

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of the citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about the prescription drug deductible. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reinstate a reasonable annual deductible amount for prescription drugs in Saskatchewan.

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

I have three petitions signed, Mr. Speaker, by citizens of Hudson Bay, Mistatim, Prairie River, Tisdale, and Porcupine Plain.

I so present.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today with a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who would like to maintain the Saskatchewan Housing Authority Humboldt territory operations office in Humboldt. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the proposed closure of the Humboldt territory operations office for Saskatchewan Housing Authority, and to renew the commitment to rural Saskatchewan and maintain a full, functioning territory operations office in Humboldt.

And the signators on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Humboldt, the community of St. Gregor, and Bruno.

I so present.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions on behalf of people who are really concerned about the deductible for prescription drugs.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reinstate a reasonable annual deductible amount for prescription drugs in Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

People that have signed this petition are all from Kelvington.

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon on behalf of citizens who continue to be concerned about the tobacco legislation. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately amend tobacco legislation that would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of any tobacco products; and furthermore, anyone found guilty of such an offence would be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.

Signatures on this petition this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, are from the cities of Regina and Saskatoon.

And I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present to do with overfishing at Lake of the Prairies. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives, and with other provincial governments to bring about a resolution in the Lake of the Prairies situation and to ensure that our natural resources as a whole are used in a responsible manner by all people in the future.

The signators, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Churchbridge and Langenburg.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the deplorable condition of Highway 42. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 42 in the Arm River constituency in order to prevent injury or loss of life, and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Eyebrow, Tugaske, Brownlee, Central Butte, and Moose Jaw.

I so present.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise, Mr. Speaker, to present a petition to you concerning crop insurance premium hikes and coverage reductions. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to halt its plan to take money out of the crop insurance program and hike farmers' crop insurance premium rates while reducing coverage in order to pay off the provincial government's debt to the federal government.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by producers and associates of producers in the community of Eastend.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to

present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the crop insurance program. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to halt its plan to take money out of the crop insurance program and hike farmers' crop insurance premium rates while reducing coverage in order to pay off the provincial government's debt to the federal government.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Gladmar, Bengough, Ogema, and Pangman.

I so present.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from citizens concerned about the increase to crop insurance premiums. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to halt its plan to take money out of crop insurance program and hike farmers' crop insurance premium rates while reducing coverage in order to pay off the provincial government's debt to the federal government.

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

Signed by the citizens of Battleford, Landis, North Battleford, and Clavet.

I so present.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you will be surprised today that I have a petition of citizens concerned about the closing of the office for Saskatchewan Housing Authority in Humboldt. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitions humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the proposed closure of the Humboldt territory operations office for Saskatchewan Housing Authority, and to renew their commitment to rural Saskatchewan and maintain a full, functioning territory operations office in Humboldt.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Humboldt, Middle Lake, and Lanigan.

I so present.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan concerned with the tobacco legislation. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately amend tobacco legislation that would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of any tobacco products; and furthermore, anyone found guilty of such an offence would be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.

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

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, on this petition are from Rabbit Lake, from Mildred, and Spiritwood.

I so present.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again I rise with a petition today from citizens concerned about the lack of cellular coverage in rural Saskatchewan. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide reliable cellular telephone service to all communities throughout the Wood River constituency.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good folks of Climax, Bracken, and Val Marie.

I so present.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper no. 7, 11, 18, 23, 24, 31, 59, 129, 132, 134, and 147.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 59 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of the Environment: (1) with regard to provincially owned Crown land not in the northern administrative district, how many parcels of land are currently being leased; (2) what is the total area of that leased land; (3) how many lessees are there; (4) what is the projected revenue from these leases in the current year?

Mr. Speaker, further to that I give notice that on day no. 59 ask the following question:

To the Minister of Environment: (1) with regard to provincially owned Crown land in the northern administrative district, how many parcels of land are currently being leased; (2) what is the total area of that leased land; (3) how many lessees are there; (4) what is the projected revenue from these leases in the current year?

And, Mr. Speaker, I have questions . . . exact same thing for seven more departments.

I so present.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 59 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for ISC (Information Services Corporation): (1) does ISC have an assurance fund; (2) is this fund used to compensate those individuals or corporations who suffer financial loss due to delays in transactions caused by ISC; and (3) if so, how much was paid out of this fund for this purpose in 2001?

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 42 grade 3 and 4 students from Sunningdale School in Moose Jaw who are seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker. They're here today accompanied by their teachers Ms. Sudom-Young and Ms. Quon, and by chaperones Ms. Hushy and Ms. Weeks.

Mr. Speaker, members may remember that students from Sunningdale School are frequent visitors to the Legislative Assembly and we're always pleased to see them. They'll be leaving about 2 o'clock for a tour of the building and I look forward to meeting with them for photos and perhaps a brief visit at 2:30. Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all our members to join in extending a warm welcome to the students from Sunningdale School in Moose Jaw.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 20 students from Dr. George Ferguson School in my constituency, seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker. And I believe they are in the first two or three rows.

They're accompanied by their teacher Ms. Lynda Gellner, chaperones Wendy Herom, Hazel Batty, Cindy Cullen, Shelley Aisaican, and Ed Whitehouse. And I'm going to have the opportunity in a little while to meet with them and I'll let them answer questions after they have an opportunity to see the proceedings in the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I hope all members will welcome them here this afternoon.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues and our guests in the Assembly today, my brother Dennis Elhard, formerly of Eastend and now a resident of the community of Caronport, sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. You may notice the family resemblance. I'd like to . . .

You know, I'd just like to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that my brother and I have been in partnership on a farm and in other businesses for about 30 years. We've spent all of our lives working in close proximity and now that he's a student in Caronport I don't see him nearly as often as I used to.

However, today when he came to the city in his capacity as a

bus driver for students from the Thunder Creek School Division, he phoned me and said the students were touring the Science Centre and the Imax Theatre and could we get together for lunch. Well following lunch I suggested he come here because I'm sure the entertainment value will be much higher here than at the Imax this afternoon.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

##### Queen's Golden Jubilee Anniversary

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise in the House today and ask all members to recognize the Golden Jubilee celebrations honouring Queen Elizabeth II.

These celebrations have taken place over the past few days in London, England at various points throughout that great city, including, of course, Buckingham Palace. This great event, Mr. Speaker, commemorates Queen Elizabeth's 50-year reign as head of the monarchy. In her five decades of presiding over the Commonwealth nations, Her Majesty has seen many changes not only within her country but around the world.

On a sadder note, we would be remiss if we neglected to mention that when Queen Elizabeth ascended to the throne in 1952, there were countries embroiled in battle. Sadly, today, 50 years later, peace among nations has yet to be realized.

On a lighter note, Mr. Speaker, and as testament to Queen Elizabeth's longevity on the throne, she is in some very royal company as only four other monarchs have ruled Great Britain as long as she has: Henry III, Edward III, George III, and Queen Victoria.

And for those who may be wondering about the duties of the Queen, according to Buckingham Palace officials, Queen Elizabeth II has approved more than 3,000 Acts of Parliament, received three million pieces of correspondence, conferred nearly 400,000 awards and honours, entertained more than one million guests at parties, posed for a 120 portraits, sent more than a quarter of a million telegrams to couples celebrating wedding anniversaries, and has owned more than 30 Welsh corgis.

Long live the Queen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

##### International Children's Festival

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The week of June 2 to 8 has been declared Tourism Awareness Week and since summer is for kids and for the kid in all of us, I'm happy to announce to the Assembly that Saskatoon is offering a great way to kickoff the summer and to make us aware of some of the sights that will attract tourists from far and wide.

Tonight on the beautiful banks of the majestic South Saskatchewan River in the scenic Kinsmen Park beneath the stately turrets of the Delta Bessborough Hotel, the 14th annual

Northern Saskatchewan International Children's Festival will get underway.

After the first night gala on the riverbank, the festival will come alive on Wednesday celebrating its theme, Faces of the World, with non-stop entertainment and education for children and adults alike. There will be jugglers, singers, musicians, and more singers, and puppeteers. There will be mime and theatre from around the world, and there will be activities and games. On Saturday, there will be a pancake breakfast followed by a parade.

Mr. Speaker, this award winning festival is a non-profit organization dedicated to challenging the minds and enriching the lives of Saskatchewan children. Like so many events in Saskatchewan, it is helped by hundreds of volunteers. The festival expects, once again over 25,000 children will attend. I can think of no better way than this way to kick off the summer festivities, and I remind members that the International Children's Festival is just the first of many summer attractions that draw us to Saskatoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(13:45)

#### **Melfort Resident Celebrates 100th Birthday**

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and members, today Fannie Fidyk of Melfort is celebrating her 100th birthday. She is of Ukrainian descent, born in Poland, and at the age of 19 she married Alex Fidyk. In 1926 they decided to immigrate to Canada. Alex came ahead to prepare a new home for his family and a short time later, with the help of her sister, Fannie made the three-week boat trip and long trek across Canada with their two small children, Tena and Fred.

They settled on a farm in the Silver Park area where Fannie and hired help ran the farm while Alex was employed with the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway) railway. Alex and Fannie were blessed with two more children, Anne and John, and in order to feed her family Fannie grew a huge garden which she often shared with neighbours. Her daughters remember filling a horse-drawn wagon with cabbage in the fall. She loved to cook and her grandchildren claim she makes the best perogies and cabbage rolls.

Alex and Fannie were able to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary before Alex passed away. Fannie now resides in the Melfort Hospital, first floor.

Mr. Speaker, and members of the Assembly, please join Fannie's 4 children, 11 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, and friends in wishing her a very happy 100th birthday today.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Environment Week — Seedling Distribution Program**

**Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the Assembly today to inform the members that as part of

this year's Environment Week celebrations, SaskPower is making free green ash seedlings available to customers across the province. These seedlings come from SaskPower's own Shand Greenhouse located just outside of Estevan.

The Shand Greenhouse plays an important role in the corporation's efforts to minimize the impact of its operations on the environment.

Since 1991 SaskPower has distributed over 3 million tree and shrub seedlings free of charge to non-profit agencies, service clubs, conservation agencies, and individual landowners eager to preserve Saskatchewan's natural landscape. The seedlings also help offset the impact of greenhouse gas emissions. As the seedlings grow, they absorb carbon dioxide from the environment, helping to reduce the effects of the coal-fired generation that we depend upon.

This seedling distribution program is just one example of SaskPower's comprehensive strategy to tackle the challenge of climate change. The seedlings will be available at any of SaskPower's 37 customer service offices across Saskatchewan, as well as the Poplar River power station, from June 3 to 7. For anyone with less than a green thumb, information on how to care for the seedlings will also be provided.

I urge all members to get a free seedling and do your part to green our province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Moosomin Holds Two Special Events**

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday two special events took place in the Moosomin constituency.

At 1 p.m. the Kipling and District Veterinary Clinic along with veterinarian Dr. Don Smyth cut the ribbon to officially open their new veterinary clinic. This special event began with a kick-off roast beef barbecue hosted by the Kipling and District Beef Club. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that everyone attending, including the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, truly enjoyed.

Mr. Speaker, this veterinary clinic has certainly provided a worthwhile service to our community and I want to congratulate Dr. Smyth and the past veterinarian, Dr. Gerald Kessler, for all their hard work and dedication to providing veterinary services in the community.

As well, at 4 p.m. the community of Wolseley held a sod-turning ceremony to officially launch the construction of their new pelleting plant. Mr. Speaker, recently I mentioned that West Central Pelleting of Wilkie and local promoters in the Wolseley community conducted a very successful share offering leading up to this sod-turning ceremony.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend congratulations to President Margaret Skinner and the board and directors of West Central Pelleting for the official launch of their new pelleting plant, as well as the Kipling and District Veterinary Clinic and Dr. Don Smyth on the official opening of their new veterinary clinic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Moose Jaw Establishes Urban Conservation Area**

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, this is Environment Week, and in the spirit of the week the city of Moose Jaw has adopted a burrowing owl conservation plan that creates one of the first urban conservation areas in Canada.

The conservation plan will be on the northern part of Moose Jaw from the Lynbrook Golf Course through Sunningdale Park, and the exhibition grounds to the Western Development Museum. This area also houses the burrowing owl interpretive centre that informs visitors about the ecology of the burrowing owl, which we all know is an endangered species.

Saskatchewan Environment and several nature and conservation organizations are participating in this program, Mr. Speaker. This is another example of the environmental leadership demonstrated by the city of Moose Jaw. Moose Jaw was the first city in the province to start cleaning up abandoned gas station sites and one of the first to start effluent irrigation and urban composting.

This is another example of the community coming together to create a better environment for everyone and I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating this good work in the city of Moose Jaw. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Saskatchewan Baseball Hall of Fame Inductees**

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not one, but two residents who live in Rosetown-Biggar are being inducted into the Saskatchewan Baseball Hall of Fame. Inductees are the late Walter Anderson, formerly of Wiseton, and the late S. Burns McDonald, formerly of Elrose.

Mr. Anderson was born in Dinsmore in 1934. In the late 1940s he began his career with the King George senior baseball team. Mr. Anderson played numerous positions, including outfielder, second and third base, and also pitcher. Walter's playing career ended in 1969 but then he began his umpire career. He was recognized as an outstanding umpire by the Saskatchewan Baseball Association.

Mr. S. Burns McDonald was born in Elrose in 1932 and grew up on a family farm near Wiseton. In 1956 he coached his first team, the Saskatoon Royals. In 1965 he and his wife Kay moved to Wartime where he started to coach the eight- to ten-year-old boys baseball team. Playing numerous local sports days and tournaments province-wide, his team won a majority of their 60 games per season. In 1970 when the Wartime School closed, Burns and his team moved to Elrose where they continued to play. As a dedicated coach, Burns coached the team until the youngest player from the original team graduated in 1978. The love of coaching was not only in baseball but also hockey as he coached the Saskatoon Blades and several local Elrose hockey teams.

I wish to express appreciation to the families and friends of Burns McDonald and Walter Anderson for their contribution to baseball and to their communities in Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

#### **Investigation of Harassment Allegation**

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* is now reporting that the former Environment minister may have slapped one of her staff members. If this allegation is true, it goes beyond workplace harassment into the area of physical assault.

Mr. Speaker, the government has commissioned an independent report on this incident. The Premier will soon be receiving that report. If that report confirms that a physical assault took place, will the report be turned over to the police?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to the comments that the Premier made yesterday because members of the opposition asked this question yesterday and I want to reaffirm what the Premier said yesterday.

The Premier indicated that on Monday, that the mediator will submit her report to the deputy minister, Mr. Perrins, in the next few days. And the Premier went on to say that he will be making . . . Mr. Perrins will be making recommendations to him based on that report, and that the Premier will be making statements on that matter later next week. The Premier then went on to say that the government . . . the Premier said that the position of the report may be released to the public, including the general circumstances surrounding the incidents.

