, for those people in the province who don't know what *The Southwest Booster* is, it is in the volume of people who receive it, they have over 20,000 people, homes that they deliver this paper to in the south-west part of Saskatchewan. And the Swift Current Chamber of Commerce is a vital part of that.

And I'm going to ask the question this way: why are they concerned about it? Because business men, people in real estate, people in small business, people who are bulk fuel dealers, people who are implement dealers, people all over the south-west in small town Saskatchewan and the city of Swift Current believe that farmers need a cash flow. And GRIP '91 gave them the cash flow. That's why, Mr. Speaker, the opposition today have asked this Assembly to consider the question of deferring the decision on '90-91.

Let's have a review process. If there was one thing that the Premier of this province could have done, he could have announced yesterday in the throne speech that he was reviewing his debate about whether he was going to implement this program at all. That would have been a review committee commission that would have been very well received by those people who were standing out there yesterday.

But no, he didn't do that. Instead he opted for other things, and they might be of value, but so does this. And this, Mr. Speaker, for at least 60,000 farmers in the province of Saskatchewan, is in a very important part.

We also, on the third point, want to have the people of Saskatchewan be allowed to elect people to the committee. There are 23 crop districts in the province, and that, Mr. Speaker, is exactly the amount of representation I believe there should be. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of points of view from all over the province that could be expressed by these people as a part of providing a depth of quality information. And then they can turn around and say we've thought about this; we've said is this a good thing to do, and then go out to the people and ask them. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what is obviously been missing in the changes of the '92 GRIP.

Mr. Speaker, the government of the day can hide behind the fact they didn't have time. Well we're allowing them an opportunity to give themselves time to do it right. There were some things that the farmers wanted to have. They didn't want to have a basket approach on their crops, and that's what you gave them. I cannot believe that you would go against the wishes of producers and give them a basket.

I spoke to them in Carlyle and in Maple Creek and in Kamsack and up at Lloydminster and Kindersley and Rosetown, and nobody wants the basket on the crops. They have never wanted that.

(1515)

I fundamentally believe, Mr. Speaker, that this whole decision to do this was reflective of a budgetary component that said I have this much money to spend and I won't spend a nickel more. And as many people as can get out of the program, I hope they get out and then we're done with it. That's I think what the motive of this government was. And that, Mr. Speaker, is wrong.

I want to point out from what I've heard, and the minister can disqualify it if he wishes, but I've heard also that the '92 GRIP program reduces the volume of benefit to this province of \$100 million in a premium payment by the federal government to this province. And a hundred million dollars of money from the federal government, where does the responsibility of this government place itself when they are deliberately not willing to participate?

The Alberta government's going to get it. The Manitoba government's going to get it. Their farmers decided they were receiving a good program. Why weren't there rallies in Alberta and Manitoba?

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out a very important thing about what was in the news the other day and what the minister said in his discussion in question period today. He said that the lentils in this province would have cost \$200 million all by themselves just the way they were.

Well, Mr. Speaker, 1991 GRIP did not allow for that kind of production increase. It didn't. And the cap was placed on after, Mr. Speaker, discussions with people from his

constituency.

I went down and I asked the people over in Rosetown, the lentil growers, the pulse crop growers, I went and asked them. I said, what do you want me to do? And they said, number one, don't interfere with the price. Don't interfere with the index-moving average price. Because that's jiggling it once, and you'll have to jig it every time. And they said don't do that.

The second thing they said is put a cap on the volume that new acres can flow into the system. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what we did. And if the minister would have the courage he could introduce exactly the same thing. He's using this as a red herring to spread all over. And what the people in the province of Saskatchewan have said is that they don't want to have a part of that program for 1992. They want that 1991 GRIP.

They want to have changes. They want to participate in making those changes. And if the government had the courage they would be able to identify with this rule or this motion and then we could move on with it.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is why I'm going to move this motion seconded by the member for Moosomin. And I will just read the three points:

Extend the deadline indefinitely until the question of the government's illegal conduct be resolved; honour the contracts it entered into in the name of all of the people of Saskatchewan with the farm family; and accept the request of farmers to establish a review commission directly elected by affected farmers to redesign the GRIP program from every one of the areas in the province of Saskatchewan.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is my motion to this Assembly. And I want to thank the Assembly for giving me the opportunity to speak on this, but also giving me the opportunity to have leave to do it. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to stand in this Assembly today and to speak on this motion, this very important debate we have entered into today, and in light of the problems and the dilemma that is facing many farmers across our province today.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the motion before us . . . and we will all recognize first of all that the GRIP '91, as it was introduced last year to the province of Saskatchewan, was a program that had a lot of questions, raised a lot of questions, didn't answer all the questions that were out there, the dilemma the farmers were facing, but certainly it offered farmers an opportunity to at least establish a bottom line and give them something that they could, as my colleague from Morse has indicated, take to the banks.

And it was a bankable program; a program, Mr. Speaker, that allowed farmers to obtain the operating credit and the operating finances that were needed to put the crop in in 1991.

I guess one of the major concerns I hear from many farmers today is the fact that with the new program . . . and in fact many producers who had negotiated their loans on the basis of the '91 program, only to have the '92 program brought forward, taking away that bottom line, were in the unfortunate position of being recalled by the lending institutions to renegotiate or to come up with some other terms of support to establish their line of credit.

Mr. Speaker, the reason we are asking for the extension of the deadline, and not just the motion in this Assembly today . . . and not just my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, I understand many farm groups, including Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, as of Thursday last, sent a request, I believe, to the minister and publicly announced that they would be asking the government to extend the deadline of signing up for the 1992 program.

And I believe, as the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool indicated, that the changes that many producers are facing with the dilemma that they have been seeking, and certainly the dilemma that has surrounded them, the lack of finances, the problems we're facing world-wide regarding pricing and the low income problems or the major income problems that farmers have been facing . . . and now to have another program forced on them or introduced so soon, so close to seeding, when they haven't had a real good chance to look at it.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it certainly would be responsible of and showing a responsible government for the minister and certainly the Premier and the government of the day to extend the deadline and give the producers not only the option of taking a closer look at the new program as it's been introduced, but I think also, Mr. Speaker, another question that we should look at and maybe we should address — and as we introduced and addressed this afternoon in question period — many farmers are also asking for that opportunity or the ability to choose the option that they would feel would be most beneficial and most supportive to their farming operation.

Maybe, Mr. Speaker, there are some . . . the 1992 program may have some positive options to it, and I'm not saying it doesn't. But, Mr. Speaker, it certainly has many shortfalls and many . . . it certainly lacks in a number of areas. As I indicated, the bottom line, many producers last year for once in their life knew if they had a crop shortfall, if it was severe drought hit their area or frost hit their area or if they had even hail hit their area, Mr. Speaker, or hit their farm . . . and we know, and there are many farmers in this Assembly today know that when you start looking at a broad area such as the new program addresses, then you can be sitting in a broad area where there maybe 90 per cent of the crop is in above-normal conditions and comes off in above-normal production and maybe 10 per cent of that area is in very severe drought situations or disasters, dilemmas such as hail or frost and you're the person in that 10 per cent area, is going to be really out in the cold.

What are they going to have? They're not going to have the option of that crop in the bin. And so that 1991 program, despite its shortfalls, Mr. Speaker, offered the producers a bottom line that they knew that they could bank on, that they could cash flow their farm on. And, Mr.

Speaker, I would suggest that many businesses around this province, business men and women also, as they looked at the 1991 program and I thought, well it's another hand-out to the farmers of this province, also realized that once the program was in effect, it became a cash flow.

It meant something to the person who was providing the fuel. It meant something to the small dealer who was providing the fertilizer and the chemicals. Because they knew that that producer out there who was doing his best, his level best to produce a crop, now knew that he could come and go to his dealer, whether it was in the summer-time or whether it was in the fall, and make sure that his accounts were up to date. And I'm sure many of the small-business dealers around our province were very grateful for that.

