

The Assembly met at 10:01 p.m.

EVENING SITTING

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT
AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Standing Committee on Agriculture

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Kindersley:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture be now concurred in.

I so move.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

MOTION UNDER RULE 46

Provincial Agriculture Crisis

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, if I could, I would like, by leave, seconded by the member from Kindersley, that on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, transmit copies and verbatim transcripts . . . I guess this is under rule 46, I'm sorry; I think out of place here. I have to wait for that motion to be passed.

The Speaker: — I thank you. We all need a little help. This has been a real great evening for everybody, and everybody's excited. So I will once again ask for a resumption of debate on the emergency motion.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, I'm both pleased and honoured to enter the discussion on this very important sector of our economy this evening — agriculture. And we've heard a lot from the farm leaders of Saskatchewan today about the topic and how important it is to our province, and indeed to our entire nation.

And on behalf of the official opposition I want to thank the farm groups for taking the time to come to the legislature in this very unprecedented fashion and present their views to the Assembly, to our province, and indeed to the country of Canada.

And I hope, and I sincerely hope, that our remarks and the farm leaders' remarks were heard in Ottawa today, and I'm counting on that fact that they are. I understand the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture will be speaking tomorrow to the Standing Committee on Agriculture, as I will be, and we'll be certainly making it known to them what transpired here over the course of the last number of hours and the importance to our country and to our province with respect to that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a farmer here in Saskatchewan.

And I think all farmers in this province are proud to be involved in farming here in this great province. We are proud to be involved in an industry that enjoys some of the simple pleasures in life as well as things that are a little bit more complicated.

Some of the simple pleasures like smelling the freshness of the soil at seeding time. Watching a new crop come up and develop into a bumper crop. Watching the birth of a new calf or a new hog being born. The sight of a great crop, cutting into a new crop of wheat or canola or lentil or what have you. A bin-busting bumper crop is what we all look for in agriculture. Those are some of the things that give us a great deal of pride to be a farmer in Saskatchewan.

Often there are other problems though and other things that we have to contend with in agriculture. Drought, too much rain — as we heard from some of the folks here this evening — frost, grasshoppers, wheat midge, canola diseases, army worms. And the list just goes on and on and on, as all farmers would know.

Couple it with breakdowns and combine fires, flat tires, banks and bankers, income statements, crop projections, income projections, putting down that very productive cow that we've had over the years — those are some of the things that we've had to deal with that are a little more heartbreaking in agriculture. Those are just some of the things that we always used to have to deal with on a farm.

Now farmers spend countless hours sitting at their desk or at their kitchen table dealing with programs like crop insurance, GRIP, NISA, AIDA. The last three, of which interestingly enough, are a four-letter word, and that farmers have had to deal with. And it's become the new reality in agriculture in Saskatchewan.

The new buzz words like Estey and Kroeger and rail-line abandonment, elevator closures, income shortfalls, WTO, marketing — those are the kinds of things that farmers spend a lot of their time thinking about in Saskatchewan today.

Now, part of running a farming operation includes things like sleepless nights, wondering how your going to make it through the next few weeks, how you're going to make the next payment that is coming due inevitably. Mind-numbing and physical-numbing days trying to get another crop in or looking out the combine window wondering how you're possibly going to be able to afford to make the payment on that parcel of land that you so eagerly purchased up a while ago and now perhaps even regret that decision.

No farmer in this province that I know of asks for pity, not a one. We don't share our thoughts all that often in this great province about the troubles that we have. What farmers really want, I think, is just simple understanding of their concern, and action to deal with those concerns. And in some way gain a hopeful understanding from the people that are not associated with agriculture as to the plight that they find themselves in today.

We truly have a great country in Canada and I think we're all justifiably proud of that country. Many of the people of this world look upon it as the greatest nation in the world, as we do.

And the reasons why are very many.

What makes Canada a great nation? A high living standard, maybe. Health care, obviously yes. Education, yes. Care for those less privileged than us, absolutely. Freedom, of course. All of those things that make this country great are what are a part of our being here in Saskatchewan and a part of our being as Canadians.