That was the comments that the Premier made yesterday, and this is what the Premier intends to do when he receives the report. He has not received the report yet, but when he does he'll examine it through his deputy to the Premier.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Julé:** — Mr. Speaker, on May 8, 2001 the Government House Leader made the following statement:

. . . (if) any member of this legislature or any member of the general public has any . . . evidence to suggest . . . inappropriate activity, they have a responsibility to forward that to the proper process, which is (to) the police.

Mr. Speaker, if the independent report suggests there is evidence of physical assault or any other illegal activity, will the government follow the NDP (New Democratic Party) House Leader's advice and forward the report to the police?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier answered that part of the question yesterday for the member and I think the member was present when he answered the question, and then answered it out for the media as well. When the question was asked, Mr. Speaker, by the media in regards to what would happen, when the media asked the Premier what would happen, Mr. Speaker, he said in regards to whether the report would be

released or handed over to the police, the Premier stated that he wouldn't speculate on the contents of the report because he has not yet received the contents of the report.

When the Premier receives the report, Mr. Speaker, he will examine it through his deputy to the Premier and will then determine what parts of the information, as he says in his scrum yesterday, and I think to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, that he would provide the information based on the content of the report. And to date, Mr. Speaker, he yet does not have the report.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Assistance to Municipalities for Firefighting

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment. Yesterday in estimates the Minister of Public Safety confirmed that there are no specific financial resources that are triggered or available to a community upon the declaration of a state of emergency.

He also stated that the provincial disaster assistance program is not designed to assist with fire, as fires are not normally classified as a natural disaster. So after all the circles that the NDP have led us on with this particular issue, Mr. Speaker, we're still back at the original question. Is there going to be assistance to help municipalities in this province cope with some of the enormous costs that they're facing to fight the large fires that have ravaged this province in the last few weeks?

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell the Assembly if the NDP are considering any financial assistance to help communities and RMs (rural municipality) to bear the costs of using water bombers and other heavy equipment to fight fires?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thought I was fairly clear on this last night in the discussion in estimates. And the Minister of Environment was sitting two chairs away from me. I don't know where other members were; I'm not to speak to that.

But what we are certainly looking at is how this situation is dealt with. I think SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) has taken the extraordinary step of making sure we've made heavy equipment available to get into the forest fringe to help the municipalities.

In terms of the cost, we do work on a cost recovery basis. This is the way that we're working and there may or may not be special circumstances. We'll look at those as they come up.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the Premier visited Nipawin after the devastating fire in that community, he said it would be appropriate if the costs were shared with the province.

Since then we've had a number of other fires in the province including the community of Archerwill which required large

equipment, Tobin Lake, Turtle Lake, Loon Lake — these fires are all causing tremendous damage, Mr. Speaker, and using considerable resources to control the situation.

The province bears the cost of fighting fires on Crown land, but many of these larger fires so far have been devastating to RMs and communities.

On May 24 the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities wrote the provincial government and asked that any charges for the use of water bombers, helicopters, and firefighting crews be waived for rural municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, what was the minister's response to this request?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, we went over this last night again, and we've been through this many times. The request from SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) is that what they are asking for is that we pick up all the cost for the firefighting. Well that is not the way that this has worked in the past and it's not the way it's going to work today.

What we're taking a look at is where there are special circumstances, we're prepared to deal with that. That was the commitment that was made in Nipawin where there are in fact issues that need to be addressed with.

Now the question here is whether or not the opposition continues to support the approach that we are taking — where we are putting in the resources now and we'll sort out the details and the costing afterwards — or whether they want something else. Because that's really what the issue is here.

We're prepared to make the equipment available; we're prepared to go in and fight where we're asked for. And that is what we're doing and that's the responsible approach. That's this government's approach.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Mr. Speaker, the SARM letter says, and I quote:

Already this year rural municipalities located in the "forest fringe" area of the province have estimated that the costs incurred are reaching up to one million dollars for an individual municipality.

We are pleased that you recently recognized the province's responsibility in regard to such fires, as municipalities are not in a position to absorb these costs . . . We therefore request that you waive the cost of the Department of Environment services for fighting fires. As well, municipalities have incurred large costs for fighting these fires using their own limited resources and hiring additional backup from the private sector. We also ask that a program be established to help municipalities cover these unusually large costs.

(14:00)

Mr. Speaker, the Premier made a commitment for cost sharing in Nipawin. How long are they and other communities and RMs going to have to wait for a decision from the NDP on whether they will be receiving any financial assistance or not?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely a confused opposition. First of all, we have the member from Wood River who has his head in the clouds fighting a 1960s battle against communism. Then you have a one-page economic wonder in their leader. And then you have the gas expert from Swift Current who's going to cost the province millions of dollars.

And now you have a firefighting expert, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't know that when you look down the scheme of things that you have to wait for these costs to be very clear, Mr. Speaker. This Premier travelled to Nipawin, and I've said before — good for the Premier, good for Nipawin, and good for Saskatchewan.

We said we would stand by SARM, we would work through these details, we'd look at a case by case scenario. And, Mr. Speaker, the reason why I call them an incredible opposition is we stood up today and we fought alongside of the many communities and RMs to fight fires. And, Mr. Speaker, last year the Sask Party voted against the hiring of 88 new firefighters.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — What damage would have been created if we had less resources, Mr. Speaker?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company**

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation.

For the second time in this legislative session the NDP appear to be fudging the books. The first set of books to get fudged was the NDP's budget to try and hide \$250 million deficit. And now the NDP is being accused of fudging the books at SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company), the NDP's failed potato company.

According to documents filed in Regina court by Idaho potato grower Chad Neibaur, the NDP wanted him to sign a draft agreement to buy some potatoes — to buy some government soon-to-be-rotten potatoes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Neibaur claims SPUDCO officials told him the only purpose for the draft agreement was to make it look like SPUDCO actually was selling potatoes, when in fact no potato sales were being made.

Mr. Speaker, why did SPUDCO officials try to use American potato grower Chad Neibaur to fake a sale of potatoes for the NDP government?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all I welcome that member back. I didn't recognize that member; he's been up on his feet so rarely.

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, please. Order, please. I was about to bring the member to order because I thought at first he was referring to a member's absence or presence; however, I recognized that he didn't. But the member was not on tape, so I would ask the member to resume his response.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact the member suggests that we fudge the books. Well we fudged them so badly that Moody's gave us a credit rating upgrade, Mr. Speaker. So that's how badly we fudged it.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, as well I would say it . . . this will be good for political fodder, but the member will know of course that this matter is before the court, and as a result it makes it very difficult and impossible for me to respond to any accusations that he or that individual might make, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the NDP everything's almost like the Liberals — it's before the court.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP is suing an American potato grower . . .

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP is suing an American potato grower for breach of contract after SPUDCO officials badgered him to sign a draft sales agreement, an agreement made to look like the NDP had a market for its rotting potatoes in the spring of 2000, Mr. Speaker.

According to Neibaur's sworn affidavit, SPUDCO officials pleaded with Neibaur and his partner to come to Saskatchewan and grow potatoes so that SPUDCO had something other than hay to store in the NDP's multi-million dollar potato storage facilities. When Neibaur said he had no interest, SPUDCO officials asked him to sign a draft sales agreement to at least make it look like SPUDCO was actually selling potatoes.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP government suing an Idaho potato grower for not being interested in either growing potatoes for the government, or selling government potatoes?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well unlike myself, Mr. Speaker, his light was on but he wasn't making any sense, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to say again that while this might be wonderful political fodder, the matter is before the courts and it's impossible for me to comment or respond.

I would ask the question though, Mr. Speaker, that if that member believes that in the best interests of Saskatchewan taxpayers we should not pursue this, then he should say that outside the House as well, Mr. Speaker.

Under investments made by the previous provincial government, Mr. Speaker, and under investments made with the federal government, there were . . . there was, I should say, in excess of \$100 million invested by way of infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. And we have developed a potato industry out in that area in partnership with many of the private sector, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government has money for potato storage facilities to store hay, but no money for people's water in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Mr. Speaker, at the risk of making a statement that is blatantly obvious, Chad Neibaur makes his living growing seed potatoes — growing seed potatoes, Mr. Speaker, in Idaho and then selling his seed potatoes to make a profit. So why would Mr. Neibaur want to buy seed potatoes grown by the NDP government?

Why was the NDP so desperate that SPUDCO officials actually faxed Neibaur a sales contract clearly marked draft after telling him they only wanted to make it look like the government was selling potatoes?

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, again this is a . . . it's very difficult for me to respond on . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. I'd ask the members to allow the minister to make his response.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult for me to respond on an issue that's before the courts as a minister responsible, but I will respond to one part of his question where he talks about hay being stored in those facilities.

I don't know if that member or members opposite would believe that we should leave those facilities sitting empty when we had an opportunity to provide space for some of the local area farmers who came to us. And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that that was used on a very limited basis; it was not that as if the facilities were full of hay — although that would not have been inappropriate, Mr. Speaker.

When the province got involved in development of growing potatoes in that area, Mr. Speaker, there was about 200 acres grown . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order. Order, please. Order, please. Fifteen seconds to the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the province got involved, there were about 200 acres grown of potatoes out in that area. And I note when the province made its

announcement to get out of that industry, Mr. Speaker, there are now about 10,000 acres of potatoes being grown and there looks like a bright future for the potato industry in that area. And I thank the farmers and the people . . .

**The Speaker:** — Member's time has elapsed.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Mr. Speaker, when the government got involved, the minister said there was about 200 acres of potatoes grown. Well, Mr. Speaker, I suspect that there's even less than that now.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP lost 28 million taxpayers' dollars by interfering in the potato business. In the process, the NDP took and then lost millions more from local investors in the Lucky Lake/Outlook area.

And now we find out the NDP was so desperate to make it look like SPUDCO was actually selling potatoes that SPUDCO officials were trying to convince other potato growers to sign phony potato sales agreements. Even more interesting, according to the sworn testimony of Idaho grower, Chad Neibaur, the NDP was also desperate to get its multi-million dollar potato storage facility filled with something other than hay.

Mr. Speaker, why was the NDP trying to convince an American grower to sign a document to make it look like SPUDCO was selling and storing potatoes, when in actual fact no real government potatoes were being sold and very few government potatoes were even being stored?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I don't quite understand the argument, Mr. Speaker. On one hand, he said that we lost money through that investment, Mr. Speaker. On the other hand, he says to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan we shouldn't try and recover what we believe belongs to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

In the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, the courts will decide who is right and who is wrong here, Mr. Speaker. And it's before the courts and it's impossible for me to respond to the question that the member raises.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Investment in Ethanol Industry

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we've just heard how the NDP lost 28 million taxpayer dollars on an intervention in the potato industry that they arguably should never have been in in the first place. And now it looks like they're going to risk . . . at least risk doing the same thing in the ethanol industry, Mr. Speaker.

However, last Friday as the Minister for Industry and responsible for the ethanol file wandered outside to the rotunda, Mr. Speaker, there was at least reason for hope. Because here's what he had to say. He said that Saskatchewan has a reputation



for too much government involvement in private business. And he said we need to stop putting so much public money into private economic development initiatives, Mr. Speaker, proving once again that even a blind squirrel finds a nut every now and then. Mr. Speaker, even a blind, very angry squirrel can find a nut every now and then.

We're glad the minister has seen the light. And now we would ask him, through you, Mr. Speaker, to do the right thing. Will he simply admit that the government didn't give the private sector enough time to take the lead on developing the industry, that two months wasn't long enough, and that they are now prepared to step back and give the private sector the time to develop the ethanol industry in Saskatchewan?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — I do appreciate the humour of the member from Swift Current even though I'm not 100 per cent convinced that anyone in this province would buy his advice.

Now the old guitar museum curator there tells us that we shouldn't be, for any reason, ever looking at government investment. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I was interested in a *Western Producer* of May 30 of 2002, you know. And it's interesting in a community that one of his members represent, the town of Mossbank, the owner of that operation said that it's not going to last in this province without some public support. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that member would close that plant down, and I know that.

And I also want to say to the member opposite that one of the proponents of ethanol development in this province has said that he wants the support of the provincial government and wants an investment from the province in terms of bringing his investment to the province.

Now if he's saying that there should be absolutely no deal under those circumstances, he should stand up in this House and say so. And the member from Shaunavon should, and the member from Mossbank should, and the member from Tisdale should as well. Because you see, Mr. Speaker, in second reading of that Bill in a couple of days, all of the people who support this decision will be here to tell them they're wrong.

**Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, if the minister wants to play that game, then he should also be directing the people of the province to the former minister of ethanol, the member for Regina South, who said the private sector should lead the development of this industry. He should check with the Minister of Government Relations, the member for Melville, who last . . .

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, he should direct people to check with the member for Melville, the Minister of Government Relations, who last week said it should be the private sector that leads this industry. Mr. Speaker, with this government, the left hand doesn't know what the far left hand is doing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last week that minister said that we need to move away from government intervention in the economy to have a

successful economic development strategy. So, Mr. Speaker, how is the government ever going to change the perception that there's too much intervention in our economy by the government if this government continues to intervene in the economy?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(14:15)

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is consistent. He's inaccurate as all get-out, but witty. Because you see, Mr. Speaker, what the former member of ethanol development indicated in that press conference was that we would be willing to look at circumstances that may in fact require some public sector investment.

I want to say he's inaccurate in this too, Mr. Speaker, because there needs to be a private sector driven industry and there will be. But that shouldn't, Mr. Speaker, preclude investment from smaller entities here in this province if a large, major investor comes in, and it shouldn't preclude the public sector investment if it means that the development won't go without it.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, they can call for delay and they can call for no ethanol industry; they can call for no jobs; they can call for no livestock industry development in this province. But, Mr. Speaker, they won't get any support from anybody on this side.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, a couple of questions ago I think the minister was trying to quote from *The Western Producer* which would have worked out quite well except that he didn't have *The Western Producer*.

But we want to direct him to another newspaper — his own local newspaper, Mr. Speaker. Here's what the editorial in the P.A. (Prince Albert) *Herald* reads, Mr. Speaker. They said in the P.A. *Herald* editorial:

There's no need for CIC to be involved in ethanol. Ethanol is an instance where Saskatchewan has advantages. With a little help from government in the form of tax incentives, either homegrown investors or an outside firm can make this industry work.

Instead there is yet another instance of the would-be entrepreneurs in government mucking about. CIC is providing funds and exclusivity to Broe industries — a company linked to the provincial government through a former political adviser.