Mr. Speaker, what happens with the new program is the fact that with our deadline approaching within three days, there are still many producers out there and some producers already in the field — I know some of my colleagues have already put some crop in the ground — many of the farmers in my area are just waiting and hoping within the next few days, week to 10 days, to get working on the land. That for those who have already been out there and the fact that the new program was basically announced in the middle or late March and the fact that there wasn't consultation given or taken to maybe really inform producers around the province of the changes to the program, many producers are left trying to decide what to do with the program.

And the biggest problem they have is the fact that not knowing where to go, not having the bankability of the program, what do they do?

Mr. Speaker, certainly we could look at the new program and you'd say, well at least you've got some protection. But comparing the new program to last year isn't really fair in the fact that all of a sudden the producer looks at the new program and says well, man, my premiums have gone up and what have I got for coverage? About a third of the coverage less than I had last year, Mr. Speaker. So you can appreciate the dilemma that farmers are facing.

I believe, as Mr. Stevenson has indicated, it certainly would be appropriate for us, for this government, for this House, to extend the deadline and not only extend the deadline but give the farmers the option. I believe that would be only fair, Mr. Speaker. It would only be fair to give farmers an option of choosing either the '90-91 program or indeed choosing the 1992 program. And then indeed as was indicated by the former government and then I believe the minister mentioned it again today, and our motion brings forward, the fact that we should have a producer committee put in place to look at the present program, at the last year's program, the 1991 program starting today, Mr. Speaker. So that by early winter of 1993, Mr. Speaker, we indeed have, as the government indicated in their Speech from the Throne yesterday, a safety net program or an option that would give farmers the ability to establish their farming background that would give them the ability to go to their lender and negotiate their operating loans, that would give them a bottom line so that they would know from this day on that

if conditions are beyond their control, Mr. Speaker, they can operate, generate the income, the economy, so that their farm becomes a very viable operation.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that anyone, whether it's a farmer, whether it's a business person, whether it's a person applying for a job, whether it's a person who has received notice of a job, notification of a job, to be left with real short notice, it's a very difficult decision to make. We all find it difficult to make decisions on the spur of the moment for the simple reason that if it's a job location, Mr. Speaker, and you're a married person with a family, it's difficult to decide. You need some time to assess your situation and, say, moving a family.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the situation that farmers face here is no different. Farmers are put in a position of where they are being forced to make a decision without having had the time to really assess the impact that it is going to have on their farming operation.

Mr. Speaker, we can argue in this House about whether the 1991 program was good, and we all recognize that it had its shortfalls. But I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that with some minor changes to the 1991 program, the 1991 GRIP program could have been a very strong . . . become a very strong program, a safety net for the province not only of Saskatchewan but for agricultural producers across Canada.

And it would appear to me, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the farmers in Alberta, farmers in . . . and the Government of Alberta and farmers and the Government of Manitoba have taken the 1991 and made some minor revisions, indicates to me that they agreed that the 1991 program — though it wasn't totally adequate — with minor changes could become a very beneficial and influential program in their farm sector and certainly become beneficial to the agricultural producers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — I believe the governments of Alberta, Ontario, and Manitoba have indicated that they are willing to support their producers. And I have to question today the changes to the 1992 program and the fact that I would ask the government of the day, how serious are they in supporting agriculture in this province? How serious was the Premier last fall when we were on the election trail and telling farmers that he would basically back them and he would support them and he would go to the wall on their behalf?

Mr. Speaker, I believe when the minister announced what he called the new, improved changes to GRIP '91, I think he made the comment that it would save the treasury \$17 million in the province of Saskatchewan — \$17 million when we have 60,000 producers in this province?

(1530)

Mr. Speaker, we just take a look around our communities. We don't have to look too far to realize that as the farms grow larger and fewer and fewer families end up on the farm, that certainly the infrastructure of our small rural communities begins to suffer. Our schools, Mr. Speaker,

our hospitals, our health care facilities, our small businesses, our main streets, right across rural Saskatchewan begin to suffer when producers do not have that safety net or that ability to generate the income they need to operate their farm and to keep their farm going.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Morse also indicated, we see chambers of commerce across the province of Saskatchewan now becoming involved in getting into the act of lobbying the provincial government and asking them to reassess their position, reaffirm their commitment to support agriculture in this province by restoring the 1991 program. And in the case of the Chamber of Commerce in Swift Current, even offering to producers the opportunity to participate in the '92 program if they so wish. Mr. Speaker, that's what we're asking of the government.

Mr. Speaker, there was no question that for us to try and demand changes to the program today as we're arguing right now, would not give . . . We're arguing right now that producers do not have sufficient time to assess the 1992 program. To again change it would even cloud the program further, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore we are suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that producers be allowed that option to choose the 1991, and if they so wish, not to take the 1991. But in some cases I would suggest, in certain areas of the province, the 1992 program might be beneficial. Producers might accept that, might be more than happy with the 1992 program. But there are many areas of this province, Mr. Speaker, where the 1992 program will not address the problems that farmers have faced over the years.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we realize that there are many farmers who may wish to opt out of the program, and they'd be given that opportunity. But, Mr. Speaker, I think if given the option, we would find many producers would think seriously about opting out of the program. If they were given the option of the 1991 program or the 1992 program, they would reconsider their option of possibly opting out, as they would choose for their farm which would be the best program available to them.

We also believe that we need a review committee composed of farmers, and as my colleague has suggested, elected by farmers.

It would appear to me over the past number of years . . . and certainly the last review committee basically was made up of representation from major farm organizations in this province. And I guess we can all ask ourselves, do those men and women who are just representing farm groups, do they really speak on behalf of farm individuals.

Maybe we need just individuals who are just strictly, totally involved in the farm, who are not tied into the beliefs or tied into the opinions of a certain organization, sitting on a review panel, making the recommendations so that the average farmer out there working on his farm was then going to be represented with a strong voice and certainly possibly have a greater input and involvement in the process.

Mr. Speaker, by extending the deadline we give producers the added option of carefully assessing the new program, looking at their farming operation, and deciding whether or not they choose the program, whether or not they opt out. And as we suggested, Mr. Speaker, whether or not if the government gives them the option of choosing '91 over '92, Mr. Speaker, I believe we would certainly give the producers of this province greater security in knowing that they have the option of choosing the program that would be most beneficial, that would support and strengthen their farming operation.

After all, Mr. Speaker, why are we trying to put a safety net into place. Why did the former government working with the federal government try to institute a safety net program? Because we realize we are fighting a global war that we have very little control over. We realize, Mr. Speaker, that our ongoing expenses have increased to the point that we need the support to supplement our programs and to support the farm infrastructure so that we not only support our farming communities, Mr. Speaker, but we are offering support to our local rural communities as well.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to . . . and I want to thank the Assembly for giving me the opportunity to address some of the concerns as they have been laid out in this motion.

And again, Mr. Speaker, I reiterate, I support my colleagues and call upon the government to extend the deadline, as well as supporting the Sask Wheat Pool and many farm organizations asking the government to extend the deadline so farmers can more carefully assess the new program, and honour its contract with producers in this province and certainly seriously look at giving an open representation for farmers across this province in review of the GRIP process. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my remarks I'll be moving the following amendment to this motion:

That the motion be amended by deleting the words "including in the recent weeks alone hundreds of notices to realize security issued by the government itself through the lands branch, and" and substituting the words "due to the federal government's continuing neglect and failure to live up to its commitments and responsibilities";

and by deleting all the words after the words "its deadline of Thursday" and substituting the following:

"asks the government

(1) to call on the federal government to meet its outstanding commitment to provide farmers with the \$500 million deficiency payment for the 1990-91 crop year as soon as possible and to deliver on its commitment for the third line of defence program this year as agreed to at the

recent first ministers' conference;

(2) to extend, with the federal government's consent, the deadline to a date which is mutually agreeable for farmers, the provincial government, and the federal government; and

(3) to accept the request of farmers to establish a review commission to design a long-term farm income stability program based on the needs of farm families and the actual cost of production."

Mr. Speaker, we need to identify with the concerns of farmers in Saskatchewan today. There is a crisis in agriculture that has had its roots in a number of things, but most recently the international grain trade wars that has resulted in farm incomes dropping to historically low levels and resulted in a farm debt crisis second to none in Saskatchewan's history.