What makes a country great? That's the question that I think is — one of the questions that we are constantly faced with in this Assembly and as a federal administration, obviously. It's coming together in times of crisis, I believe is what defines a nation in large measure. Whether it's in times of conflict, world wars, and things of that, gone by. Or whether it's in times of crisis that we have no control over as a nation.

When the ice storms were happening in Ontario, southern Ontario and parts of Quebec, the nation responded. The nation responded because it was the right thing to do. Clearly it was the right thing to do. And in fact, many people wondered why our governments couldn't move even faster to respond to the crisis that was there.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a lady in my constituency said to me that when the crisis in Quebec was happening, she sent a . . . she purchased a generator, a small power generator, and prepaid it, the freight, down to a friend of hers in Quebec. And when asked why she did that she said because she simply couldn't bear — she couldn't bear to see on the evening news the kind of problems that there were faced with in that part of the country and stand by and do nothing.

She said she believed it was her responsibility as a Canadian to do what she could to help out, so she did that for her fellow friend in Quebec. And she said, quite simply, it was the right thing to do. It was the right thing to do. And we all know that it was the right thing to do. Just as when the Maritime fishing industry in this country was faced with crisis, the country responded because we all know it was the right thing to do.

When we saw flooding in southern Manitoba, the visual images were breathtaking to all of us. And I was just down in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, last week and I had occasion to see a map of the flooding as it was at its peak levels. And I was interested, the Department of Agriculture put out this map and they showed that it was . . . at that time when it was at the peak levels, it was the 28th largest lake in the world. That's from nothing to the 28th largest lake in the world, just in the matter of a few days.

And I have a friend down there, that while the flooding was taking place I called him and asked him . . . or just prior to it taking place, I called him and asked him whether he would be experiencing any trouble. And he said, no, I don't think so, because I'm 12 miles away from the river — 12 miles away from the river. I called him at the peak of the flooding down there and he said, it's lapping at our door today. That's how quickly it came upon them.

And what did we do as a nation? We responded to the call. We responded and said to those people in southern Manitoba that this is a crisis and we must deal with it. It's imperative as a

country that we have that kind of response mechanism when we need it most. And we need it now here in Saskatchewan.

That has been a part of building a nation. And I think part of that nation building is a process that we are going through here today. And I think it's also one of the things that has made our country the great nation that it is.

And I want to pay tribute this evening to our Premier for his contributions with respect to nation building. He has been a member for a long time in this Assembly, as we know, and he's made great contributions, both provincially and federally. And I couldn't help but feel, when we were in Ottawa, some degree of sorrow for not only the Premier of this province but for our province itself when we ran into the type of roadblocks that we did when we went down in that farm delegation. I can't help but think the Premier must have questioned a lot of his work over the years.

And I think I recall one of the things that he said when asked by one of the reporters whether this is a sad time for our country. And I think he responded by saying yes, it's one of these times when you call into question some of the good work that you've done over the years. And I think that's important, that we recognize the Premier for his contributions in that regard.

It is those kinds of contributions that are the glue that holds our nation together — many great leaders federally, provincially, federal assemblies, provincial assemblies, and just simply people working together to try and build something good for our country and for ourselves.

When the farm delegation, Mr. Speaker, as I said, went down to Ottawa, they were met with, I think, a response that we had no idea we would be met with. A kind of, oh, almost a disdain for our concerns. And it was extremely troubling. I think we went down there with a tremendous amount of optimism that our concerns would be listened to and addressed, because it simply was the right thing to do. And we were essentially told to pack up and go home, in a manner of speaking. And it was heartbreaking to see that type of thing take place.

(2215)

And subsequent to that, we hear the Minister of Agriculture saying in Ottawa these days, in not so recent days, a few weeks back, that maybe we have to simply have a little bit of tough love for our concerns here in Saskatchewan. Tough love, that's what he said, is the response to a crisis in agriculture here in Saskatchewan.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, I looked up "tough love" to find out exactly what the definition of that is. And I contacted through the Internet the program that's based out of, I believe it was the original founder of it, out of the United States. And the program's definition goes as follows:

For parents troubled by the behaviour of their children of any age. For those with past, current, and anticipated problems concerning school, family, alcohol, drugs, or the law.

That's what the national tough love program tries to address,

and I think they do a very good job of that.