They go on to say:

Perhaps, Minister Lautermilch . . .

**The Speaker:** — Would the member go directly to the question, please.

**Mr. Wall:** — I'll conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying:

Perhaps, Minister Lautermilch, a far more radical approach should be taken. Have the government (butt out of CIC) . . . butt CIC out of people's businesses.

Here's a question to the minister: if he doesn't want to take the advice of his . . .

**The Speaker:** — Would the member go directly to the question.

**Mr. Wall:** — . . . will he take the advice of his local paper?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe I have to take the advice of the member from Wood River, who stands in here and says, well golly, you know, maybe we will take some public sector investment.

And you know what he says to the people who are calling on him to butt out of this? Mr. Speaker, the people who have been developing this initiative from Shaunavon — I'd really like to know what he says to them. Because you know, Mr. Speaker, this is the guy who is trying to stop, along with his friend from Swift Current, the development of a very positive industry here in this province.

And now, Mr. Speaker, we'll have second reading here of this piece of legislation and they will have the opportunity to go through this with us on a clause by clause basis. And they will have the opportunity to vote against economic development, and they'll have an opportunity to vote against the development of the livestock industry in this province, and then they'll have the ability, Mr. Speaker, and the responsibility to go back to their constituents and tell them why they voted against development of a good industry here in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### **Bill No. 67 — The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority Act**

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 67, The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority Act be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

##### **Bill No. 68 — The Saskatchewan Water Corporation Act**

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 68, The Saskatchewan Water Corporation Act be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

##### **Bill No. 70 — The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2002**

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 70,

The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and read for the first time.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table written responses to questions no. 256 and 257 and hope they are finally coming to an end.

**The Speaker:** — The responses to 256 and 257 have been tabled. Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask leave of the Assembly to go to government business.

Leave not granted.

#### SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

##### **Drought Assistance for Livestock Producers**

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of my remarks I will be moving the following:

That this Assembly urges the federal government to recognize the seriousness of the current drought on Saskatchewan agriculture industry and commit \$10 million to a program to fund digging of new wells, digging new dugouts, and the purchase of more water pumping equipment in order to avoid a massive sell-off of cattle this year.

Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying, for water-short livestock producers there's nothing that we can do or say that's going to make things right. We can't as legislators make it rain any more than those drought-stricken producers can make it rain, Mr. Speaker.

Let me express a sentiment that is widely held in here and that is a view of frustration, Mr. Speaker — frustration that we can't make it rain and frustration that in fact there are such desperate, in some instances, such desperate choices that are going to be made by livestock producers.

Choices I'll describe as for me, what seems to me up to and sort of including the ultimate choice of hugely, hugely cutting their livestock herd. Which, for people who maybe didn't grow up on a farm or maybe don't know, Mr. Speaker, the seriousness of this is that livestock producers spend years building up their livestock herd and they cull the least suitable livestock sort of on an ongoing basis. And they're very proud, the best producers are very, very proud of the stock that they have.

So this water shortage, this drought, is causing just unbelievable angst. We've got a water shortage combined with, of course

when you have a drought, a feed shortage. You can't force pastures to grow when it's too dry. Nor, Mr. Speaker, when it's as dry as it is in many parts of central Saskatchewan, you can't even grow grain feed to feed these livestock.

Mr. Speaker, there's been times when I've felt like I've been under a personal cloud. Well a couple of weeks ago I experienced it first-hand. My wife and I were returning from visiting our daughter and son-in-law and their family in Kindersley, driving back to Regina. And we weren't very far this side of Kindersley and the dust cloud appeared and it blew and hung over us all the way until about Chamberlain, maybe Dilke, on the way to Regina. I've never seen such a massive cloud of dust, which really just is by way of typifying or signifying how dry it really and truly is, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say of course how troubling it is from all vantages, but I want to talk a little bit, Mr. Speaker, about what the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, the Saskatchewan government is doing, and what the Canadian government are doing. I just want to go over a few of the things. And I just want to cap it. It's rather a lengthy list, Mr. Speaker, more than a dozen things of significance.

Things like what we spend on and what we do for crop insurance for not only livestock producers but for all farmers, crop insurance that this administration enhanced this year by some \$14 million.

I know that there are some, particularly in opposition benches, who would tell you, Mr. Speaker, that crop insurance has been somehow gutted or hurt . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . gutted, thank you, this year. But how in the world you can describe a \$14 million provincial enhancement as a gutting of livestock — I think it requires a lot of selling and a very long bow, Mr. Speaker.

We're very proud on this side that even in this troubled year, if I can describe it that way, when our finances are not as buoyant as we would like at the provincial level — oil has been troubled and there's been some other areas, softwood lumber, now the US (United States) farm Bill dealing with export enhancement — all of these things sort of combine to not make it a banner year for the Saskatchewan . . . provincial Saskatchewan treasury.

Despite that, we found \$14 million more for crop insurance and indeed we're very, very proud that the province of Saskatchewan, taxpayers of Saskatchewan are paying fully a third of the premium, roughly a third of the premium for crop insurance for farmers and livestock producers.

Mr. Speaker, there's the NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) program; there's the CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program) program; there's a feed grain and forage listing service; Sask Water has a pumping equipment rental program, Mr. Speaker. The stated view is that they want the pumping and related equipment rental program to be rented at cost. Unfortunately it's rented — or fortunately, depending on your perspective — it's rented for far less than the cost of said equipment. And indeed we view it as sort of part of our ongoing obligation.

The federal government has a income tax deferral system. If you come as a livestock producer, Mr. Speaker, to what I opened my remarks with, that is where you're drastically reducing the side of . . . size, rather, of your livestock herd, then there's a income tax deferral system where you can for example sell — I'm going to use a third of a herd — you could sell a third of a herd, defer that income tax with the view that you can purchase a similar value of livestock, perhaps next year, perhaps two years; I think in fact some of it can be even a bit longer, like up to three years, to purchase back a herd.

One of the weaknesses . . . I mean this is a very laudable program, Mr. Speaker, but one of the weaknesses of course is quite literally when a livestock herd is culled as they are or reduced as they are in Saskatchewan, much of that beef winds up being quite literally sliced and diced. And it's not . . . no longer available as breeding stock. That is the ultimate fate of most livestock anyway, so the loss is the genetics much more than anything else.

(14:30)

Mr. Speaker, in the past year the province of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Agriculture, has contributed — this past winter in fact — one and a half million dollars into what I will describe as a emergency well-drilling program. We ponied up a million and a half dollars, and the federal government ponied up another million and a half dollars, and that's a welcome addition. I want to point out it's an addition to the normal Prairie Farm Rehabilitation rural water development program. This is 3 million in addition, half of which came from the province of Saskatchewan just in recognition of the fact that there's such demand on our water supplies, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's very important that we would recognize that according to today's Business & Agriculture, *Leader-Post*, there's a story, a headline, Mr. Speaker, titled "May in Saskatoon driest since 1919". Now that's a long time and that's very, very dry.

The reason that I brought out that headline is simply this. In a normal year livestock producers . . . particularly as herds tend to grow, perhaps fewer herds but larger herds as we have fewer producers, wells have more demand on them. That is individual wells are providing water to more and more livestock.

Every year you're going to have some wells that deteriorate and they're no longer usable. Some of them will collapse or simply become unusable for whatever reason. In a normal year you have that going on, Mr. Speaker.

This year because the dugouts are all too often dry, that the normal . . . the sloughs, the other sources of water for livestock is dried up, Mr. Speaker, this year we have exceptional demand on our wells. We have exceptional demand on existing water supplies.

This year what we're calling for is an additional \$10 million just to recognize exceptional need for more water. And I say, Mr. Speaker, exceptional need. Frankly, digging a dugout this year isn't likely to provide any water this year. It may next year, given some runoff or . . . but it's not likely to provide any help this year.

Drilling wells will provide immediate relief where they hit water. So that's really what this is about.

And I want to stress this \$10 million request for emergency water drilling capability and water pumping capability, Mr. Speaker, has nothing to do with the US farm Bill. It has nothing to do with trade enhancement program put out by the United States government or anything that's happening in the EEC (European Economic Community).

It is strictly related to getting water to livestock on Saskatchewan's farms immediately, this year. It's related to the emergency that is added to us, an emergency that is — as I started my speech, Mr. Speaker, saying — an emergency that is no fault of Saskatchewan's producers. It's no fault of legislators on either side of the Assembly here.

But it is . . . there is something that can be done and \$10 million additional to the PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration) experience would be most welcome.

Mr. Speaker, some are going to ask why we ask for the federal government . . . The seconder of my motion, the member for Saskatoon Idylwyld, is going to deal with the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act that was originally passed in 1935 as a five-year Act. And in 1939 the federal government of the day recognized the value of water, the necessity of water to Saskatchewan farmers, to rural people across the Prairies — it wasn't just Saskatchewan. They recognized that and ended the original five-year limit on the PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act).

So, Mr. Speaker, this is additional to the great work that PFRA has done over the years. And I know that the member for Saskatoon Idylwyld has a history of it and I don't want to go too far into that history because I don't want to steal his speech.

But the PFRA has a great history in Western Canada. It's helped rural Saskatchewan. It has helped us on the farm I grew up on a number of times. It helped us with water development projects, none of which seemed to be wildly satisfactory but they got us through and they, in fact, saw that we had water for our own households and saw that our livestock had water to drink and I guess, at the end of the day, that may be as good as it gets.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation. We have a drier prairie than I have ever witnessed. I no longer can claim to be a young person. Call me whatever you want, but we have the driest, driest record in the past year that I've ever seen. I remember 1961 as the first what I would call a very dry year in my lifetime — '61 was relatively wet compared to what we've seen so far in this year.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to conclude by moving the motion, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Idylwyld. And I move:

That this Assembly urges the federal government to recognize the seriousness of the current drought on Saskatchewan's agricultural industry and commit \$10 million to a program to fund digging of new wells, digging new dugouts, and the purchase of more water-pumping equipment in order to avoid a massive sell-off of cattle this

year.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, thanks for the opportunity to join in this very important and timely debate.

Without a doubt we are facing a most severe drought in this province. Not the first one, but it is pretty severe. Yesterday CTV (Canadian Television Network Limited) *Farm News* quoted Neal Hardy, president of SARM, as estimating 70 per cent of the farm land in this province as being baked by drought. *The StarPhoenix* today, as my colleague reported, says the Saskatoon area records the driest May since 1919.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan producers are in dire straits as farmers wait for water for the crops and ranchers are worried about their pastures and hay drops. And we're all in agreement on this, and that's with no doubt. But that's not what the debate is about today. It's about where can we go for the resources to solve this issue?

The motion put before us is:

That this Assembly urges the federal government to recognize the seriousness of the current drought on Saskatchewan's agriculture industry and commit \$10 million to a program to fund digging of new wells, new dugouts, and purchase of more water-pumping equipment in order to avoid massive sell-off of our cattle this year.

Mr. Speaker, the motion put forward by the member from Regina Coronation Park is indeed the best plan of action as we must act quickly to provide relief for our agricultural producers.

I will second this motion because I believe it is the federal responsibility; they have the resources, they have the expertise, and they have the mandate. Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking specifically about the PFRA.

Now last night in preparation for this, I went on their Web site and I took a look to see what exactly was their mandate. Well the PFRA was established by an Act of Parliament in 1935 in response to widespread drought, farm abandonment, and land degradation of the 1930s.

Its role was to, at that time, to secure the rehabilitation of the drought and soil drifting areas in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. And to develop and promote within those areas systems of farm practice, tree culture, water supply, land utilization, and land settlement that will afford greater economic security.

And with this mandate, PFRA has served to promote sustainable development on the rural prairies for six decades and they've done a good job.

Now as I was on the Web site last night, I was looking for some of the success stories, what have they done well, what are some of the new innovative things that have happened around the

issue of water and drought protection, that type of thing.

And I came along this very interesting success story, and I'd like to quote this extensively. I think it's very interesting to show how people who were experts in this area are doing some very interesting things in this province.

Now, and I'll quote now:

#### New Plough Helps Install Pipelines

Take one old cutting blade, add a fresh, innovative idea, sprinkle in a few twists and hydraulics, and you have yourself a simple, yet effective pipeline layer.

This is what (the) staff at the . . . (PFRA) office in Swift Current did earlier this spring. Using a very basic plough design, workers took a discarded Noble blade, attached it to a three-point hitch, engineered a simple yet rugged hydraulic system, and created an apparatus for installing shallow buried pipelines.

(Now) "The idea came from knowing there are lots of these Noble blade ploughs sitting idly on farms," said Sherman Veitenheimer, head of water programs for PFRA's Swift Current office.

Veitenheimer helped design the plough. (He says) "Having built previous ploughs . . . (on) our pastures division on a three-point hitch system, the Noble blade has a one-inch shank which can be utilized as a cutting tool. We converted it into a plough that would enable us to thread in a pipeline while causing very little disruption to the ground."

The story goes on:

The scar this new plough leaves on the ground's surface is minimal, while cutting at a quick pace. Veitenheimer estimates the plough can lay a mile of pipe in an hour. The pipes — made of . . . (plastic) — are usually submersed between six and 12 inches into the ground, leaving them well out of harm's way.

Most producers use pipelines as an alternative to watering directly from dugouts. Water is sent from a nearby source and away from where cattle have direct access, ensuring better water quality as well as longer dugout life.

One Saskatchewan producer who put PFRA's new plough to use is Brian Weedon. Weedon owns a livestock operation 20 kilometres northwest of Swift Current, raising cattle on his 13,000 acre chunk of land.

Before installing his pipeline, Weedon relied heavily on windmills, pumps and dugouts to water his herds. As a result, watering areas were limited, costs high, and the livestock were taking a toll on the land. Different sections of land were getting grazed more heavily than others. But in the end, a reliable water supply was the main objective.

In total, (Mr. Speaker) Weedon laid ten kilometres of pipeline in May (of 2000), causing very little environmental damage. He now has numerous outlets on

his land where he can set up remote watering sites for his livestock. But the real benefit is on the financial side of the equation.

(He says, and I quote) "I would have needed four windmills to supply the same amount of water as the pipeline and the mills alone would have cost a lot more. We also would've needed to put in wells or sand points," (he says) . . . "I'd recommend shallow buried pipelines to anyone, but also suggest you do your homework first and find out what kind of terrain you have to go through."

Other benefits of shallow buried pipelines include having access to . . . reliable water supply in drought-stricken areas, consistent quality, and the ability to place outlets nearly anywhere they are needed. Veitenheimer cautions that because most pipelines are supplied by one source of water, regular maintenance is essential. Back-up sources are good to have just in case . . . (their) first (one) fails.

Now the last paragraph I want to read carefully.