Income for Saskatchewan farmers in the last couple of years has been reduced to numbers like 4 or 6 or \$7,000 realized net farm income per family. That's money to live on, to eat, to buy clothes for the kids, and to pay back your debts. That happened under a theoretical regime of a federal government and a provincial government of Conservative construction delivering supposedly their kind of farm support.

The debt crisis in Saskatchewan is deepening. We now have a \$5.2 billion farm debt in Saskatchewan. The reason it's deepening in Saskatchewan, while in the rest of the country it's getting better, is that Saskatchewan depends so heavily on grains and oilseeds production in order for our agricultural system to function. We have 45 per cent of the productive land in Canada. We produce about . . . 20 per cent of the world's export grains come from Canada, and Saskatchewan has a major part of that. Saskatchewan is dependent on the international grain trade, and those with whom we compete, the United States of America and the European Community principally, have their farmers supported by their federal governments.

What's happened in Saskatchewan in the face of this income and debt crisis? In Saskatchewan since 1988, the members opposite sat idly by, maybe collaborated with the federal government in taking on in excess of \$200 million in farm income support from the federal responsibility.

In 1988 we put in \$75 million into drought support which we're beginning to pay back now at the cost of \$15 million per year. In 1989 the provincial government took on from the federal government half of the cost of crop insurance — a cost to the province of between 40 and \$60 million annually.

Up until 1990 we had a western grain stabilization program. Another program with serious design flaws, but it at least had the federal government paying 60 per cent of the cost of the program. What the members opposite participated in, the design was for Saskatchewan to take on, instead of that program where we contributed nothing, the GRIP and NISA programs — where for GRIP we contributed between 140 and \$150 million dollars

annually and for NISA about \$30 million annually. And that doesn't count the program deficits that are run up.

Those numbers in the last year cost the province of Saskatchewan \$260 million in farm support, which was entirely federal a short four years ago. And you talk about being worried about farmers and the ability of the provincial government to deal with the crisis in Saskatchewan. You've voluntarily accepted a cost of program support that no one in his right mind would have done.

Even the Prime Minister, at the recent first ministers' meeting, recognized the difficulty that's here.

Your leader, the former minister of Agriculture, didn't recognize it. The Prime Minister, who lives 3,000 miles away, recognized that the cost of program supports to provinces like Saskatchewan is a serious detriment to our economy and threatens our ability to function as a government.

He also recognized that the third line of defence triggers — which were part of the original recommendation of the committee before GRIP was accepted which the federal government and your provincial government, when it was in place, rejected — that the third line of defence triggering was an important part of sound stabilization programming.

Farmers in Saskatchewan took on a major program cost, the province of Saskatchewan took on a major program cost, in exchange for a commitment from the federal government to pay third line of defence money which they refused to put in a predictable fashion. Farmers are still waiting from last year for a half of a half of what the federal government said was money farmers deserved through their own national GRIP committee.

The national GRIP committee said we needed \$1.3 billion of farm income support here for the 1990 crop. They haven't started talking, the feds won't let them talk about the 1991 crop, for the 1990 crop that we were short \$1.3 billion.

The federal government last fall announced 700 million of which they have not yet paid a good part of, and that's contributing to cash income problems and cash flow for farmers.

Let's deal with the design of the old program. GRIP is a flawed program. It was flawed, so seriously flawed, that it's virtually unfixable. The GRIP program, as designed by you, first of all, was based on a sliding price. Farmers were supposed to accept a 15-year sliding average price for their support level — had nothing to do with the cost of production. On the other hand, had nothing to do with market values either.

Farmers recognized those shortfalls and described to your government when it was in place and have described to our government that those things needed fixing. And that the complex administrative structure that you'd put on the old program was a serious problem.

Designing a program where the prices are guaranteed to

fall — and when it was first designed they were guaranteed to fall for two years, and now it's guaranteed to fall for three years — where the premiums by the design of the federal government were designed to increase this year by in excess of 50 per cent, where the farmers had to look to the program to decide what crops to grow, how the members opposite could possibly ask that that kind of a program be retained is beyond me.

(1545)

The program flaws have accurately been identified by farmers through the process put in place by the previous government under previous legislation. The legislation establishing old GRIP in Saskatchewan described a review process which involved all the farm organizations in Saskatchewan with the exception of the National Farmers Union, which the previous government refused to recognize as a legitimate farm organization. We, when we took office, asked the organizations presently named in the program to confirm their membership, added the National Farmers Union representatives, and added two ministerial appointments and asked them to go and consult and come back with recommendations.

They invited farmers from across Saskatchewan to respond to them. They got in excess of 300 submissions. They met with a number of farm organizations and many individuals, and as a result of those consultations came back with recommendations for a new GRIP design.

The new GRIP design was taken before the ADD (agriculture development and diversification district) regional councils, before it was announced, and it was then introduced as a program for 1992 over a lot of game playing by the federal government. 1991-92 was to be the year of review for GRIP, because it was established in spring and they recognized when they established it that it had fatal flaws in it.

We began our review process in accordance with the procedures. The federal government, after we completed our review, decided no, let's not do this now; let's do this at a later time. So we did not have an opportunity to create the kind of program that farmers want. We simply had an ability to try to fix some of the major problems in the program.

The process then resulted in the federal government putting road-blocks in our way. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have expressed concern about the short time in this program. I want you to know that by mid-February this program was ready to be announced. And for about a month the federal government played games with the regular process for introducing change. The elements of this program that are in Saskatchewan exist elsewhere in Canada, without Saskatchewan's name on them, in this particular combination. They chose to force us to spend the time to get our consent from other provinces because they wanted to play politics with farmers' lives in Saskatchewan, as they've been doing for ever.

The *ad hoc*-ery of the federal government in co-operation with your party and previous governments has left farmers with an inability to determine where they are

going in agriculture in the long haul.

We are committed to looking at farm agricultural programs independently of the problems that are here. The problems in old GRIP are so serious that we need to have a look at alternative approaches to farm stabilization, and it is our intent to do that before very long.

You might want to remember what farmers are really saying out there about where they're at in terms of their farming operations and the issues that are really important to them. Farmers have talked about their cash flow problems and their lack of income security.

GRIP offers income security at too low a level, and the federal government needs to meet its commitment of third line of defence which was part and parcel of the original package before farmers can have income security at an adequate level. The federal government needs to take on, in a more appropriate share, farm program costs before farmers can have the kind of income security they need. And farmers need a cost-of-production formula in a farm program so that farmers can have the kind of cost of production . . . have the kind of income security they need.

But let's look at the issue of cash flow around income security. The old GRIP program pays out its designed support, after all the increases and premiums and after all the slides, over a two year period. Farmers have to make their seeding decisions now. They get their first payment in fall, if there's a pay-out. They theoretically get another payment the next spring and they get their third payment about a year from now.

Well what happened to farmers' payments this April? Farmers expected a substantial payment from the program in April. But what happened? The interim wheat price increased, so farmers didn't get the money from the program; so many farmers got bills instead of cheques when the interim support should have arrived.

Nor has the federal government yet paid out the increase in the Canadian Wheat Board prices that were named. Nor has the federal government paid out the NISA (net income stabilization account) cheques that farmers have been waiting as long as 20 or 30 weeks for.

Nor has the federal government paid out the income support promised — the inadequate income support promised last fall — the last half of the \$700 million they did promise. And they've completely ignored their own committee's recommendation on the other \$500 million where the committee said, just to get up to the last five-year's average income — which would give the average Saskatchewan farm family 10 or \$12,000 a year — just to get up to that number they ignored the call for the \$500 million that was to be put in place for that.

You talk, and we know about the issue of bankability for farm programs. The old GRIP or new GRIP have serious flaws when it comes to bankability. The banks have taken exactly the approach, the same approach to new GRIP as they took to old GRIP when it comes to bankability. They looked last year at the guarantee; they came to this spring

and they saw the money evaporate that was on their assignment from GRIP, and they said, whoa, where is this going? They looked at their priority on the GRIP assignments that they had and they said, whoa, where is this money going?