Tough love was the message that we got for our agriculture producers here in Saskatchewan, and I think it was extremely disheartening to say that. We're not an errant child; we're not someone that has had a brush with the law.

Farmers in this province are not someone who have somehow or another done something wrong and must be punished for it. Or be given a message that you simply have to do what is the responsible thing to do to pull yourself out of crisis. That's what the tough love message means.

That isn't what we are faced with here in Saskatchewan at all. We are faced with a crisis that is of no making of our own. We are faced with a crisis, an income crisis that is a result of an international trade war that no farmer in this province can manage on their own. If a farmer in Saskatchewan isn't in trouble, it's only because they have a little bit deeper pockets, and it will be soon when they all are in trouble. It's not about saving a few farms; it's about saving all farms here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, the importance of this cannot be understated. It's extremely important that we move as quickly as possible to address the concerns in agriculture here in this province before we continue to see farm families ripped away from their livelihood.

And I was very, very moved by some of the comments of the grandmothers and mothers and young people here in our province in letters that were read out in the Assembly here today. So I sincerely hope that this effort has made a difference. I think it's made a tremendous difference in Saskatchewan. I hope it makes a difference in Ottawa.

And we in the official opposition will continue to pledge our support for the farm delegation to try and convince Ottawa and indeed others in this country that there is a need here and it most certainly needs to be met.

And when we talked earlier today a little bit about the concerns that some people have that maybe we should just let this thing go, I don't think they have any understanding of the breadth of the problem that we have here in Saskatchewan. And I hope today's debate has somehow or another made them a little bit more aware, a little bit more understanding, a little bit more caring, and a little bit more willing to do what we all know is the right thing here in Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to, as I understand, close the debate, and I want to say, first of all, thank you to all members of the Assembly who have stuck with us here today and actually, I think, been involved in a very historic day — the meeting of the Agriculture Committee on the floor of the Assembly.

I want to thank the Ag Committee members, both from the government and opposition, for being there to ask the questions, to be involved in the process. But most of all to the farm organizations, some who are still here in the gallery, and others who have come here to present to us on this most important issue and to re-emphasize to the federal government that the attitude that somehow the farmers who are going broke in our province are somehow inefficient and not capable of doing the work and surviving, that somehow it's their fault for the fact that they're going broke.

And I want to say that nothing could be further from the truth. The fact of the matter is, if there were any inefficient farmers left three years ago when the Crow rate was removed, they were gone by then.

The people we're losing today are the youngest, the university educated, those that know how to use a computer. They know the science of agriculture. Their only mistake is farming a few miles north of the US border where the subsidies are substantially different. That's the difference. If they were in the United States or Europe, applying the technology they apply here today, they would be the most successful farmers because on the cost side it's very similar. The cost of fuel, the cost of chemicals, belts for a John Deere combine — there's not a great deal of difference on that side of the formula.

When you look at the income side though, you find a minimum of 30 per cent difference in gross income on one side of the fence line, as Alan Balfour, who farms at Climax indicated at the Wheat Pool convention. Thirty per cent difference in income — farming in Saskatchewan versus farming in Montana or North Dakota — because of the subsidies being paid by the national government in the United States versus Canada.

And we shouldn't buy the line that the Canadian government cannot compete with the US treasury when it comes to supporting farmers. Taxpayers in Canada pay only one-third the amount of subsidies to Canadian farmers as the US government. So we should not buy the argument that the money isn't there. We know that there's about \$95 billion in surplus over the next five years. And we just can't accept, and we aren't going to accept, and we're going to work even harder together with our farm organizations to make this pitch work in Ottawa when the next budget is read.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I want to say that one of my heroes is my father who is 82-years-old and raised nine kids on a little farm north of Shaunavon. And I want to talk just for a moment about being a Canadian. Because my dad, an old German farmer, moving here from the United States where they had a little homestead in North Dakota and then immigrated about 1909 to southwest Saskatchewan. Dad was born in 1917. He always had this attitude that everything went to Eastern Canada — Ontario and Quebec. And those on the farm will know the story. Over and over we heard it as we were growing up.