"Where a producer has more than one water source, you can use one for . . . backup, but if you only have one source and the well goes down, then you're out of water," said Veitenheimer. "However, pipelines are becoming very popular in this area. Anyone who comes into our office and inquires about a dugout, we (usually) find ourselves changing their minds and thinking (about) pipeline."

Now, Mr. Speaker, I talked to Mr. Veitenheimer just about an hour ago asking him, how is this program going? And he says, well, they started out in 2000 with 10 K (kilometre) of pipeline in farms and now they're up to 100 K in the southwest area.

Now the reason it's in the southwest area so much is he's very protective about his little tool he's developed — and it's pretty neat. But what he says, there's two key important points about the work that he's done. One, is improving pasture land; and two, eliminating the need for a secondary water source. And he made that really important point.

(14:45)

Now I want to talk just briefly about the history here. As the member from Regina said it's very important that we look back over the past six decades and we look at the PFRA and what are some of the innovative things that they did.

Well in 1935 they started out and they only had a five-year mandate because they were talking about a . . . and we can all . . . we've heard the stories about the dirty thirties and how important . . .

**An Hon. Member:** —We don't remember them.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes, we don't remember them. But we've heard stories about them. And I was looking at this and at that point they had a lot of initiatives but they were paying up to \$50 per dugout. Then came along 1957, yet the beginning of another drought period. Unusually dry years across the prairies from 1957 to '62 dramatically increased demand for water development projects. Pastures are stocked to capacity.

And my colleague talked about 1961 as a year that he remembers — one of the driest years on record across most of the prairies. PFRA boundaries are extended northward to cover all agricultural areas of the prairies. And they opened five new districts in that area, in that time.

As well in 1975, the 40th anniversary of the PFRA. They've opened . . . they've helped out with over 95,000 dugouts, over 10,000 wells, over 11,000 dams, and their work is well documented. 1977, the start of yet another dry period that will last more than 10 years, well into the '80s.

I highlighted this: 1981 farmers now receiving up to \$1,500 per dugout, up from the original \$50. 1988, another dry year comparable to the droughts of '36-37, 1961, '84-85. PFRA delivers government emergency drought programs for livestock . . . (inaudible) . . . and water supplies. So the PFRA has a long history of doing the work in drought. And these are the people who have the mandate.

Our province has done an awful lot to help farmers. We spend over 5 per cent of our budget on agriculture — the federal people only spend less than 1 per cent. We spend on average \$430 per capita. This is by far the highest of any province — three point . . . three times the national average. And so we do our share.

But I think we have to go with the people who have the resources, the expertise, and the mandate. They've had this mandate for well over six decades and we should go . . . and I think it's imperative that the federal people do put in at least \$10 million on this project to help eradicate the drought this year.

So I would be seconding this motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments regarding the motion that's before us and the effects of the drought in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate part about this motion brought forward by the member from Regina, is the fact that this government, as it has in the past, continues to always blame or look towards somebody else.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're not disputing or arguing the fact that the federal government doesn't have a responsibility when it comes to a number of agricultural issues. We talk about trade related issues and the federal government has a responsibility there, and certainly my colleagues and our leader have enforced that point.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina talks about Saskatchewan's commitment, and I believe the Minister of Agriculture talked about the fact that there was a little more money in the agricultural budget. But if you take a look over the past 10 years, agriculture has actually been lowered significantly — the funding of agricultural projects and concerns in the province of Saskatchewan — which begs one to ask whether or not this government is very concerned at all, or actually is concerned in any way regarding rural Saskatchewan

and the agriculture community.

However I would have to add that I believe even the public in Saskatchewan, and people living in our large urban centres, are beginning to understand the impact of a downturn in the agricultural economy. People in our cities like Regina, and more specifically Saskatoon right now, as they continue to . . . like the agricultural community, the rural community around them, are looking for much needed moisture and trying to maintain your lawns or your gardens if you're putting in a garden. And the need for water is an important factor that everyone understands.

And, Mr. Speaker, a couple of recent headlines say it all. Basically what they say, *Leader-Post* this morning says, "North didn't get (the) rain." And the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, the headline is "Drought curtails seeding."

Mr. Speaker, those of us in this part of the province, the southern part of the province, certainly appreciate and are truly grateful for the rain that has been falling. And we certainly feel for the rest of the province, not only the agricultural community but also the forest industry where there's a significant lack of moisture resulting in forest fires that are destroying large acres of forestry and forest land that is an economic blow to this province, as well as private property.

But coming back to the motion before us, and the fact that many agriculture producers and specifically livestock producers in the province of Saskatchewan are facing a significant problem at this time.

Areas outside of this southern belt that has received rain . . . however, in some cases, even in the southern areas of the province, while the rains have been welcome and we're really grateful for them — whether it's been an inch, inch and a half, or half an inch of rain, the fact that it's come over a period of some . . . almost 48 hours and it's been cloudy and most of the moisture has soaked into the land, this wasn't a rain that really put a lot of water reserve into reservoirs if they're being depleted. So even in southern Saskatchewan many producers are facing the need for water.

And, Mr. Speaker, the provincial government does have a responsibility. While we look to PFRA . . . and I remember last fall the Minister of Agriculture going to PFRA and arguing with the federal government for the fact that they should look at expanding the funding the PFRA program was putting into water resources because they had run out of money fairly early and many, many rural producers were finding themselves — even prior to last winter — in a situation where they were short water supplies, their water resources had dried up or the wells had dried up and they had to drill new wells.

And at that time I believe the federal government came through with some funds. And it's imperative that the federal government recognize the importance of not only meeting the trade subsidies with the United States, but recognizing there's a program, that PFRA has a program available and that it should be funded adequately.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, we talk about the provincial government has to show some leadership and show us that they

have . . . that they're committed to rural producers.

The water pumping equipment in the province of Saskatchewan I believe is handled by Sask Water. And if a person has access to water, if they're . . . If a water reservoir they have is actually low or pretty well depleted, Mr. Speaker, you make an application to Sask Water and apply for a use of their equipment and get access to a water source and pump your reservoir full of water.

The unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker, is that there isn't a lot of equipment out there and the demand for that equipment far exceeds the ability . . . or the amount of equipment that's available, or the ability of the equipment to meet the needs, to try and supply the water resources that are needed to water and to provide the water for the livestock herds that . . . And the livestock producers whose livelihoods are in jeopardy as they watch their pastures dry up, and as they watch their water supplies slowly dwindle to the point of forcing them to make a decision: do I look elsewhere? Do I look to other parts of the province?

And we notice that certainly in my area, Mr. Speaker, last spring, last summer, we noticed cattle liners moving in from Alberta bringing cattle into our area and also into the western part of Manitoba. We've noticed last fall hay moving from our area and western Manitoba into western Saskatchewan and Alberta.

And, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately even the eastern parts of Saskatchewan are running short of grassland and producers are forced to look further afield. And one has to ask themselves, at the end of the day what is this going to cost me and is it an economic benefit or is it . . . or will this make my operation economically viable if I have to move livestock great distances in order to find pasture and water?

So, Mr. Speaker, while it's important for us to continue to hold the federal government's feet to the fire on a number of issues, I believe the provincial government has a responsibility as well to show some leadership; to actually make some efforts to provide more pumping equipment so that producers who have made application to fill reservoirs can gain access to some of the equipment, or to equipment from Sask Water, to actually replenish their water reservoirs in order to provide the much needed water for their livestock, and in some cases, as the member from Regina indicated, even for their homes and the lack of water that they face and the hauling that takes place.

Mr. Speaker, we have all at some time or other driven in other areas of the province that haven't been as fortunate as the area that I represent. We've been actually quite blessed with moisture even this winter, and this most recent rain. And it is somewhat disturbing to drive through an area and just see the land just totally brown — nothing on it and yet there's livestock trying to graze. Livestock producers cutting their herds trying to at least keep a few animals around to keep their herd viable.

And yet, you see them . . . one case we saw last year where an individual was driving out of the field with a large water tank while he had just left another one there to fill a . . . replenish the water supply that was available.

So, Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to those producers who are in this situation. But at the same time, while we are concerned and we empathize with those individuals, we realize that provincial governments and federal governments do have a responsibility in helping to reach out, and in this case, we're suggesting the provincial government has a responsibility to show some leadership in areas where they already have access and provide some of the resources to meet some of the drought condition needs.

And we're not going to meet it all. We realize that. We're not . . . we don't have it. We're not asking the provincial government just to dig so deep and just let the federal government off the hook. It's imperative that the federal government realize that responsibility. But it's also imperative that the provincial government realize they have some responsibility to show some leadership.

And when you go arguing and lobbying for the federal government to come forward with some money and you're not prepared to show a bit of leadership and you continue to cut your agricultural budget, you wonder at the end of the day, how is the federal government going to respond? If they say no, you can hardly wonder why they would say no when there's no leadership at the local level.

So, Mr. Speaker, while in a large part we can agree with the motion that's before us, we believe that the provincial government needs to provide some leadership as well.

**Ms. Jones:** — . . . I also welcome the opportunity to enter into this debate. And I was listening fairly carefully to the previous speaker who seems to me that on that side of the House they're always having something negative to say about whatever efforts that the government makes.

And it seems to me also, Mr. Speaker, that it would be a lot more useful if, instead of always criticizing the provincial government, that they would get on board and help in making a concerted effort in lobbying the federal government for the funds that are so desperately needed to help our agricultural producers here in Saskatchewan.

I think in terms of him saying that we ought to show some leadership, I think that the provincial government, in expending approximately 5 per cent of our annual provincial budget on agriculture, indeed shows a great deal of leadership in showing other provinces and our federal government the importance of agriculture to a province such as ours.

And I think it's very important to note also that in contrast to the 5 per cent of our budget that we spend on agriculture, the national government puts in something just over 1 per cent, I believe, of the total budget that they have which is substantially greater than ours and is supported by many, many more taxpayers as well.

(15:00)

So I think that our province indeed does show leadership in this area. And we would be much better served by an opposition who joined in an effort to secure help for farmers that are facing a very serious drought situation and as previous speakers

have said, perhaps the most serious situation since 1919. Perhaps even drier than the dirty thirties that everyone loves to hate to talk about. So . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Substantially drier than that. And so I think that a little help from the other side would go a lot further than the criticism that they simply like to always extend.

I was very interested to hear the member from Idylwyld's remarks about the PFRA. And most of us likely have some very fond memories of a project, a dugout, something that was assisted with on our farms when we were growing up.

And in my particular case, we had a coulee that ran through, actually through our farmyard. And through the help of the PFRA, that was dammed off and a road built across it to give us better access to our farmyard and a very nice swimming hole and a place to do a little bit of rowboating.

My dad was a Red Cross swimming instructor and was able to provide swimming lessons to all of the village children in the Alsask and surrounding area. And all of that and all of those badges very likely came about as a result of having the PFRA . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, two water holes in a 50-mile radius, says my colleague over here. So we all have memories, I believe.

I also thought it might be quite handy for everyone to have access to that new, noble plough. If it's going to lay such a nice trench, perhaps it would be good for underground sprinklers in cities as well.

So there's been some very interesting comments made this afternoon. And I'm pleased to be able to participate in that.

I think in terms of leadership as well that our provincial government provides, I want to recount some of the programs that are available to people. Much as the opposition doesn't seem to think that we're showing leadership, I believe that we are.

And we have a rainfall forage program which was available from Saskatchewan Crop Insurance to protect producers in the event precipitation on native forage and tame grazing acres is below historic levels. And under that program, Mr. Speaker, producers are eligible for coverage for up to \$7 an acre for native forage and up to \$9 per acre for grazed tame forage if the weighted average precipitation at weather stations falls below 80 per cent of the average precipitation.

So it is a bit of a complicated thing. But in spite of that complication, 4,000 producers insured \$3.3 million acres under this program in 2002. So obviously it was considered beneficial by the producers and well worthwhile.

We have an annual crop rainfall pilot program, and that has had a very great uptake as well. Producers are eligible for coverages of up to \$10 an acre if the precipitation falls below 80 per cent of historic level. And 2,363 producers participated in that pilot rainfall program covering just over 900,000 acres, Mr. Speaker.

Not perhaps used to the same extent by livestock producers, but NISA can be triggered if the producer is falling below their traditional income. CFIP is available to provide protection to

producers against severe drops in the producer's gross margin.

We have a range assistance program, Mr. Speaker, where lessees of Crown lands that are experiencing the effects of dry conditions can apply for reduced rents under this program. And I think that that is as well a very helpful program that the government has made available to producers.

They must indeed sign a range of improvement agreement covering a term of five to ten years, where they agree to reduce the level of stocking because the lands are stressed as a result of a lack of moisture and it's going to be necessary to make changes to improve the utilization of these.

But the rents are reduced by an amount that's equivalent with the level of reduction in stocking so it works its way out.

We're also able, Mr. Speaker, to accommodate drought-affected livestock on Crown land. And this program includes allowing lessees to custom graze drought-affected livestock, and allowing forage crops to be sold to others that require the feed.

So community pasture managers can assist this by moving cattle, as many cattle as they can, to other community pastures that have unutilized capacity. So they are able to move the stock back and forth and hopefully be able to feed in a better way.

There's the farm dugout pumping assistance program, which is operated by Sask Water, to provide farmers with pumping equipment at cost. And where it may not be a permanent answer, it's certainly a temporary solution that helps out with filling small storage reservoirs.

Power takeoff pumps and aluminum pipe and pipe trailers are available on a fee-for-service basis from regional Sask Water depots, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We have rural development programs where the PFRA provides financial assistance for the development of dependable, secure water sources for domestic and livestock uses. And it's important to note that in 2001-02 they did come through with some money and Saskatchewan made a one-time contribution of 1.5 million as well, matching the federal contribution to allow more producer access. And that was an important start. And then in 2002-03, 2.2 million in federal funding is allocated to this program.

So we have requested . . . officially Sask Agriculture and Food has requested an additional 5 million, but I think that there's an understanding amongst everyone here that 5 million is going to be a very great help but it isn't going to be sufficient.

So along with those programs, the one thing that I came across in doing some research here was a very interesting article that has a grant from Sask Power, I believe. And I think . . . I don't have time to talk about that very much now but I think it's going to be an important thing that producers will enjoy learning about and I'm sure there'll be an opportunity to talk about it at a later date.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll take my place and I urge support for this motion.



**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a great deal of pleasure to speak on this 75-minute debate concerning a real, very severe situation in much of the province, much of the northern part of the province. As we know the rains have not come to much of Saskatchewan. It's created a huge impact on the farming community. As we know, it's affecting right now, affecting the livestock producer more right now. It soon will be having a devastating effect on the grain producer as well.