But you can go talk to any bank and every credit union in Saskatchewan — and we've had discussions with them — and they've assured us that in terms of the numbers that are guaranteed for farmers on the program, they have not taken a different approach to 1992 GRIP than they did to 1991 GRIP.

The program is as bankable as old GRIP. The bottom line is GRIP is a program that has design flaws of very tremendous proportions, and farmers do not want that kind of a program. They want a simple program that they can understand, that's deliverable at the elevator — a program that gives them some response to cost of production and a program that responds to the market signals so you don't get into the kind of difficulties that are going on in other provinces in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Farmers want affordable premiums. Since last year GRIP premiums have increased by 33 per cent because the federal government has withdrawn about \$78 million from the program. The crop insurance premiums by the methodology determined by the federal government have increased by in excess of 50 per cent to farmers across the province. That's a tragedy when they're already suffering from farm income shortages. And that's the design that you people participated in creating.

As I said, farmers wanted a simpler program — a program that they could understand and afford — and we are committed to that kind of a program.

It's ironic that you should talk about co-operation and consultation in the design of farm programs. You ought to be aware that in the original design of GRIP, the federal government did not listen and you did not listen to the farmer committee that was put in place to design it. Your government and the federal government did not listen to the national GRIP committee when they recommended that farmers needed more support. We have followed the recommendations of farmers from across Saskatchewan in bringing forward amendments that fix some of the problems in this very seriously flawed program.

The Speaker: — Order. We have about two or three different debates going on. I would appreciate it if those members went behind the bar or outside the House and continued on with that discussion. All right?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I want to simply say in conclusion that the members opposite need to work together with us, as we will call you to do, to work with farmers to bring forward a program design that has some merit and that is based on farmers' opinions and not on the kind of mess you brought forward last year to the farm program.

We want a program that doesn't put the farmers in the

position like Manitoba farmers have been put in where for example on their lentil acreages, Manitoba lentil acreages are estimated to be increasing by a factor of four or five times, creating absolute havoc in the industry. That is costing the program between 11 and \$15 million for every 100,000 acres grown in Manitoba.

That translated to Saskatchewan where we have a base acreage of four times that in Manitoba, would mean a cost to the provincial treasury out of the program in excess of \$200 million. And that's the kind of design the members opposite support, Mr. Speaker? I'm astounded.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Well I'll tell you, the members opposite have a capacity to design disasters. If you look at the provincial financial situation, it was a disaster designed by the members opposite. And if you look at the farm income programs in Saskatchewan, they were disasters designed by the members opposite, and I think they should be ashamed of their approach to that.

We are going to take a consultative approach beginning immediately to design the kind of program farmers have been talking about for a number of years, and the federal government and the members opposite have refused to listen.

Farmers want a simple program, deliverable at the elevator, affordable, properly funded by the federal government that is responsive to cost of production and that is reflective of the market-place. Farmers want to go out there and farm in a business fashion and we're going to work with them to help them do it. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — In conclusion therefore I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting the words "including in recent weeks alone, hundreds of notices to realize security issued by the government itself through the lands branch, and" and substituting the words "due to the federal government's continuing neglect and failure to live up to its commitments and responsibilities";

and by deleting all the words after the words "its deadline of Thursday" and substituting the following:

asks the government

(1) to call on the federal government to meet its outstanding commitment to provide farmers with the \$500 million deficiency payment for the 1990-91 crop year as soon as possible and to deliver on its commitment for a third line of defence program this year as agreed to at the recent first ministers' conference;

(2) to extend with the federal government's consent the deadline to a date which is mutually agreeable for farmers, the provincial government,

and the federal government; and

(3) to accept the request of farmers to establish a review commission to design a long-term farm income stability program based on the needs of farm families and the actual cost of production.

Moved by myself and seconded by Darrel Cunningham, the member from Canora, I so move.

The Speaker: — I just want to remind the member — Order! — remind the Minister of Agriculture that we refer to members by their constituency.

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to be speaking on this motion. I think there is indeed an emergency in Saskatchewan and rural Saskatchewan. Across this province farmers are going broke. Farmers cannot get credit to put in their crop this spring. Farmers are losing their farms, losing their land, losing their livelihood. This is not a problem that arose in the last six months. This is a problem that has arose over the past decade.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of sympathy for those farmers. I am a farmer and I do not like to see my neighbours going down the road and losing their land and destroying the very fabric of the community. And I think there's a very serious problem.

And, Mr. Speaker, this should not be happening. The people of Canada, Mr. Speaker, have had cheap food for the past hundred years. They've had the cheapest, the most abundant, the safest, and the best food supply probably in all the world. And they have had that on the basis of a vibrant and strong agricultural industry in all of this country. And, Mr. Speaker, if those people intend to have that supply of food and that abundant supply of food, they must be prepared to support farmers through difficult times.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is a national responsibility. It is the responsibility of the people of this country. And we need the support of our country, of our national government, to live up to their responsibility to get the farmers through this tough period.

And, Mr. Speaker, we might be able to get through on a provincial basis, but we inherited such a financial mess that we cannot do it. If we had 500 million or a billion dollars we could help the farmers survive for one more year, but we can't even borrow that much money, Mr. Speaker. Our finances are in such a state that we cannot even borrow that money if we wanted to borrow that money to do that. So we have no choice but to be as efficient as possible with the money that we have to work with. If we're going to spend \$200 million on agriculture programs, we must make them efficient and deliver the dollars in the cheapest and the best way possible.

And I think, if you look at the changes in the program, that's what this is all about. If you look at the old program, you spent \$6 million measuring bins. That's money that could have gone into farmers' pockets — \$6 million.

You look at the programs, the flaws that are in it, as Berny points out, where the shift of acreages causes a waste of taxpayers' dollars. But we have to run this program as . . . we need to deliver a program that is cost-effective and will help the farmers to the best of our ability. And we need to demand from the federal government that they live up to their responsibility to fund this province and this agriculture so that we can continue to have farmers on our land and cheap food in this country.

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the problems that we've had in selling this program and delivering this program has been political interference. Before the program was even announced we had letters from the federal Minister of Agriculture writing letters to producers with partial information and attempting to dissuade them from participating to the fullest in this program. And I think that is shameful.

I think if there are producers who do not enrol in this program to the best of their advantage and to the way that is most advantageous and gives them the best coverage because they were persuaded by political interference not to do so, I think that if those producers are losing their land this fall because of those decisions that they made based on misinformation that was spread by people with a political agenda, I think that is shameful.

And I think that the changes that we've done to this program are done to deliver it more efficiently, to make better use of taxpayers' dollars, and to protect the farmers in the very best way that we can with the limited resources that we have in this province. And I agree with my colleague who says that we need a new program. This program is not adequate.

When I campaigned during the election campaign, I kept a record of people in support of GRIP. I found 97.3 per cent of the people were opposed to the old program and they wanted changes. They wanted cost of production formula; they didn't like the sliding average; they didn't like the . . .

An Hon. Member: — They had a choice. They chose us.

The Speaker: — Order. I don't recall when the members opposite were making their speeches that there was interference when they made their speeches, and I would hope that they would give the members on the government side the same opportunity to participate.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, this program is complicated. It is not adequate. It was a level of income that would not support farmers in this province. It was a sliding average. It was designed that the IMAP would slide. We know already that under the old program that IMAP will slide. Even under the new program it will slide to 385 next year and probably to 360 the year after.

We have a program that was designed to run a deficit which would create higher premiums in the future. We had a program that would not work, would not support farmers in Saskatchewan, and we made whatever changes we thought were necessary in order to make the program a little bit better.

It certainly is not the program that we would have chosen if we had had co-operation from a federal government who was really interested in designing a program that would provide adequate income support to our farmers over a period of time.

And I think that that is the solution to our problem in Saskatchewan, is a long-term program with adequate federal support, not attempting to deliver a program in an agricultural province that's whole economy is based on agriculture to try to deliver a support program that will support that industry.

Because, Mr. Speaker, that is part of the reason that we are a country. And in Canada we have in the West contributed to other parts of Canada when grain prices were good, and I think it is incumbent on the rest of Canada to support the agricultural industry through these tough times.