And one day when I was newly elected member, I got to go to Montreal and I told my Dad to come with me. And he did. And we flew into Montreal and we rented a car and drove to Quebec City along the St. Lawrence River. And part way to Quebec

City . . . it was in the autumn and it was beautiful and the trees were turning and the farmers had their apples and various things for sale along the road. And we came across a farmer who had an old John Deere combine, and the combine had plugged up in some wet swaths. And my dad insisted that I stop the car. And he went over and couldn't communicate because my dad couldn't speak French and the farmer couldn't speak English. But somehow working together, one pulling the drive belt and one putting the PTO (power take off) into gear, they got the combine going. They waved to each other, never saying a word, but they made the combine work.

And that's the image that I have of my father, but more importantly of what I think of the Canada we love and know should be about — Canadians helping Canadians — whether you're from Eastern Canada, Western. And I think that this is what we all believe.

And I watch with pride when our federal government in the past has protected people who have had ice storms or floods in Manitoba, as we all have. And I was proud of those who got on planes and flew to Montreal a couple of years ago during the referendum to tell the people in Québec that we loved them, we wanted them to stay. And many farmers were included in that movement to keep Canada together and I know that we as legislators believe in doing everything we can to build a stronger country.

And even when . . . we remember Bombardier running into trouble in, I think it was in Brazil where contracts weren't being let properly, and our federal government went to bat for Bombardier as well they should, to protect jobs. And so the contracts are done right and we were proud of our federal government for doing that.

But here we are today asking our federal government, because of a international trade war which they have responsibility to come to our assistance, we feel not only slighted but we feel hurt. And it's interesting that when we were in Carlyle . . . And I wanted to read a quote from a young farmer there who we've heard many times. But I have the transcript and I talked to him recently and he said he wouldn't mind if I read it in speeches, when I was giving speeches from time to time. And I want to quote what he said about Canada and the farm crisis, and I quote:

My wife and I are fourth-generation farmers on a farm that just celebrated its centennial. We are proud to be farmers but I, like many of you, am having to swallow my pride and ask for help. Mr. Vanclief, you say if we can't make a go of it, we should get out, and that's easy to say for many people. But when you are working the land that has been in the family for generations, you just can't walk away. Even if you could, for many farmers it would take their lifetime to pay all the bills and outstanding debt. For many farmers, any equity built up in the farm is long gone or, in our case as new farmers, we've been going deeper in debt every year. (And he says) Indeed, on October 28, it was a sad day. When I got home from my off-farm job that day, the first thing I did was take down the Canadian flag that has flown at our farm since before I can remember. (He said) I will never put it up again. (But the hope comes from what he said in a few moments later, after he talked about the

crisis. He then said), and we went on to say and challenge Prime Minister Chrétien, and I quote, "Make me want to put up my Canadian flag and show me that you care."

I think that's what we're all saying today in our own way. We love this country. We're a big part of it. We may be a small percent of the GDP (gross domestic product) as farmers but we're like the foundation under this building. It may be a small percentage of what you see, but it's a fundamental building block of our country, and we need the support. And today was an important part of that. And I thank you all immensely.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 10:27 p.m. until 10:28 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 53

Romanow	Trew	Hagel
Van Mulligen	MacKinnon	Lingenfelter
Melenchuk	Cline	Atkinson
Goulet	Lautermilch	Thomson
Kasperski	Serby	Belanger
Nilson	Crofford	Hillson
Kowalsky	Sonntag	Hamilton
Prebble	Jones	Yates
Higgins	Harper	Axworthy
Junor	Wartman	Addley
Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Boyd	Gantefoer	Toth
Peters	Eagles	Wall
Bakken	Bjornerud	D'Autremont
McMorris	Weekes	Harpauer
Wakefield	Wiberg	Hart
Stewart	Kwiatkowski	

Nays — nil

The Speaker: — The motion is carried unanimously.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, by leave I move:

That the Speaker, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, transmit copies and verbatim transcripts of Rule 46 motion and debate, with respect to the farm income crisis now facing Saskatchewan farmers, as well as the verbatim transcripts of the hearings of the Standing Committee on Agriculture to the Prime Minister of Canada, the federal Minister of Agriculture, the federal Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, and all opposition party leaders, and respectfully request that they cause the House of Commons to immediately hold an emergency debate on this matter of urgent public concern.

I so move.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I move this House do now adjourn.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:32 p.m.