As we know, without spring rains the pastures have not grown and very little snow means there was very little runoff to fill any sloughs or dugouts. And this has put the livestock producers in the province in a very tenable position and one only has to take as an example a RM in the constituency of Redberry Lake, the council of RM Great Bend, No. 405 has declared itself a disaster area.

The reeve, Ron Saunders, confirmed after talking with various grain and livestock producers within the RM the lack of moisture had taken its toll on pastures, dugouts, and fields. In his words:

There just isn't any water. In the northern part of the RM, there are sloughs that many elderly have never seen without water before.

Ground wells have run dry putting a strain on the cattle industry. Many cattle producers have been hauling water for their cattle all winter.

And he goes on to say:

This (is not a common sight) was a common sight all over the Riverbend area, not just Great Bend.

And he says:

This is (very) serious. Community pastures are refusing to admit cattle unless there is some rain and the potential for fires is (very) high.

(Of course) grain producers from all over the Riverbend area have been checking their fields for moisture only to find powder dry soil. Lack of winter snow cover and spring showers has added more strain to the struggling farm economy.

That's just one example in one part of northwest Saskatchewan that has sought to declare itself a disaster area.

It's a very traumatic situation because this is not the first year of drought in much of this area and much of this part of Saskatchewan. In some areas, this is the third and fourth year of drought, so it's been a very serious concern for quite some time. And it's taking a devastating effect on the livestock producers.

As we know, what choices do many livestock producers have? It's fundamental to the provincial economy and the provincial livestock industry that farmers and ranchers keep their basic breeding herd on the farm, on the ranch. And these animals are not animals that can be sold and replaced easily or without

considerable expense in another year.

It's one thing to sell off the yearlings and other animals that may be around, but to sell off the breeding herd that has taken many years, in many cases, generations of breeding and selecting to find the optimum animal that suits that particular rancher's or farmer's situation and the . . . also reflecting the market conditions that do change over time.

So it's very fundamental that we as legislators put in place finances to help these producers keep their livestock on the ranch. As I said, once they're gone, it's a tremendous loss to the economy and to that individual producer who may not be able to get back into the livestock business with that particular type of breeding stock again because of the years it takes to replace quality animals.

I have heard from many constituents that they're beginning, or have been for some time feeding . . . supplementing the feed to their breeding animals on the farm out in pastures. If they have dugouts or wells out in the pasture, they are taking feed out to the livestock, in many cases hay or straw if it's available, but that's running out.

And there's other products that livestock producers can use. Grain screening pellets is a very important product that can be used for livestock feed. And normally these feeds are used in the wintertime and not used in the summer, of course, relying on the grass and pastures that in normal years are available for the livestock producer. So there's a tremendous cost of buying extra feed, basically feeding your animals year-round, which has added a tremendous financial strain to the producers of this province.

But that is also an added problem if the pastures do not have adequate water. Then the producer must also haul water to the cattle out in the pastures or dig very expensive wells or dig dugouts or clean dugouts out.

Now many dugouts do not . . . are not supplied by springs and they need runoff. So digging dugouts at this time of year is not necessarily going to help in the short term. Now of course wells are definitely more effective if you can get water in that particular area, but it's a very high cost.

And there's other problems with livestock. When you are feeding them year-round, there's a reproductive problem that could occur. Normally breeding stock need to be flushed before breeding season and . . . so that they have a higher conception rate. And feeding animals dry feed in the summertime during breeding season can cause considerable loss in production and conception rates, which is an added financial problem to the livestock producer.

There's a number of constituents that are considering and are digging in pipes. They are pumping water from the yard to pastures a mile or two miles away. And this is the area where these producers need financial help now to help them with the cost of pumping and putting in the piping to give water to the livestock.

(15:15)

And so we as legislators must take a serious look at helping these livestock producers to help offset some of these costs now, because now is the critical time of the . . . of this . . . in this drought that these producers are needing help. And if we do not help them soon, these producers will be forced to sell off their . . . their very important breeding stock and this breeding stock will be gone for . . . for generations in many cases.

Now these animals are going on the market. We know that cow-calf pairs are being sold in record numbers. Normally this time of the year the markets are fairly slow and there aren't a lot of cattle being sold, but this year that is not the case. There are a number of breeding stock going to market, as well as feeders. And so this is added . . . has added the extra weight of concern to the . . . to the crisis in the livestock industry right now.

The other thing that some producers are doing are going into . . . actually taking their animals into Manitoba, renting and leasing pastures in Manitoba and moving their livestock there. And again, hopefully, if the weather is good to Saskatchewan, when the rains come back these cattle will come back. But in many cases people may just continue to leave their cattle out in Manitoba or elsewhere and start their productions out there and continue their operations out there.

I believe that a commitment of \$10 million to the program of digging new wells and digging dugouts and purchase of more water, pumping equipment, and I hope that also would include piping and underground trenching and things like that, it would be very important at this stage.

And I believe the way the federal government has always operated in the past, if the provincial government was willing to put some money into a plan, the PFRA or other . . . or another plan, the federal government would come in and top up that amount or on some basis increase the amount of money that's committed to these projects. So if there was \$10 million put into the fund, the federal government would certainly add to that as well. So that's something we as legislators must take into account, the dynamics of how the federal government thinks and works.

I would, just in conclusion, like to emphasize the deep concern that we must have for the livestock industry and we must take all the initiative and give help wherever it's needed in the . . . in this drought disaster area and to help the livestock producers of this province to basically survive for one more year until next year or . . .

**The Speaker:** — The member's time has elapsed. Next speaker.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to be able to stand today to speak to this particular motion.

As the members of this Assembly will be aware, drought has been a major concern to the constituents of Cypress Hills for a number of years now. It's not just a recent phenomenon. It isn't something that just occurred last summer. In many parts of the constituency drought has been a matter of serious concern for at least two years, three years, and in some small parts even more than that.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that drought is just now becoming an issue of provincial concern is a bit of a surprise I'm sure to the constituents of Redberry Lake and of Lloydminster constituencies and some of the other constituencies in the Northwest where, as I understand it, they've been affected by drought for maybe half a dozen years now and are in desperate, desperate need of help in those constituencies — maybe even more so than producers throughout the rest of the province.

Mr. Speaker, it's rather easy in our short memories to forget about the impact of drought when you've just experienced a weekend of beautiful rain. And I know that we have seen some nice moisture fall in the extreme southern part of the province, generally, approximately from the No. 1 Highway south. And the impact of that rain, both physically and emotionally and mentally, is tremendous. You know, the attitude of producers improves dramatically after a rain of any kind. And I think that we noticed that at home over the weekend when we talked to producers who were enjoying the first decent rainfall of the spring season.

But we don't want to let this small amount of rain that we received very gladly cloud our perception of the problem. Because the problem, Mr. Speaker, is tremendously serious through the vast areas of this province. Through the areas north of the No. 1 Highway in particular, up into the mid-range of the agricultural areas of the province in the Saskatoon area, into the Melfort/Tisdale area, Prince Albert — all those, all those areas are experiencing very severe drought. And I'm sure that any member who has rural components to their constituency has heard first-hand the stories from producers who are suffering seriously as a result of the current drought.

I think it's been mentioned in the House this afternoon that, statistically speaking, this past year was the driest year in recorded history in this province. We've all heard either our parents or our grandparents talk about the impact of drought in the Depression era of the '30s, but if I understand the data correctly, Mr. Speaker, even in the driest part of the Depression era, in the driest years of the 1930s, there was lots of snow, a large amount of snow available for spring runoff. We had heavy and hard winters in the '30s, and the runoff produced pools of water and opportunities to dam water in certain places where dams existed, even though the summers were very dry.

So having come through a summer now that was even drier than those historical years of the Depression era is really something. And I think that having had that kind of statistical information made available to us, Mr. Speaker, it behoves us as legislators, people who represent this province, and producers that have been hit harder than at any time in this last century, it behoves us to address their problems in a more specific, serious, and deliberate way.

And I think the motion today talks about a \$10 million fund that could be used to good advantage for water sources, and developing new water opportunities for hard-pressed producers. The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that it insinuates very clearly that the responsibility all rests with the federal government.

I heard a bit of the history delineated concerning the PFRA and how they've done good work over the years, and how they have traditionally taken the lead in this particular area of

development. But, Mr. Speaker, when push comes to shove, is the federal government going to feel the consequences of the drought as much as this province is? Is the federal government and the treasury of the federal government going to be impacted as seriously as our provincial treasury? Is it the federal cattle herd proportionately that's going to be hurt, or is it the provincial cattle herd that is going to be hurt worse?

Mr. Speaker, these are very real and specific questions. And I don't think there's any doubt, if you did the math, if you looked at the consequences, that the herd sell-off that's going to be happening in this province, which has already happened to a large extent and which will continue to increase, the herd sell-off will have a financial impact in this province of far greater proportions than the impact will be felt at the federal level.

It only makes sense, Mr. Speaker, when it's your house that's burning down, that you participate in a fire brigade. And I think that to lay the burden of this particular relief effort solely on the federal government is an abdication of responsibility by the provincial government.

Now there might be some room for compromise and there might be some room for working together. But to just say it's not our problem, it's their problem because, historically, the PFRA has been responsible for water development ignores the reality, ignores the reality of the current circumstances and the reality of the impact that will be felt in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I did some research in my own constituency and found some serious information that was compiled as of February, early February this year, but it talks about what has happened in rural Saskatchewan in my particular constituency as a result of the drought.

I had one rancher who sold 200 head of cows last year. He possibly will sell the balance of his herd this year. And he's already at his own expense, primarily, put in 12 miles of pipeline on lease land. Lease land that does not even belong to him. Lease land that is owned by the provincial government. Lease land that is charged to this man's account. This man has to pay the taxes on that lease land. Now he's put a water pipeline in there at his own expense.

This is the kind of effort people have gone to at their own expense and their own initiative to try and assist themselves in this very serious crisis.

I have another rancher who sold down 30 per cent of his herd. He sent his yearlings to Manitoba at 65 cents per head per day last summer. The cows went east. They were being fed there for the winter. The calves were being fed there. They weren't even going to come home. And this particular individual put in five miles of pipeline for water sources on the lease.

Another rancher reduced his herd by 15 per cent. He had \$19,000 worth of water work done last summer on lease land, Mr. Speaker. Another \$5,000 worth of work on deeded land where he put in a water system.

Mr. Speaker, this list is extensive. I've just given you three, maybe four examples of the kinds of initiatives taken by people

in my constituency.

Last year, we asked for a water program. The provincial government was warned on March 4 that we had a drought impending. It took until late last fall for anything to be done, Mr. Speaker. And by then, for many of the ranchers in my constituency and other areas of this province, it was too late to complete the work.

Mr. Speaker, a \$10 million program is a minimum given the magnitude of the problem. And I believe the provincial government needs to take seriously its role and go to the federal government and put up at least half the money, start the bargaining process someplace and let's get this work underway. We cannot afford to wait any longer.

If APAS, the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, is correct, we soon will have very, very little herd left in this province. We cannot afford to lose another minute, another day, or another cow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order. Sixty-five minutes of the debate has elapsed. We now proceed to the 10-minute section for comments or questions.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is for the member from Cypress Hills. And I was struck by his comments about how we all do feel for our neighbours and I was struck also by the comments that people in the cities also feel the extent of the drought.

But I am concerned that if we don't ask the federal government for \$10 million, and particularly in the area of PFRA, that if instead Saskatchewan takes that over, is that something the member from Cypress Hills sees us doing on a continual basis? In effect setting up our own provincial PFRA because we know the problem closer? And I would . . . I'd like to hear his response to that question.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to thank the member for the question. The reality of the situation is of such magnitude, Mr. Speaker, that I think we are wasting time by debating this issue. I think, given my experience in the sales business, you start out with a price and you have a bargaining position, and you know where you want to end up at.

If the province is not prepared to put \$10 million into this program, then they need to at least go to the federal government and say, this is what we're prepared to do; what are you prepared to do?

And I would remind the member once again that a bargaining position has to start someplace. You have to have a beginning and an end, and every negotiation requires those two elements. So I would suggest that we take that approach and we quit playing politics with this and get something done for the producers of this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the member from Regina Coronation Park. I was just notified that the Deputy Premier, the Agriculture minister, in an interview out in the rotunda said that he . . . the government would be interested in cost sharing with the federal government concerning this very important issue.

And I would just like to ask the member does he agree, should the provincial government cost share with the federal government? If the provincial government is prepared to put in so many million dollars — possibly if the federal government is going to put in 10 million, possibly the provincial government should put in 10 million and top it up to \$20 million and have an adequate program in place for this very disastrous situation in rural Saskatchewan and the livestock industry.

(15:30)

**Mr. Trew:** — Mr. Speaker, to the member for Redberry Lake. I don't believe that question is in order. Simply put, what's debated here is what we're asking questions about. What he said she said somewhere else — what a member might have said out in the rotunda, what your member might have said in his constituency or anywhere else — has little relevance to the debate that's going on here.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Trew:** — Now the question is: do we have \$10 million from the federal government to help with emergency drilling of wells? The answer is yes, we need to get that.

The further part of the member's question was: what's the provincial responsibility? In my speech I said last winter we ponyed up a million and a half dollars, and the federal government matched that. That was extra money beyond the normal PFRA money, and we welcomed their extra million and a half and we were pleased to pony up our million and a half.

But what the Minister of Agriculture may have said out in the rotunda has no direct bearing on this particular debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for that. I have a supplementary question to the member from Regina Coronation Park.

I would like to have the member clarify exactly what the government's position on cost sharing with the federal government. I believe it's very important, as a . . . in a negotiating tactic with the federal government, to put some money on the table and go to the federal government and say, this is how serious of a situation we have in this province. We're prepared to put up, let's say \$10 million. Will you come in and match, or come in even with a \$15 million package to have a total of a \$25 million package for this very disastrous situation in Saskatchewan?

**Mr. Trew:** — Mr. Speaker, again I thank the member for Redberry for the question. This is kind of like asking a

drowning person to provide their own life jacket, Mr. Speaker.

What we have is a situation where we're asking for some emergency water drilling. In terms of agriculture policy — for the member of Rosthern and others — in terms of agricultural policy, we have question period, we have estimates for the Department of Agriculture. Those are all appropriate places to ask about provincial funding, provincial cost sharing.

What my motion, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Idylwyld, said is we're asking for \$10 million extra — 10 million extra — simply to provide emergency well drilling to deal with an emergency situation that we have right now in our livestock producing areas. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's for the member from Cypress Hills.

I think that his speech was quite interesting to listen to today. The analogy he uses is of a person waiting for their house to burn down for the fire department to show up. I wonder if a more appropriate analogy isn't that he is asking for bleeding men to give themselves transfusions. Because this is exactly the kind of approach the Sask Party has put forth.