And where we go from here is that we are going to appoint a new committee. I'm interested that the opposition party should . . . members opposite should criticize the structure of a committee which was the exact structure that they themselves set out with. And this was a broad based representation and we will have a committee if it's elected or in some way representing producers. And we'll have public meetings and we will design a program which is adequate and not one which is put together on the fly and is basically unfunctional.

I'm quite interested that members opposite should suggest that we make changes to the program at this time of the year. I think that is indicative of the way that they ran programs when they were in power.

I think, as a minister who took over the administration of crop insurance in October, I can tell you that making changes on the fly as they did last year is a total disaster, and as many as 16,000 non-corrected errors . . . and was a program that did not adequately serve the farmers that it was designed to serve because it was impossible to administer because it was based on a program that was designed piece by piece as it was put out and designed on the run.

The agreement for the last year's program was signed in September. The federal-provincial agreement was signed some time in September, and that is not the way to operate a program that starts operating in March.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that we do need to address the farm problem. We need to work together. I invite the members opposite to join us. We just try to design a program which is adequate for farmers across this province and one that is not complicated and does not waste money and not function properly.

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by saying that it's going to take a long time to correct the plunder and plague inflicted upon this

province by the last government. What we have here is just a small portion of what they have inflicted upon the people over the last nine and a half years. But as outlined in the throne speech, this government is going to take its responsibility in hand by offering fairness, new hope, and the ability for people in this province to maintain a decent style of life. They have not had that in the past.

The process that we went through on the GRIP program right from the beginning, Mr. Speaker, was absolutely ludicrous. I see the sanctimonious lot over there standing and saying why don't you do this; why don't you do that. This program was given . . . a program was given to them by the farmers of this province. They were saying, put in a cost-of-production formula; keep spot loss hail; give an elevator delivery program. Three key elements of a program that in the beginning, when it should have been put in, were neglected by the last government. And now they're sanctimoniously sitting over there and saying, well just do this and just do that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this doesn't work that way. Because the farmers of this province remember the beginning of this mess. And one thing that many people don't know, Mr. Speaker, is you talk about the last government saying they were going to create a program that was going to be a great program for farmers. The actuary of this program, Mr. Speaker, is over three or four years on the revenue side.

Now I want to tell you why that's an important point. Any other insurance program in this country has the actuary over 20 to 30 years. And you wonder why the premiums are so high. The premiums are so high because two Tory governments, while standing in their place saying I have this long-term program for you fellas and women farmers in Saskatchewan, put the actuary over three years.

I wonder what they were really thinking. Our accusation of the shortest long-term program in history has been proven now that we know the length of the actuary.

The process was flawed right from the very beginning, Mr. Speaker. And then the farmers demanded changes. Representation was made to committees and they demanded a change in program. Program was changed.

Mr. Speaker, then came in Mr. McKnight's politics. And this is so typical of Tories. Just when we were trying to bring forward a program to help the people of this province, what does the opposition's Tory cousin in Ottawa do? Well Mr. McKnight starts playing his jiggery-pokery politics. Because we all know what the IMAP would have been at 385, and then all of a sudden after the fact he comes out and says well no, we're going to bring it out the . . . (inaudible) . . . But I mean, purposely trying to play his political games, not thinking about the farmers of the province, but thinking about how to mess up the NDP government in Saskatchewan.

And that's the way these guys operated in Saskatchewan when they were government, and that's why they're no longer government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, the program was set up on three lines of defence. First line being farmers production; second line — and everyone who read the paper, the green paper, read this — the second line was the GRIP and NISA programs, Mr. Speaker; and the third line was monies from the federal government in times when there was a large drought or low prices or whatever, when times of dramatic shortfall. That was what this program was built on — three lines of defence.

The GRIP program was never designed to be the be-all to end-all as far as income was concerned, because the third line was agreed to by the federal government, by the farmers, by everybody. But they did not deliver on it. They play their typical Tory politics.

In fact the recent first ministers' conference, where they also said they were going to talk about third line of defence, they're still talking third line of defence. But that's all it is, is talk.

The federal government is taking the same approach as this government did in their last desperate days. They're thinking more about politics and survival of themselves than any farmer or living, breathing person in this country, including the farmers of Saskatchewan, and that's the problem.

Our government was thrown a rotten tomato by the Tories, and we were forced to catch it. And we know that, but I'll tell we're not going to duck the responsibility. We will be starting, as we did right after the election, to rebuild this province, and part of the GRIP program is its rebuilding.

If you talked to anybody out in Saskatchewan, they will say we have to come to a completely new design. But they say for our sake please put in a cost of production. Please put in a spot loss hail provision. Please put in a delivery system that is not based on payments that are political or that is based on a payment that can be delayed by the federal government, but a payment based on an elevator delivery system and feed-lot system where the farmers can simply haul their product and get a decent price for it. That's all they're asking, and that is the direction we're heading.

As I said before, Mr. Speaker, it will take time to clean up nine years of Tory greed and plundering. But I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, it will be done because we have a commitment on this side of the House to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1615)

Mr. Upshall: — The current conditions of farm income and debt, Mr. Speaker, are devastating, and we know that. We have plans to bring forward legislation as far as debt is concerned. We have planned now to have a committee to start right now as soon as possible to get the GRIP program on track.

The Speaker: — As agreed to earlier his time has been consumed.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the MLA for the largest urban constituency in Saskatchewan, I do want to remind everyone that Saskatchewan people — be they city people or those in the country — understand the importance of finding a solution to the agricultural economic problems facing the province.

Citizens want responsible leadership, and they want a commitment from all politicians regardless of political stripe to solve our problems. There is no political party in Saskatchewan whose commitment to agriculture should ever be questioned. That would be cheap politics and non-productive criticism.

I have no question in my mind that the changes that are being proposed to the GRIP program by the current government are being done in good faith. What is open to question are the tactics and perhaps what we would call the approaches by politicians in their efforts to deal with the crisis in agriculture. To date, all attempts in our province have met with failure in trying to address our agricultural problems. And the most recent failure was the original GRIP program. I think people do realize that this program was fundamentally flawed from the outset, and part of the reason for its weaknesses was the haste in which it was put together and the fact that farmers' concerns were indeed ignored.

Now Saskatchewan is about to enter into another program which I believe has many flaws for precisely the same reasons. I wish to offer constructive advice in the hopes that we won't make the same mistake twice.

Every farmer knows that if you want something to work properly when you need it to, you'd better build it right from the beginning and take the time to build it right. In my opinion the way in which the original GRIP was initially introduced did put politics ahead of agriculture. And rather than take as much time as was necessary to discuss the program and its inherent problems with the farming community before implementing it, the politicians of the day did rush off to Ottawa to sign the deal because an election was on the horizon.

The result was a GRIP in Saskatchewan that did cost our taxpayers more than it did the people of Alberta, more than it cost the people of Manitoba or Ontario or Quebec — a program which created a problem for taxpayers when some farmers could make more money farming the program than doing what was sensible for Saskatchewan farm land or for the markets.

If only farmers on the advisory board, Mr. Speaker, had really been listened to before the original deal was signed, we could have played a leadership role in creating a national agriculture plan without all the pitfalls that surfaced in the original GRIP. Why create a panel of experts, experienced farmers, agriculturalists from whom to obtain input if they're simply going to be ignored? Why create this panel? Why have people come forward and then not listen to what they have to say?

Well here we are and it's seeding time again. And our hastily built revenue insurance program has broken down again just when we need it. We are all interested in correcting the faults with GRIP, but this time there's no

excuse for not doing it right. And I ask, why the haste again? Why not stay with the original flawed program, work with Alberta and work with Manitoba who are indeed doing things that are going to cost the farmers of this province a great, great deal?

We should be the people, we who farm 40 per cent of Canada's arable land, to take the leadership role, joining together with two other provinces who too have a base that's contingent upon making good decisions in agriculture, and take our joint recommendations to the federal table.

Why not take the time to put new options to farmers this fall? Let them think about it for a change. Hold hearings in November. Come out with final forms so that people have enough time to know what it is they're really having to do. And this time let's allow people to really be heard when they raise concerns about new proposals. Unless government learns to listen to people, there is never going to be an acceptable program.