Now what I would like to hear is the Sask Party explain why this is not Ottawa's responsibility and why they are once again letting the federal Liberals off the hook.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to note that in the question the member just addressed to me, he referred to his own government as bleeding men. And I think that's quite appropriate under the circumstances because they are bleeding red ink all over this province.

You know, we looked at their budget this spring and found out that it was not just wanting, it was in desperate need of an infusion. Maybe a transfusion would be a better word to use, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I don't care which political party looks after this problem. What I would like to see is some political party with the intestinal fortitude to recognize the seriousness of the issue and take some action.

Now it was referred to earlier actions last year and for instance when we were asking for a water assistance program for producers that the provincial government put up \$1.5 million, the feds put up \$1.5 million, and eventually we had another 1.1 million. It was cost shared then. What's the problem with doing it now?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you. A supplementary question for the member from Cypress Hills. I find it interesting . . . Let me preface my remarks by saying I find it interesting that he would start off his answer about how serious this is while making a flippant comment about the hemorrhaging that is going on within the beef producing industry. I find that very interesting.

My question to the Sask Party member from Cypress Hills is

this: if this is their approach today, how long until they fall off the bandwagon in terms of the approach that the Leader of the Opposition has said in terms of a united front with Ottawa?

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, we're not talking about trade injury here. We're talking about drought assistance — a drought that is being felt in our province worse than anywhere else.

You would think, Mr. Minister, that a government that thinks it has the legitimacy to govern would do what's appropriate in its . . . in terms of its obligations. The drought is affecting our province.

The question is: will this government show some leadership in addressing the problem?

Mr. Speaker, I cannot take any action on this side. Unfortunately I'm helpless in view of the particular coalition that this government has formed. They have all the cards in their hands. I wish they would play them so that somebody — somebody — would benefit from the game.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Speaker, the motion called on the federal government — and you didn't hear my colleagues arguing the fact that the federal government has a responsibility — but I believe, Mr. Speaker, what we have in front of us is the provincial government has some responsibility to give some leadership.

And we look at pumping . . . equipment needed to pump wells or to pump . . . fill your water reservoirs, and Sask Water has equipment. However there's a real lack; there just isn't enough right now.

And I'm asking, Mr. Speaker, the member, what his government . . . the responsibility that his government has in providing and giving some leadership to meet some of the needs of the drought-stricken livestock producers in the province of Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank the member from Moosomin for the question. Mr. Speaker, it's a long list of things that we're doing to help agricultural producers.

Let me start with crop insurance where the province of Saskatchewan . . . taxpayers of Saskatchewan, we fund 35 per cent of the premium — 35 per cent of the premium, Mr. Speaker, funded by taxpayers and this is for agriculture producers. We're proud of it. It's for livestock producers; it's for grain producers. Our portion has stayed the same; the federal government has dropped. We increased ours to 108 million this year, that's taxpayers' funding to farmers.

**The Speaker:** — Order. The 75-minute debate time has elapsed.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

#### Motion No. 12 — Drought Assistance for Livestock Producers

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as with the other motion, I have to agree with the speakers from before and with things that we've said in the House numerous times.

Something that we know quite well in this House on both sides is the importance of the cattle industry for our province. And statistically, globally, when we look at the markets, the cattle markets, and what is needed and what can be supplied and where, we know that there is room to expand the cattle industry in Saskatchewan. And we know that there's a good reason to expand the industry in our province.

Often we hear different speakers on business and economic development that we are behind our neighbouring provinces in the expansion of intensive livestock operations and value added through intensive . . . or through livestock within our province.

We've got one province to the east of us, Mr. Speaker, that has developed the hog industry far beyond our own here in Saskatchewan. We have a province to the west of us that developed the cattle industry far better than we have in Saskatchewan.

And it has been to the detriment at the farm gate, I'm afraid, for our province. We've been more dependent on the grains and oilseeds. And therefore our, you know, bottom line incomes is lower. So we know that there is a good reason to expand the cattle industry in our province.

The ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) committee which had done extensive research on what we need in order to revitalize rural Saskatchewan to help the rural economy, and then subsequently the economy as a whole in our province, had on page A-23 wrote the following on the cattle industry:

Saskatchewan's natural advantage in the production of low-priced feed grains and forages favours the production and feeding of livestock. This conversion from grains to livestock is accelerating over the last few years and promises to continue in the future.

High transportation costs, low grain/oilseed prices and abundance of marginal land, which can be converted from grain to grass, have put Saskatchewan in an ideal position to expand (the) livestock production. It is expected that the cow-herd will significantly increase in the next 5 years.

Backgrounding continues to bridge the gap between the cow/calf and feedlot sectors. There is considerable potential for growth in the province. Interest in this area is growing substantially with grass-fed cattle being a profitable area and an important part of sustainable agriculture.

So there could be no little question, or very little question — I'm sorry — that there is quite a significant social and economic benefit can be achieved in rural Saskatchewan and in Saskatchewan as a whole with the development and expansion of the beef sector in our province.

The value-added returns of backgrounding and fattening cattle in our province will achieve a positive economic increase for the net income at the farm gate and for the province as a whole. And presently we do have the second largest beef herd in Canada, but unfortunately it's drastically below the leader in our country.

And in the past we have lagged by percentage of growth as well.

There's a number of reasons why we've had difficulty growing livestock sectors in our province. There's a lack of capital investment dollars that comes into our province. There's extremely high property taxes. I've heard where other tax structures are a deterrent to investment dollars in our province as well. And there's a number of other factors that I've heard.

But the fact is that, recently, we've experienced a renewed realization of how important it is to have livestock increases in our province. And the leaders within that industry realize that in order to sustain the future of the rural economy, we need to expand the livestock sectors within our province. And because of that, it was indeed happening in our province. The cattle industry was growing — not as speedily as some had hoped that it could and would, but it has been slowly expanding.

And now that this very important industry that we've been trying to grow is facing a drought last year and again this year . . . And I really stress, Mr. Speaker, that this is the second year where it's facing a drought and that is going to have huge effects on the cattle industry. The government knew that there was a strong possibility of a second year of a drought and we have to really question what they did to prepare for it. It wasn't a surprise. There was a lot of talk last year that, yes, it's a dry year and what will happen if next year is the same.

Well next year is the same, Mr. Speaker. And what they did to address the possibility of yet a second year of a drought was they decrease the agriculture budget. They designed the most inadequate drought program that I've ever seen — or this province, for that matter, has ever seen.

It involves investing or betting per se on 500 acres at a weather station of your choice. It doesn't matter where that is. And it accepts 24 farmers per weather station or less than 2,000 farmers in the whole province, which is less than 5 per cent of the producers in this province and can participate in the program. And that's what they bragged as our drought assistance program.

(15:45)

It was sort of championed by our Agriculture minister as the greatest thing since sliced bread. But in fact it doesn't address the problems and it doesn't address the need that we have in this province, and it shows a complete lack of action and a complete lack of vision on behalf of this government.

And sadly enough, that's typical of this government. They have gone through so many years of crisis management that they're at the point now where they can't even do that well. They can't even manage the crisis well.

And, Mr. Speaker, this government's lack of vision and lack of understanding, and lack of being able to address the future years and what may happen to the future is totally unacceptable. And the lack of the understanding of the cattle industry and what's happening, and how drought is going to affect the cattle industry in this province, by our very own Agriculture minister, is quite appalling.

Mr. Speaker, this drought is going to bring all the plans that the industry had and that this province had of expanding the livestock sector in this province to its knees. There is a shortage of water. There's a shortage of feed. And there's a shortage of grazeable pasture because it's drying up right before our very eyes.

One of the bigger pastures that I have in my area is the Wolverine PFRA pasture. A lot of producers are quite dependent upon it, and to date they will not accept any cattle into that pasture.

Every day there's more and more articles in the newspapers of how serious that this problem is becoming. To quote some of the headlines we have, "Drought put pastures in peril." "APAS calls for drought payment for cow owners." "Provincial budget does not recognize agriculture as an economic driver." "Drastic action needed to save provincial cow herd." "No time to wait and see with livestock." "Drought areas at point of no return."

And it goes on and on and on, the number of articles, the number of people who are voicing their concerns for the cattle industry. And yet what does our government do? Basically they just ignore it and they say there's not a problem.

And APAS has predicted that the producers will have to sell between 50 to 70 per cent of Saskatchewan's cattle at fire sale prices. And if that indeed does happen — and it is happening; we've got a number of auction marts that have contacted us, said that the number of cattle going through their rings has increased drastically over this time of last year, so it is indeed happening — it's going to take years for industry to recover from this, Mr. Speaker.

And considering that all this is happening, considering that it's well known in the public, considering that there is a public outcry, I was quite appalled that on May 22 during question period, our Minister of Agriculture stated, and I quote:

. . . there are a number of things that we have been doing with the federal government, the national government, and with producer organizations in this province to prepare ourselves . . . for the kinds of situations that we might face again this year. And these are the kinds of things, Mr. Speaker, that we've done.

We've gone to our Ottawa friends and said that we need in this province to have an enhanced crop insurance program . . .

We've said that we need to take a portion of our crop insurance dollars and we need to restructure them so that they make their way to the grass program and to the pasture program.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can't explain to the minister any better than the producers in the industry have obviously tried to. This is all well and fine but the cattle need water now. They actually . . . they need water every day, Mr. Speaker. And our minister needs to know that, that cattle need water every day and they need feed every day.

And the fact is neither are readily available at this point so that we cannot wait for the enhanced crop insurance, such as it is, and that's questionable. They have to have something in place now.

And I think it's time that our Agriculture minister recognizes the seriousness of that. And it's time that he recognizes what's going to happen long term to the cattle industry in our province if he continues to ignore this problem.

It's estimated that 800,000 cattle could be on the auction block within our . . . in our province this year due to wells and dugouts that have gone dry and that the natural creek-ways in some areas has dried up as well.

And this again has been . . . we've asked the minister what he's going to do for water in our province and the need for water for livestock producers. And his answer to that, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

. . . what we've said to the PFRA . . . — which is the Prairie farm rehabilitation program, which is managed by the federal government — we've said to the federal government that . . . (we) need to put additional dollars in, Mr. Speaker, and it's historical that the prairie . . . (and) the PFRA has provided funding forever, Mr. Speaker, for water programs . . .

I'm on record, Mr. Speaker, today asking the national government to put in additional money into the PFRA program, Mr. Speaker, because there is a drought in Saskatchewan of which we know — a serious drought, Mr. Speaker, for livestock producers and for cattle producers in this province.

So I guess my question to the minister has to be like how's that going for him so far? And what if . . . My understanding to date, there is no further funding beyond the traditional or the regular available PFRA programs. So he can continue to bicker away along with the federal government and he can continue to wait for the federal government, and in the meantime, the producers can keep on selling their cattle.

And I'm curious, Mr. Speaker, who the Minister of Agriculture thinks that's going to affect? Because my fear, it's going to affect the economy of the province. It's not going to make a huge dent in the federal government's economy. It's going to make a huge dent in the provincial economy. It's going to make a huge dent in the incomes and the viability to earn a living for people who live right here in our province.

You know the Thursday before last, the minister said that he met with the Saskatchewan Cattle Feeders Association. And I know that they would have described to him the seriousness of the situation. And yet, he just doesn't seem to be getting it.

The following day in question period again he was questioned on what was going to be made available provincially, to address what is happening provincially — a crisis that's happening in the livestock industry right here in this province. And he talked about how they had more hay listed on their Web site than a year ago at this time. And he implied that there was more feed out there than a year ago.

And I really hope that he was just feeling pressured by question period, because I can't imagine that he was serious. Because it's the most . . . it's to me . . . that statement was as naive as the small child that covers up their face, Mr. Speaker, and they think that you can't see them because they've, they put their hands before their face.

The Web site, to my understanding, was just set up a year ago, Mr. Speaker, and people are . . . last year just started to know about it a little bit. The fact that there's more posted this year than last year, when the program was just started last year, surely can't be that big of a surprise to the minister that there would be more postings than last year.

But I did go to the Web site, Mr. Speaker, just to see if indeed we were flooded by postings of bales and feed that was for sale. And I checked it out. And the Web page is called, "Feed and Forage Listing Service" and it's under the Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization Web site. And I noticed that there are a whopping big 21 listings for bales. So I don't know if the minister doesn't understand the cattle industry. I hope he understands better than that. But 21 listings for bales, Mr. Speaker, is hardly going to sustain the cattle industry in our province.

And a lot of those listings are straw bales. They're not even, you know, hay bales or alfalfa bales or some substantial feed bales. They're straw bales, Mr. Speaker, and that's not going to go very far in sustaining our cattle industry.

Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, May 23, our Minister of Agriculture said a number of things. He said that there was 14 million tonnes of hay for our producers across the province.

And I have to say that that has to be questionable and I'm not sure how he knows that. But again, it astounds me that he's denying that there's a shortage of feed out there. And it's time that he woke up to reality. The reality is that there is no hay out there. There is very, very little; that we are weeks away from running out of hay and feed for our cattle.

The other thing that he said that was kind of humorous and . . . was that he said:

I want to say . . . Mr. Speaker, that last year at this time we had the 2.325 million head of cattle. This year, Mr. Speaker, we have 2.235 million head of cattle — (which is) up 10,000 head over last year.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if he didn't know before, he should read this and realize that those numbers are down 100,000 head. They're not up. We have less cattle. He needs to do his math on that one. And he said:

. . . we're working closely with livestock producers to make

a difference.

So my question is what's his difference? What's he going to do right now within a week to make a difference to the cattle industry in this province?

When we suggested to the government that through Sask Water that we should, as a provincial government, spend \$10 million on our own industry, within our own province, for our own infrastructure of water, for wells, dugouts and pumping equipment, what did our minister do?

Well, he said no. He said that we cannot pump \$10 million of the Saskatchewan taxpayers' money into livestock industry in rural Saskatchewan. He said that it was a dumb, dumb, dumb, dumb idea.

And yet he condones SaskTel trying to spend \$80 million in rural Australia even if the Australians don't agree with him, Mr. Speaker, because SaskTel is finding a hard time finding a partner in Australia. It doesn't matter. Our Minister of Agriculture agrees with it. He feels that it's quite fine to spend \$80 million in rural Australia but he thinks spending \$10 million in water infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan is a dumb, dumb, dumb, dumb idea.

So you've got to wonder, Mr. Speaker, where the heck our minister's priorities are and it obviously isn't here. It obviously isn't with the agriculture producers within our own province, and I find that unbelievable and unacceptable.

The other thing that he said is that it's the federal government's responsibility. And you know for this side of the House and for the producers in the province, this whole line is getting very, very tiresome.