It is unfortunate that the same mistake is going to be made twice. The new government has unilaterally opted out of GRIP as fast as the previous government opted in. And just when we're in the position to negotiate major changes, the Saskatchewan government once again puts our farmers and our taxpayers out of step with the other producing provinces. In spite of protests from many farmers, Ottawa's been told that this revised program has the full support of the Saskatchewan farming community. And that is just not true.

Is all this rush really worth it? For all the changes that this latest Saskatchewan government experiment on farmers are going to produce, we should have gone to the table with our neighbours to the East and to the West. The changes being proposed to GRIP by the government will really only save pennies per acre, but will now create a new competitor for farmers and new competitors for our taxpayers in Saskatchewan, namely the treasuries of Alberta and Manitoba.

Our federal income tax dollars are going to be supporting the growing of lentils in Alberta and Manitoba, contrary to market signals, and at the very same time we're going to be trying to subsidize low market returns on what we grow in Saskatchewan. For very little benefit the Saskatchewan government will have added to the confusion with new forms, different rules, predictably, other people going out and trying to explain all of these things to beleaguered people who are truly at the end of the line.

And although this experiment does offer an option of crop insurance over revenue insurance and eliminates the problems of moral hazard, it does not address farmers who cannot maximize yields due to such problems as drought or grasshoppers. And many of those farmers were out here yesterday.

Once again, we have people, our people, in a panic. Therefore, I do urge this government, in particular the Minister of Agriculture, to leave the original program in place while intensifying efforts to renegotiate a deal which will serve all three prairie provinces more

effectively.

Please, and I implore you, to get back in step with Alberta and Manitoba rather than making them our agricultural enemies.

Mr. Speaker, we need a national agriculture plan in Canada, a solidarity in our programs, a united front on global markets. We need a program which addresses input costs, farm debt, and world market pressures. Saskatchewan cannot afford an every-province-for-itself approach. And if we do not emerge from discussions with Ottawa with an airtight, GATT-able (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) program, then while others fight to remain distinct as societies in Canada, rural Saskatchewan will struggle to avoid becoming an extinct society.

I implore the members in this House to do what is best for the people of our province, to do what is best for the farmers who want to do nothing more than to have a chance to farm, and to do what is necessary to save our agriculture industry. In my view, what is the very best to do is to have the courage to extend the deadline, to honour the original GRIP until joint changes are established with the provinces of Alberta and Manitoba to take forward to the federal government table.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On a point of order, because I'm not quite sure . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not quite sure how the logistics of this proposal is going to work, but I was impressed earlier this afternoon by the spirit of co-operation that was exhibited here by discussing and debating this very important issue, and now I can see us heading to a point where we're going to come at loggerheads.

In the spirit of compromise, I'm going to make a suggestion, and I'd like to have the reaction from the government, and that is that essentially the amendments that are being proposed by the government is something that we feel in tune with and we would not primarily have too many objections to those amendments.

However, we do feel that the information and the points that we were suggesting are also of paramount importance. So rather than having the whole thing being negated here, we would suggest that we keep our original motion, the government can put their amendments to it, and then we would vote in favour of both the amendment and the original motion. Because I think, Mr. Speaker, it's very important for us to come out of here with one, single, united voice so that we can show the farmers on the steps of the legislature that we are speaking with one, single, strong voice in this legislature. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Order. I'll ask the members to give me just a minute to consult here.

Order. First of all I would like to inform the member from

Rosthern, that was not a point of order. The words may be well applicable to the discussion, but that's certainly not a point of order.

I want to . . . What we did this afternoon was certainly not according to the rules and this is what happens when we play, you know, on a momentary basis we make decisions. I could see this coming when we decided that we were going to go in this direction, but members must decide that. But I would ask the two House Leaders to please find a different forum than the Chamber to do your negotiations and your consulting. And those things really should not be done on the floor of the Chamber.

I think I have no choice but to put the motion and the amendment as they are, and that is what I intend to do — I really have no other choice.

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate it if you could verify one point for me and that is, that the rules are there as guidance. But my understanding is that when House Leaders agree on something, this House can do whatever the House Leaders agree on; so that even if it means the bending or the omission of rules at that particular point, if it's a unanimous decision of this House. So I don't see really where there would be a problem in doing as I have suggested.

The Speaker: — I would like to inform the members that I am only carrying on the wishes of the House. It was stated 90 minutes ago that when the time was up that I shall put the question. I am putting the question and until there is another motion before the Assembly, I cannot act otherwise. The only motion that is before us is the motion and the amended motion and that is what we will take the vote on now. I will put the motion and the amended motion to the Assembly and that is all we have before us. Will the members take the question and the amendment as read?

The division bells rang from 4:30 p.m. until 4:32 p.m.

Amendment agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 40

Van Mulligen	Hamilton
Thompson	Johnson
Lingenfelter	Trew
Koskie	Draper
Goulet	Serby
Solomon	Whitmore
Atkinson	Sonntag
Kowalsky	Flavel
Carson	Roy
MacKinnon	Wormsbecker
Penner	Crofford
Cunningham	Stanger
Upshall	Knezacek
Hagel	Harper
Bradley	Kluz
Lorje	Carlson
Lyons	Renaud
Pringle	Langford
Calvert	Jess
Murray	Haverstock

Nays — 9

Muirhead	Britton
Neudorf	Toth
Swenson	Goohsen
Boyd	D'Autremont
Martens	

The division bells rang from 4:36 p.m. until 4:40 p.m.

Motion as amended agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 48

Romanow	Pringle
Van Mulligen	Calvert
Thompson	Murray
Wiens	Hamilton
Simard	Johnson
Tchorzewski	Trew
Lingenfelter	Draper
Teichrob	Serby
Koskie	Whitmore
Goulet	Sonntag
Solomon	Flavel
Atkinson	Roy
Kowalsky	Scott
Carson	Wormsbecker
Mitchell	Crofford
MacKinnon	Stanger
Penner	Knezacek
Cunningham	Harper
Upshall	Kluz
Hagel	Carlson
Bradley	Renaud
Koenker	Langford
Lorje	Jess
Lyons	Haverstock

Nays — 9

Muirhead	Britton
Neudorf	Toth
Swenson	Goohsen
Boyd	D'Autremont
Martens	

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I am honoured and humbled to be allowed to move the motion in support of the Speech from the Throne. Although I'm a junior face in this Assembly, I am deeply aware of the tradition behind this moment — intimidated and inspired at the same time by those who have stood in my place and given voice to sentiments of hope, challenge, and opportunity as I propose to do today.

This is a new experience for me, but I am part of a

continuum going back to the Walter Scott government, and before that the role of parliamentary history through the ages. We who represent the people perhaps sometimes forget that our duty is not only to the political, economic, and social whims of the present; we also owe an allegiance to those that served before us — those who are our models of selfless, energetic devotion to the common good.

This Chamber is alive with example. We endanger our future if we dishonour their past. So I am honoured — I am honoured, Mr. Speaker — that I can present my address to you.

I know that I will be heard because you demonstrated during the last session that you not only revere this institution, you ensure that we will adhere to its rules. And that's not an easy task, but one you perform with delicate severity.

I am honoured as well, Mr. Speaker, because in selecting me, the Premier is also paying homage to the fine people of the Meadow Lake constituency who I am proud to represent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1645)

Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, the Americans call the state of Virginia the mother of presidents. Meadow Lake constituency — more modest but twice as beautiful — is, I suggest, the mother of MLAs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — As I mentioned last December, my constituency has five sitting members of this legislature who were born or raised in it. As well, the current and former ministers of Health are from Meadow Lake. Others might call that a coincidence, Mr. Speaker. To me, it very simply illustrates the principle of natural selection.

Mainly, Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to lead this debate because I am proud to be a part of this government — privileged to be associated with this Premier and this cabinet of hard-working women and men, and thrilled at the prospect held out in this throne speech.