We're not talking about trade injury to subsidies here. We're talking about our industry, our economic future, our livestock producers, and we're not suggesting an ad hoc, one-year little program here to be financed by the province. We're talking about long-term infrastructure for the future growth of the industry as well as to address the drought of today.

So there's a member opposite who's chirping away saying 10 million a year, and he knows perfectly well we asked for 10 million this year, unless he's predicting a drought every year for the next number of years.

And the minister tried to convince the media that this, you know if we did all of a sudden invest in our own industry, it would hurt our ability to secure assistance for water from the federal government. And that simply isn't true. And I don't believe for a minute if our government invested in some water infrastructure on its own that we would then be eliminated from the future PFRA monies. Alberta has done so and it hasn't harmed their negotiations with the federal government.

(16:00)

And quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost — and most people know that in the House — I'm a wife and mother. And when I look at my children and I'm thinking, if I had 10 children and I would — as I only have 3 — but if I had 10, I

know that I have responsibilities to those children and they know that I have responsibilities to them and they rely on me for certain things. But you know if I had 1 child out of the 10 who consistently did absolutely nothing to help themselves and kept on coming back to me and saying, well it's your fault that I have this problem, it's your fault I have that problem, and if I said, well what are you going to do to get yourself out of your troubles — nothing — I have to say there would come a point where I would not be inspired to help that child as much as the rest.

So it is time that we stopped using that as an excuse. We can't do that because the federal government won't help us out any more. We simply can't help ourselves because the federal government won't help us.

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — It's absolutely ridiculous to keep on saying it time and time again — it's the federal government's responsibility.

But again I pose the question: whose economy does it hurt if the livestock sector of this province is devastated by a drought? Who pays the price? Who pays the price at the end of the day — the federal economy or the . . .

**The Speaker:** — I ask the members to allow the member to continue with her debate.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — . . . Mr. Speaker. I think it's naive to deny that it's going to affect our province more than the country as a whole. I think it's lacking in economic knowledge if you believe that it's going to affect the country the same amount as the province. I think it's lacking in vision as to how to address problems that are happening in our province. And I think it's time that this government got their priorities straight. This is our industry and we need to help them.

And as so many things where the Saskatchewan Party has . . . have to give suggestions in the last year on how we could help the economy, this is yet another one. This is another suggestion of how we could help the problems that are happening in our province.

We laid out an ethanol plan and they ended up basically laying out the same plan later. We had a motion in the House, not once, not twice, but it took three times suggesting that there should be a summit with the Western provinces over the US farm Bill. And now after the third time of the Saskatchewan Party putting forward that motion, it has come about and it looks like it will be fruitful. So we're going to give them yet another suggestion.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make the motion, seconded by the member from Humboldt:

That this Assembly urges the provincial government to recognize the seriousness of the current drought on Saskatchewan's agriculture industry and commit \$10 million to a program to fund digging of new wells, digging new dugouts, and the purchase of more water-pumping equipment in order to avoid a massive sell-off of cattle this



year.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to second the motion put forward by the member from Watrous that the

... Assembly urges the provincial government to recognize the seriousness (the very serious situation at hand) of the current drought in Saskatchewan's agriculture industry and commit \$10 million to a program to fund digging of new wells, digging new dugouts, and the purchase of more water-pumping equipment in order to avoid a massive sell-off of cattle this year.

Mr. Speaker, if the NDP government is at all in touch with what's happening in this province, it should be no surprise to them that we are suffering a major drought. We have areas of the province that are varied in their severity of drought, but nonetheless we have a major drought.

Mr. Speaker, all the way from Canora-Pelly through Humboldt up through St. Louis, up to Aberdeen, all the way back to Watrous and halfway to Regina now we have a major situation of dry, dry land. Mr. Speaker, if one would drive through there ... And I would suggest that maybe some of the NDP members get in their vehicles and get out there and have a look to understand and feel the impact of what happens when there is a drought.

Mr. Speaker, when they got on their bus last year, they probably didn't see this sort of a situation. They probably weren't looking for it but the fact is it remains, Mr. Speaker. Dugouts are bone-dry. Mr. Speaker, wells on farms are bone-dry. There is no water for beef or dairy herds.

Mr. Speaker, I was at a function, as well you probably know, in Aberdeen last Saturday. The Minister of Finance was there also, and I really truly wish he would have, after the function we were at, talked a little bit further with some of the farmers that were there. I wish he would have taken a drive out into the areas around there, because I had a farmer speak to me there about having to sell off his dairy herd within a period of two weeks now simply because it would be totally impossible for him to keep on with the lack of water right now.

Mr. Speaker, we have a need to take some responsibility, or the NDP government certainly does in this province to provide means whereby farmers and rural people in rural areas can access water. We need to hear the government across say that they will take the responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, all of us agree that there is a drought. There's no doubt about that. The words are there; we're saying there's a drought. Both sides of the House agree with that.

Who is responsible? This is where the debate comes to a head. Mr. Speaker, the NDP government are saying it is the federal government. I mean they need to blame just about everybody that they can blame. They need to put the responsibility on everyone but themselves.

Mr. Speaker, many, many of the speakers across the way have been talking about where are we going to get this \$10 million

from? Well, Mr. Speaker, if they would manage the affairs of the province properly and stay out of risky ventures overseas, it would be a great deal of help to the taxpayers of this province. And we ...

**The Speaker:** — Order, please.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess when you fail the people of the province in so many ways as this NDP government has, they need a number of scapegoats and they find them very readily.

Mr. Speaker, here is a way that they have been wasting money on risky ventures, money that could have been used for the people of this province — \$80 million by the NDP's new Information Services Corporation on a computerized land titles system that still doesn't work, that they're trying to sell around the world.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$28 million on the infamous SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) fiasco. There appears to be dollars there for rotten potatoes, there appears to be dollars for the government to think they can get into business and lose those dollars, but no money for the needs of rural Saskatchewan with water infrastructure right now.

The NDP has lost \$2.3 million on IQ&A. That was a company they set up to sell personal health information. Another \$2 million lost on on-line auction companies that the NDP set up to compete with eBay.

SaskTel operations — supposed operations — in Australia, we're looking at \$80 million there. As the member from Watrous has mentioned, instead of doing that, just look at that one venture, get out of it, and take \$10 million of that and put it forward for the rural agriculture producers in this province. That would be a more sensible and responsible way of using taxpayers' money.

Another 3 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was lost by the NDP trying to buy a power company in Guyana, and millions more being invested by the NDP in money-losing dot-coms in British Columbia, Ontario and even Nashville, Tennessee.

This government again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is planning on spending \$100 million in the ethanol industry when private investors are more than willing to come in here and put their money in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is absolutely no reason why if this government had a clue about how to manage the money of the taxpayers of this province, that we would not have money available for critical situations like the drought we are experiencing right now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, members opposite are saying we should call on the federal government once again. You know, in February 2000, the province ... we were calling on the federal government to aid us in a farm crisis already at that time because there were many areas of crisis.

And what happened? Mr. Chrétien's assistant sends a form letter to Saskatchewan on the farm crisis. That's how much the

federal government cares. It should be absolutely clear to the members opposite that the federal government has not given us the time of day and nor will they. And for sure they won't if this present NDP government does not show some good faith, start taking some initiative and leadership, and doing something themselves first in order to entice the federal government to possibly put in a cost-sharing situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this water shortage on the prairies is the most horrible crisis that I've seen and I'm sure that many people in this province have seen. I've talked to many, many of my constituents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they're talking about this being worse than the '30s — worse than the dirty thirties, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And we have an NDP government across who has tunnel vision, who has got no vision obviously, who do not seem to be able to see what a crucial situation this is out there in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government opposite and the Agriculture minister have mentioned that we should be able to access hay supplies from other provinces. Well once again, I have farmers in my constituency and right in Humboldt that have talked to me just as recent as two days ago mentioning that they have tried to get hay supplies from Manitoba and from everywhere around and they cannot do it. There is no hay available. There is no water; there is no hay.

It is a sad situation when we have to see farm families selling off herds of beef and dairy cattle and trying to figure out how they're going to be paying these high and exorbitant education taxes on their land. Their property taxes are sky high because the government has not been putting in their share to support education. We have had the education portion of the property rebate pulled out from under our producers. We have higher crop insurance premiums.

We have a situation where we've got many, many farm property owners out there that are expected to pay these exorbitant fees on top of utility rates being hiked to the point of no return. They are expected to pay these fees, Mr. Deputy Speaker; they're expected to pay for everything, but they don't have an opportunity to even make a dime any more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this resistance by the provincial NDP government to help our producers out there right now is a crying shame. It is a terrible shame that we have a provincial government like this that is just absolutely without any caring for what happens in the province of Saskatchewan not only in rural Saskatchewan but in urban Saskatchewan, because the businesses in urban Saskatchewan and rural Saskatchewan are going to feel the effects of this situation. If there is not help for our producers soon, the whole province is going to suffer economically.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has such obvious little interest in what is . . . in the successes, rather, of rural Saskatchewan and in agriculture. And that's pretty obvious and evident by the kind of funding that the provincial government has taken out of agriculture since 1992.

In 1992, Mr. Deputy Speaker, agriculture . . . the Agriculture budget was \$1.2 million. In 1999, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the

Agriculture budget in this province is \$300 million. We actually spend more on the Liquor and Gaming budget in this province right now, or very close to just as much as we do in Agriculture.

(16:15)

Now where are the government's priorities? For goodness sake. I mean it's time that they just woke up here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and recognized how critical this situation is, recognized that farm families are in desperate need of assistance right now and that it's the responsibility of the present government to give them that assistance. This is not just asking for money any old time. This is not something that the farm families of this province do on a regular basis, is ask for assistance. This is crucial; it's a crisis.

In many, many farm homes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no water for drinking. In many farm homes, there is no availability to access water unless they drive 10 to 15 miles. Many people have to drive that distance with tankers on the back of their trucks on a daily basis in order to bring water into their homes for drinking, for washing clothes, for those kind of simple things. They need that same, that same water that they don't have right now to water their cattle, to take care of their livestock.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a critical issue and I commend the member from Watrous, the Agriculture critic for the Saskatchewan Party, for coming up with this suggestion to the provincial NDP that they take action immediately to inject \$10 million into the agriculture industry, particularly at this time, for digging new wells, dugouts, and to ensure that there is water-pumping equipment at hand in order to divert this crisis and certainly to avert a crisis of greater magnitude in the future.

We are about at our breaking point out in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government has been very, very hard on rural Saskatchewan in many, many ways. And we just ask them and plead with their sense of decency at this time and ask them to please take the initiative to put this money and inject this money into rural Saskatchewan now in order that they may have water and are able to sustain their livelihood.

And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will take my place and allow the next speaker to present their debate on this issue. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Harper:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to enter into this debate today. And no doubt it is a timely debate and it's a serious debate, Mr. Speaker, because whenever drouth and drouth conditions are at hand, it's always a serious situation.

It's probably more serious in Saskatchewan here because we're extensively an agricultural-based industry, an agriculture-based province, and with that comes . . . a drouth has of course a negative effect on the entire farming community.

And the front line of that effect are livestock producers. And this is true and it's well known: that a number of elements are the substance of life, but no one greater than water. And

livestock are no different than human beings, they can only go so long without a drink.

And it's an interesting thing and I suppose it's a human flaw, and I suppose we're all . . . we'll all fall prey to it now and again, is that we never really appreciate the things we have until we miss it. And on many occasions in the past when we have enjoyed wet years and lots of rain and ample water supplies, we never take it in serious consideration.

Probably those who would give more serious consideration to it is livestock producers. And many of them have prepared themselves well for drouths. They have . . . In a lot of cases not only do they have their main water supply, which likely may be a dugout or perhaps a well, they'll have a dugout for a backup, and in some cases, they'll even have a second dugout for a backup.

And so they've prepared themselves fairly well for withstanding dry periods of time without rain and without, perhaps, even snowfall, and the amount of runoff to fill those reservoirs.

But in this case, Mr. Speaker, in some instances in Saskatchewan, I think we're probably on our third year of a drouth. Certainly we're well into the second year of it for all of the province, and many of the areas of the province are now experiencing their third year so no individual, no individual operator out there who's probably prepared to withstand that type of pressure on their water reserves.

So it is for them probably a very stressful time, particularly when we had not only a dry summer last year and a lack of rain, but as many livestock producers will know and will be the first to agree, that it's not the rain in the summer months so much that replenishes their reserves and their water supply as it is the snow throughout the winter and the resulting runoff from that snow melt.

Although yes, Mr. Speaker, a good moist summer, I guess you would say, certainly replenishes the water level in the land and the soil and results in less soaking in, in the spring with the winter melt and causes a greater runoff and the greater ability to replenish their water supply.

And as the members may not be aware, opposite, that it's not exactly the government that controls the weather nor the amount of rainfall nor the amount of snowfall — not even my colleagues here, not even the Minister of Environment although he may have a little more of a direct line than the rest of us.

But I remember as a child, my grandfather in particular — my parents too to some degree but certainly my grandfather in particular — talking about the dry thirties as they were known, the dirty thirties. My family farmed during that period of time and suffered the drouths. And I remember them talking about the lack of rain. I remember them talking about the land blowing — that the winds were so strong and so continuous day after day after day and the lack of rain, lack of moisture. The ground certainly . . . simply, I should say, dried out, virtually pulverized, and would blow with the wind.

I remember them talking about days where the dust would be so

thick that you would believe it was night. And they would have difficult times negotiating even throughout the yard, making their way from the house to the barn to look after their livestock that was housed in the barn. And it was some very horrid times.

And I remember my grandfather talking about not only the drouths and the land blowing, but also about the hordes of grasshoppers that came about as a result of the drouth. So it really has a domino effect on our economy and on our society when we do go through an extensive drouth period.

And as I hearken back to the conversations of my grandfather, I can remember him saying that if he had a choice throughout his life and his experiences in farming and living in this province, if he had a choice to choose between being too wet or being too dry, he would choose being too wet any time. He would choose that simply because it would be a struggle in many occasions to, in a wet year and wet years, to gather feed in for the livestock. It would be a struggle to harvest the crops in the fall time, particularly fighting wet weather and wet conditions.

But my grandfather used to say, at least there was something there to gather. When it's wet, it will grow. You may have a tough time gathering it. You may have a tough time bringing it in. You may have even a tough time storing it or keeping it. But it would grow. In dry conditions that doesn't happen. There's nothing there to gather.

So there's no question the experience of Saskatchewan people, Saskatchewan governments of the day, has certainly given us the ability to recognize problems when they're arising, and this government certainly has recognized that and has stepped to the forefront to address the problem.