This speech says to the people of Saskatchewan that our 10-year epidemic of financial insanity is finally over.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — It tells us that irresponsibility is no longer our guiding light. It tells us that the first steps have been taken toward restoring Saskatchewan to its rightful and historic place as an innovator among governments in Canada. It tells us, as Prime Minister William Gladstone said more than a hundred years ago, the resources of civilization are not yet exhausted.

Mr. Speaker, December's session was a transitional one. That throne speech and the short session which followed took this province out of reverse and put it into first gear. We put an end to the loathsome PST (provincial sales tax)

and immediately introduced a note of optimism into the provincial economy that has been silent for years.

We reintroduced the word economize into the provincial vocabulary through a series of measures, both large and small. We combined the SaskPower and SaskEnergy bills in the same envelope, saving \$725,000 a year. We began our government with the smallest and most effective cabinet in years with . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — With equally small staff, Mr. Speaker, saving approximately \$100,000 a month. We took away the extravagant life-styles of Graham Taylor and Bob Andrew at a saving of nearly \$2 million a year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — We didn't find enough in December to cover the Tory debt of nearly \$14 billion, but we made a start.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, as we said we would do, we opened the books. We established the Financial Management Review Commission and solemnly swore that that kind of incomprehensible and incompetent secrecy that was the Tory government watchword would never happen again.

Notice, Mr. Speaker, that I pass quickly over the nearly \$14 billion figure. I am sure my colleagues will have something more to say about it as will I. But frankly my mind stutters at the brutal enormity of this figure. I simply do not understand how rational men and women fulfilling their sworn duty to the public good could allow this to happen.

One of the previous deputy premiers, Eric Berntson, a current senator of excess, is on record as saying that they intended to fix this province so it could never be returned to the way it was under the Douglas, Lloyd, and Blakeney governments. That is, I suggest, close to the only aim that they've achieved — maybe.

This throne speech continues the process begun in our first session. The blueprint it provides, along with the budget speech to follow shortly, will put us in high gear once again. Folks, we're on the way.

There are a number of things I like about this speech, but what I like most is its attitude — its open, up-front, bald assertion of this government's basic commitment. The speech says this is what we're going to do. It then says, if we fail to do it, the judgement be on our heads.

The throne speech says that this government will put the provincial finances in order. It will restore open, honest, and accountable government. It will be fair and it will be compassionate. It will reintroduce a spirit of community and of co-operation, and it will lead the province into economic recovery. The people will judge us on how successfully we achieve these goals, and that's fair game.

I want to say something about these goals, about our plans. Keeping track of the public purse may not be an

original plan, but operating the government with the doors open and the books legible is one thing Tommy Douglas and this government believe in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — Nothing new here, Mr. Speaker, just plain common-sense objectives that are supposedly those of any government with some direction and integrity.

And there you have it, Mr. Speaker. What's new here is the word restore. The Premier and his government will restore sanity, integrity, and a compassion to the operation of this government; and in the process, restore the faith of the Saskatchewan people in what has heretofore been their instrument and their servant, the Government of Saskatchewan.

What a sad comment. What a damning indictment of the previous government. The first task, the monumental task of this new administration, is to restore in the minds of the people what should be taken for granted.

Government after government from 1905 on has acted with honesty and with integrity. The people might not always have agreed with what was done; that's why some governments are turned out and new ones are brought in. But by and large, the people knew their governments were attempting to act in the people's best interest.

I don't want to sound self-serving, Mr. Speaker, but politics was once considered a noble profession; I would like to believe that it still is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — But it's fair to say, I think, that that image has indeed been tarnished. With every dollar they went in the hole, with every horror story, with every deal gone sour, all this took a bit more of the glow off the image of government and those who served it.

We have inherited a sorry mess, Mr. Speaker, and it is to the eternal shame of the previous government that it made the mess we all have to clean up today. Its only real accomplishment, I suppose, is that it made the only previous Saskatchewan Tory government, the Anderson government, look good by comparison.

And the Leader of the Opposition dares say, where's your plan? I tell you where our plan is; our plan is to start rebuilding and restoring. Our mandate for change is a sense to return to go, but before we collect our \$200. We have to retrace our steps to find where we've lost the way and then continue on the road we began so long ago.

Mr. Speaker, in 1931 Mr. George H. Williams, once a member of this Assembly for the constituency of Wadena and one of the pioneers of the farm movements in this province said of our party, we must decide whether we really are going to accept as our road, the road to a social commonwealth or continue to support a system of individualism and worship at the shrine of personal gain.

Self or society, individual wealth or commonwealth —

which road? My friends, you have a right to a living from the fruits of your labour. You have a right to give your children the kind of future you planned for them when you brought them into this world.

In the 60-odd years since that statement was made, we in Saskatchewan have taken the correct road, for the most part. This throne speech indicates that we have once again found our way.

Mr. Speaker, in a few short days the Minister of Finance will present his budget. He will I suppose take his cue from Lord Rutherford who said, we haven't got the money so we've got to think. His will be a thinking-person's budget. He will announce how our finances are to be put back in order.

There are many aspects of this mandate for change to talk about. I would like to take a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, to explore the idea of community and of co-operation first, as a Canadian and Saskatchewan bench-mark, then more practically, on how we plan to integrate it into our economic recovery.

The long-standing argument between our party and theirs, Mr. Speaker, covers many topics, but the fundamental difference, I believe, can be summed up and summed up fairly in two words — community and individualism.

The cut and thrust of political repartee to struggle for the hearts and the minds of the voters ultimately comes back to this distinction John Kenneth Galbraith so aptly puts it when he says, the modern Conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy, that is the search of a superior moral justification for selfishness.

New Democrats restore the rights of the individual and believe fervently in allowing the expression of that individuality. However, we recognize at the same time that untrammelled individualism is simply a code word for trampling the weak and the underprivileged. The community's job and that of its servants, the government, is to do as much as possible to remove the large disparities and the gross discriminations which can and do exist in society.

It is our job, we believe, to do the best we can to achieve the best possible balance between the rights of the individual and the needs of the caring, sharing society. Because of this basic commitment, New Democratic governments have introduced in the past, broad universal programs which have made it easier for the individual to cope with society and allow some sense of security. Hence the list of programs of which Saskatchewan people are so justifiably proud — medicare, hospitalization, government insurance, and many, many more. An economic plan that makes sense and works in combination with the private and public sectors to finance the creation of these programs for people.

What does the opposition believe, and how do they translate their beliefs into programs? That's hard to say. They use abstract words like freedom and individualism, free enterprise and government interference. Translated, that means the strong have no concern for the weak; the

advantaged have no need to look after the disadvantaged; the rich have no need to pay any attention to the poor.

Their philosophy and plans could be summed up by Kenneth Tynan who says: a critic is a man who knows the way but can't drive the car. I wonder at times though, Mr. Speaker, about knowing the way.

Ours on the other hand is a simple set of beliefs based on biblical principles dedicated to the fair distribution of benefits to all, the rights of the individual balanced by his and her responsibility to the community. Simple, but it seems to work. We know it works because the Tories spent so much energy trying to destroy what the people had built.

Mr. Speaker, what I have described I believe is our basic system of beliefs, our ideology, a word I'm not ashamed to use. But I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that ours is a system more in tune with the realities of the Saskatchewan history and the Saskatchewan character, more in line with the development of our people and their institutions than the call to tough, rugged individualism. I could be wrong but I don't think so. The fact that three times in the history of our province our party was called on to rescue the province after experiments with the other system is one proof. An honest look at our past is another.

Mr. Speaker, the history of Canada and the history of Saskatchewan is a noble one, one our children do not study nearly enough. If we step back and observe what our ancestors did to establish a foothold for themselves and then for us, we will realize their accomplishments were truly remarkable. There is no need to go into detail here, but we know that these pioneers, small in number but huge in heart, forged the basis of our modern society. They survived as individuals, but they prospered together.

A few miles north of my home in Goodsoil is the bush country stretching from sea to sea to the tundra. An individual does not stand much of a chance against that enormity, but a community does, and did. Further south with fewer trees and more grasshoppers, the situation was the same. Individual homesteaders did not fare well by themselves against eastern interests, but when he and she banded together into the pools, the co-ops, the churches, and the credit unions, then voices were heard. It happened out of necessity. It became a way of life.

As a teacher yourself, Mr. Speaker, you will know that we do not have the numbers of heroes our neighbours to the south have — the George Washingtons, the Buffalo Bills, the Davy Crocketts, and on and on. Not nearly as many.

But what we do have is our kind of heroes, Canadian and Saskatchewan heroes, people who acted together rather than individually — the Mountie, the soldier, the homesteader, the many great Indian chiefs. We remember them for what they accomplished collectively not for what they did as individuals.

This country is big. It's imposing. It's cold. And it takes a combined effort to scratch an existence out of it. We learned that early, and we turned that knowledge into the institutions that are the backbone of this province. And,

Mr. Speaker, we turned that knowledge into the CCF/NDP political movement.

(1700)

So I won't be the first to admit, Mr. Speaker, that when the throne speech talks of reinstilling a spirit of community and of co-operation, it is being narrowly partisan, trumpeting our party line that in the immortal words of J.S. Woodsworth: what we desire for ourselves, we wish for all.

There are a number of items in the throne speech which indicate its partisanship. It announces, for instance, the establishment of the Premier's Economic Action Committee to advise and assist in economic rejuvenation. Perhaps we should do it the Tory way — establish an economic diversification corporation and tell absolutely no one, not even the legislature, that it exists.

The throne speech announced that The Community Bonds Act will be amended. Like few other Tory plans, here is an idea that has some merit until you put Tory ministers in charge of the plan. Ask the people of Melville who invested in Trinitel. We are going to invite some third party involvement to get an unbiased review of investments before another community is duped.

This government believes that community and co-operation are not just words. They represent valid and valuable solutions to the very serious economic situation that we face today.

Representing a constituency on the border between the sparsely populated North and the southern part of the province, I am particularly excited about the announcement . . . and it is about an announcement; and in the co-operation between the private and public sectors.

Mr. Speaker, the Tories had a plan to meet Saskatchewan's future power needs. They called it the Rafferty-Alameda project. I believe other members will have something to say about this monument to greed and incompetence. Suffice it to say here that it is a mammoth project. It is way over budget and the economical and environmental cost of the power it will produce remains to be seen. This, the pet project of the former premier and former deputy premier.

Rather than another super project, Saskatchewan Power plans to encourage the development of several small co-generation projects. I am a credit union manager, not an engineer, Mr. Speaker, but I understand that co-generation is the power surge of the future — smaller, cleaner, more efficient, and best of all, more employment.

And, Mr. Speaker, these co-generation developments will not cost us \$25 million down, with some possibility of energy production in several years, as would another project favoured by the member from Saskatoon Greystone.

No, Mr. Speaker, we're not buying a genie in a bottle or a

\$200 million bowl to hold a drop of water. We're investing in a viable job-producing co-operative energy project.

If we are to dig ourselves out of this \$14 billion hole Mr. Open-for-business dug for us, it's going to take every scrap of ingenuity available in this province, whether it be found in the private, public, or co-operative sector. It's going to take the return on every pop can we can find, because the bankers of New York seem not surprisingly reluctant to want to loan us much more money until we can prove we don't need it any more.

It's going to take co-operation. Like every other person in Saskatchewan, I look forward to the details of these co-operative efforts and others by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk very briefly about another area where co-operation is beginning to occur, where it has been shamefully absent for too long. I'm talking about our first nations. The throne speech reminds us we still have a long way to go before we redress some old wounds, and frankly we have been saying for too long we have a long way to go.

The throne speech says we will make rapid progress on aboriginal self-determination and reliance, and I believe that. I believe that because in my constituency I can see progress being made.

Let me say a few words about the Meadow Lake first nations. Located on the lands of the Flying Dust Indian nation, are the head offices of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, a vibrant and progressive organization composed of Cree and Dene chiefs. Together they are charting their people's collective destiny by linking Indian tradition and culture harmoniously with the latest technology and skills available to them. Their successes are many.

By using a co-operative approach always based on mutual respect in their dealing with the Crown and the private sector, they have designed and developed the following: the national Indian forestry institute, a school of excellence in Indian child care, an Indian health care system based on other wellness models and holistic medicine; employment, education, and training opportunities that assure a bright future for their children and stimulate the overall Saskatchewan economy. They are involved in many other ventures.

We as a government have every intention of working closely with these first nations in partnership, learning from each other as we rebuild Saskatchewan together.

Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing that we could learn from Indian people, it is how to live in this world harmoniously — how to care for mother earth instead of fouling the nest we live in. We need to realize once and for all that Earth's resources are finite — that its life-giving bounty, its air, its water, land, and life are not eternally replaceable.

In the words of the song: we are the children of the universe, no more than the trees and the stars; we have a right to be here. But we are not its masters. Indian people

have known this for generations. It is occurring to us, I hope, before the crisis point. Meeting the environmental crisis we have all placed ourselves in will take the same kind of co-operative effort I have been talking about.

And I am pleased to see three vital pieces of environmental legislation in this throne speech — the charter of rights and responsibilities, the Environmental Assessment Commission, and the environmental management and protection Act. These two accompany the environmental round table already in place.

Mr. Speaker, the environmental charter of rights will establish principles of environmental stewardship. It will set a framework of province-wide standards for the environmental protection. It will give the public access to information affecting their local or provincial environment. It will guarantee the public's right to participate in economic decisions affecting their environment. And most significantly, it will protect workers and citizens who report environmental accidents or hazards — whistle-blower protection.

Mr. Speaker, last fall the Premier made a commitment to an environmental charter of rights. We see the fulfilment of that commitment now with this announcement.

We see as well the recognition that protecting our environment is a co-operative responsibility, just as is restoring our economy in a sane and sustainable manner, more of that narrow partisanship I mentioned earlier.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues on the agriculture caucus committee will have much to say about agriculture when they rise in this debate. They will comment in detail about how this government is consulting and working with farm groups, as we all wrestle with the problems besetting this most central segment of our economy and of our social structure.

We are taking action to provide security of tenure in these difficult times. We recognize that security will come with regularity of income. We are doing what we can through the modified GRIP program to deal with the income problem. Most importantly, we will continue to press the federal government to take its responsibility for income security. The American government and the Common Market governments know their responsibility to their farm community. Our federal government, alas, does not.

The spirit of community and of co-operation, Mr. Speaker, that spirit cuts across every aspect of this throne speech. It forms every action of this government. The rekindling of that spirit is our crusade and it is our pragmatic duty. We know that governments cannot take charge of the individual destiny, but it can work in partnership with the individual to make that destiny attainable.

Whether it be the economy, agriculture, the environment, health care, northern development, employment programs, or services for seniors, all of the programs mentioned in this throne speech will be brought by the government. We will provide leadership, but we will not be successful unless we have the help of Saskatchewan people. Co-operation — that's what it's all

about. That's the plan. It's good ideology. It's good sense. It's the reason I'm proud to be a New Democrat sitting in this House on this side at this time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, 2,000 years ago Emperor Augustus said of the city of Rome: I inherited it bricks and left it marble. When the former premier inherited the Government of Saskatchewan in 1982, they inherited a house in order with their chance to turn it into their own province of marble. In 1992 we're here with a broom and a dustpan. But, Mr. Speaker, we also have a hammer and some nails and a plan.

There's a lot of cleaning up to do before we begin rebuilding and rebuilding in earnest, but we're on the way. Rome wasn't built in a day. Saskatchewan wasn't bankrupted in a week and it won't be restored in a month. But it will happen. It will happen, Mr. Speaker, because Saskatchewan people, with the able assistance of the Premier and the government, will make it happen.

This throne speech provides the battle plan for the first stages of restoration and I am proud to support it. I move, therefore, seconded by the member for Regina Wascana Plains:

That a humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable Sylvia O. Fedoruk, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

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

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was talking to many people and had an opportunity to hear from constituents who are very impressed with the Speech from the Throne and the plan of our Premier and our government. They're excited and they're willing to listen to the return debate of my colleagues also and hear more particulars of that plan and, unfortunately, to hear the sad mess of the Tory regime. But today it is late of hour and I would beg leave to move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:15 p.m.