The provincial government certainly understands how weather so affects every citizen engaged in agriculture. And a mild winter and numerous thaws and subsequent freezings has extracted a great deal of moisture amounts from the land and thusly leaving it open to absorbing whatever snow melt there was.

And if . . . I'm not sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as many of my colleagues here on both sides of the House have experienced over the last little while of driving around Saskatchewan. For example, this winter as you drove through Saskatchewan, you'd have noticed that there was really a shortage of snowfall. In many cases the land was bare. There was virtually no snow.

And what would happen then of course when the springtime comes and normally the snow melt would feed the small streams that would lead on to larger creeks and then lead on the river system and replenish the water supplies for many of our producers through their reserve systems, simply isn't happening.

And as a result of the lack of moisture, surface moisture, and the lack of rain, we're seeing in many cases where the water table in a lot of communities is dropping. And as a result of the drop of that water table, the wells that have maybe produced very well for a large number of years under normal moisture conditions, which we have experienced for the most part in Saskatchewan, maybe those wells were producing very efficiently and . . .

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Leave granted.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'd like to thank the member from Regina Northeast.

I'd like to introduce a school group in the east gallery, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are 17 grade 4 and 5 students from Climax School. And with the students is their teacher, Rose Calcutt, and chaperones Laurie Bennett, Dennis Klein, Judy Klein, and Pam Caswell.

I'll have an opportunity to meet with you in about 10 or 15 minutes. What we're doing in the House right now is debates, private members' debates, and if you're going to listen to some of the proceedings for a few minutes and then I'll be out and meet you.

So, members, would you please join me in welcoming the school group to the Assembly today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

#### Motion No. 12 — Drought Assistance for Livestock Producers (continued)

**Mr. Harper:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'd like to join with my colleague from Wood River and welcome the school group here. It's always a pleasure to have school groups down here because it gives them the opportunity to see democracy at work. Although maybe many of their parents may think that the elected members here really don't work. But I can, I can assure you we really do work and on occasions work quite hard.

But I . . . Personally it's always a great pleasure for me to have school groups down here, whether they be my own or one of my colleagues, because I think it's quite important that young people have the opportunity to see democracy in action.

I believe this to be a very worthy cause because I think all of us as elected members fully realize that the youth of today will soon be the leaders of tomorrow. And with this . . . such a fine group up here, I know that, Mr. Speaker, I think I can speak on behalf of all my colleagues here when we realize that these youth will soon become the leaders of our society, we'll be in very good hands.

So I want to welcome you all very, very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Harper:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to get back to what I was saying earlier about the drouth crisis that

we're experiencing here in Saskatchewan and the fact that, you know, we have gone through drouths in this province. I suppose the one that's the most, most — maybe not most recent — but the one that stands out in our mind the most of all was the 1930s, the dirty thirties as my grandfather and my parents used to refer to them as.

And I know that many of the members here and my colleagues here will probably believe I have a first-hand memory of that particular time, but I want to assure them no, I do not. I can only relate to those . . . that period of time in our history from the stories that I was told by my parents and my grandparents.

And they were horrendous times because, like I was saying earlier, I don't think that we as human beings often realize and appreciate the many good fortunes that we have until we miss it.

And the same I think can be said about . . . as farmers and producers of livestock particularly where water is so important. Good quality water is something that we often have taken for granted in this province because we have enjoyed ample rainfall and certainly ample snowfall and thusly a reasonably good melt in the springtime and the ability to replenish our reservoirs of water. And those things you take for granted.

(16:30)

But when it comes down to a drouth situation where we see a shortage of water, we see the lack of rainfall to replenish the level of moisture in the soil, and we see our wells that start to suffer. We see the lack of runoff from snow melt and we see our dugouts failing to fill to their full capacity. We see sloughs across this great province, which is always a source of water for emergency purposes, in some cases, but it . . . probably in a lot of cases for farmers, for ranchers, and for pasture land, it may be the source of water supply for the summer for their livestock. And when we see those not filling up to their capacity and see maybe only half capacity — in some cases very little capacity — going into the spring, we know that throughout the summer there is going to be some problems for those livestock producers.

And as I was saying, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the many of us, as we have travelled across Saskatchewan this winter, have had the ability to look around and notice a bit of uniqueness for Saskatchewan, and that is a lot of cases there was no snow. There was simply no snow cover. So with that, of course, there would be very little, if any, melt.

And I had the opportunity to, on a handful of occasions this winter, to travel up into the Yorkton and north Yorkton area. And in travelling the province as a whole, that particular part of the province probably had the most snowfall of anywhere in Saskatchewan. And having been originally from that neck of the woods, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I can attest to the fact that normal snowfall in that area would be, oh, 3 to 4 feet. Certainly you'd see some snowbanks against the fencelines, and against the bush hedges, and so on and so forth. And in March, that would be, oh, 6 to 10 feet high.

That wasn't the case this year. That wasn't the case this year. It was an abnormal snowfall for that area. Although talking to

those people who live there year-round, they were telling me that they were experiencing at the height, before the snow melt, they were experiencing about a foot of snow, which is well below normal.

But in that particular area, there was a reasonable snow melt, there was a bit of a runoff. In talking to one of the business people there, in Norquay, they were telling me that the runoff this year was simply a little trickle.

But for the most part, it was able to replenish the water supply in many of the farmers' reservoirs, and in fact pretty well fill up most of the sloughs — that they're normally full of water in the springtime and most of them were pretty well full of water.

But the . . . There's a real . . . And I suppose again, once again, it's a kind of a human flaw that we don't always recognize the value of things that are before us because we take them so much for granted.

But I think as the world is unfolding . . . And I remember . . . (inaudible) . . . just harking back here to a television program I seen a while back, and I believe it might have been even on a Discovery Channel, where it suggested that the fresh water supply in the world was dropping. There was some scientific study done that indicated that the fresh water supply around the world was reducing. We're seeing that, I suppose, in the Great Lakes of Canada, the fresh . . . huge fresh water bodies of Canada. The Great Lakes . . . levels in the Great Lakes are dropping.

And we're seeing in many of the fresh water bodies across the world, around the world, across this great nation, we're seeing that water level drop. And to some degree then that makes one a little concerned because, despite the fact that the world is . . . the large percentage of the world is water, there's actually a very small percentage that is fresh water. And fresh water is the sustenance of life as a whole.

So when you, when you hear that scientists who have watched this and studied this for some time have . . . are indicating that the fresh water supply in our globe is dwindling, you can't help but be concerned about that. And it raises the issue of the environment and man's, I guess you would say, disregard for the environment and the effects this could have on future generations. And it can't . . . you can't help but be quite concerned about this.

But I think that we, as a society, have to realize that there is a value in water and I think for many generations, we haven't done that because we've just taken water for granted. It's been at the tap. You turn the tap and the water flowed. And we just took it for granted that we'd have the ability to drink that water. It would be fresh, pure water without any restraints and we basically disregarded water and water conditions.

But there's a, there's a real value in water and I think that urban residents in our city — in our province, I should say, in our cities — have recognized that because they have . . . you know, they have been involved in the cities' approval, I guess you would say, to establish water and sewer systems and the cities' leadership have upgraded the systems to ensure that there's pure quality water being provided at the taps, and I think urban

people have recognized that. And there's no question at all in my mind that rural people certainly recognize the quality of water.

There's an old story I remember my grandfather telling me about the 1930s when he was farming at that time in the Estevan area. And my grandfather was one of the fortunate ones; they had a good water supply. They had a couple of very deep wells, at that time at least they were very deep. I think they were 250 feet or 300 feet deep and they were into a good supply of water and they were able to provide not only the water for their yard and for their housing and so on and so forth, but they also ran a dairy farm and those two wells produced the water to water their dairy operation and maintain that operation.

And my grandfather noticed that a neighbour, every day his neighbour would go by with his horse and his wagon which had a water tank on, and he would be gone for an hour or two and then he would pull his water wagon back. And my grandfather noticed that he was doing this day in and day out, day in and day out.

So finally one morning he watched for him and he stopped him and he got into a conversation with him. And then he finally asked him, he said, I noticed that you're pulling your water wagon up and down the road on a daily basis here. He said, are you short of water? And the farmer said, yes I am. He said, my dugout's gone dry, my well has quit producing and, he said, I'm hauling water now.

So my grandfather, in a bit of humour, said to him, well why wouldn't you . . . why, you know, why are you all in a huff? Why are you hauling this water? The farmer said well, he said, I'm hauling it five miles. So, he said, I'm making over a ten-mile round trip. I went five miles one way filling up the tank of water, and fives miles back.

So my grandfather said well, he said, why wouldn't you dig a well? And the farmer said well, he said, it's easier to haul the water five miles than it is to dig the well five miles.

So when you run out of water it's very dramatic to the entire operation. It breaks up sometimes your farming, your farming practice, and it'll also break up even your normal routines of living.

So we, quite quickly, recognize the importance of water. And like I said earlier, I think we often forget about how important water is. I mean it's one of the main substances of life. And if you notice, Mr. Speaker, I myself am consuming a fair amount of water here this afternoon.

And it's one of those things, Mr. Speaker, that if . . . Human beings are no different than any other animal — that you can go without eating, and you can probably go for a fair period of time. And I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are going to suggest that I can go longer than most people. I understand what you're about to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I could see that in your eyes and that's why I thought I would say it before you did. But I think the hon. member and colleague across there from Redberry Lake may even be able to go longer than me.

But despite how long . . . whether the member from Redberry

Lake or myself could go without having the ability to sit down to a nice steak dinner is one thing, but I can assure you that the length of time that either one of us could go without taking on some liquid, preferably mother nature's ale — water — would be a lot less.

So certainly water — the very, very important part of sustaining life. And I think we as a society are gaining a greater appreciation for water and I propose maximizing the use of it. And we'll see our rural people, our farmers, are really, really, really experts on being able to maximize the use of moisture, not only as it applies to livestock production and replenishing of groundwater to replenish our wells and making sure that there's a good reserve of water, whether it be in a dugout system or a river system or a slough system.

But if you look at our grain and oilseed producers, how they have improved farming practices from those days I was referring to earlier — the dirty '30s. Where my grandfather used to call it the dust bowl, where he would relate to me the stories of the wind blowing day after day after day and the fine dust, simply because the ground was dried out and pulverized to the point where the fine dust would drift as if it was snow. And it would blacken out the horizon. In some cases he tells me it would even blacken out the sun that when you looked outside at noon hour you couldn't tell whether it was noon hour or midnight it would be so dark.

But if you noticed, it was suggested that contributing to this soil drift was the farming practices of the day, and how those farming practices have changed over the last 60 years for example.

We've seen with the help of departments of Agriculture, both federal and provincial, and we've seen farmers adopt new technologies and new farming practices, much of them first tested on experimental farms in this province whether they be federally funded farms or provincially funded farms, where they would test different techniques of farming and soil management to try to identify ways and means to retain trash cover, to reduce soil blowing, to greater utilize the levels of moisture that mother nature does provide us from year to year.

And we've seen really, really great strides in that direction to utilize the moisture levels that we do have and to conserve those moisture levels.

I remember back in the . . . probably in the '60s and the '70s there was a move by the extension department of the Department of Agriculture to encourage farmers to first of all stop burning stubble and burning the straw cover off.

There was a move to cultivate the land in such a manner as to do little disturbance to the stubble so it would be retained there for a couple of reasons. One would be to catch whatever snow was available in the winter months and to maintain a straw cover so that when that snow melt did take place it would soak down into the ground. And the straw cover would shade the ground to preserve the moisture for the farmers for when they went out there to seed their crop that they would have good, ample moisture for germination and get the crop off to a good start.

With that, of course, came the development of machinery that would effect that type of farming practice. And we've seen the . . . in many cases, not only the experimental farms — again whether they be federally funded or provincially funded — but we've seen the machinery companies take up that challenge and challenge their engineers and their technicians to develop the type of machinery that would have the desired results the farmers were looking for across this great province — the ability to retain moisture.

And as a result of that we've seen, particularly in the last, oh 10, 15 years, dramatic changes in farm machinery design and technology. For example, today we're seeing many, many farmers and more and more acres moving into a zero till program where there's very little soil disturbance, unlike the practices of the '40s, the '50s, and even in the '60s, Mr. Minister, where farmers would, depending on the moisture level of course, would crop and summerfallow. In some areas of the province where there was a higher moisture level, they would have two crops consecutively, then they would summerfallow.

And of course during that summerfallow period they would break up and destroy all the natural straw coverage that would be there to retain snow in the wintertime and a shade for the moisture in the spring.

But we've seen farmers slowly moving away from that with new technology, new equipment and a new focus on farm practices and farm management to greater utilize the moisture levels that we do receive.

(16:45)

And we're seeing in more recent years the move to a zero till operation and to assist this has been some direct air seeders have come out. And we have some very large equipment in this province.

Prior to the advent of the air seeder was the traditional drill type that was a hoe drill that didn't have to be pre-worked in front of it. The hoe drill would have the ability to penetrate the surface and lay the seed down into a good moisture bed. And, of course, that would stimulate germination.

But we've seen a move away from the hoe drill to the air seeder for a number of reasons, and primarily efficiency. The air seeder can cover a lot more acres between being serviced or being refilled. And it has simply been some of the movements by our farmers to ensure that they utilize the moisture level that they have in their soil as a result of the winter melt or the rainfalls, to best utilize it for their agricultural practices and to produce the best possible crop possible as a result of getting early germination, a constant steady germination where we have good growth and good products as a result of it, and hopefully a good crop.

So, Mr. Speaker, I suppose that a number of things help but, of course, nothing works better than rain; nothing works better than lots of moisture. And I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I believe that the good Lord is going to look after us and He will balance this thing out and we will get our ample rain and we will address the drought problem and that's a problem that's in His hands. But I got a notion that He's going to be on the side

of this government because He's always on the side of right.

And, Mr. Speaker, with that I would like to adjourn debate. I move adjournment of debate.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move this House do now adjourn.

The division bells rang from 16:48 until 16:56.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

**Yeas — 28**

Addley	Atkinson	Hagel
Lautermilch	Serby	Melenchuk
Cline		

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order. Order, please. Order. Order. Order. I ask members to remain in order so that we could get the proper vote here, votes properly recorded. Thank you.

Osika	Lorjé	Kasperski
Goulet	Van Mulligen	Prebble
Belanger	Crofford	Axworthy
Nilson	Junor	Hamilton
Harper	Forbes	Jones
Higgins	Trew	Wartman
Thomson	Yates	McCall

**Nays — 20**

Hermanson	Kwiatkowski	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Gantefoer		

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order, please. Members, it's a very serious breach to be interfering in the vote of this House. The voting will proceed.

Toth	Wakefield	Stewart
Elhard	Eagles	McMorris
D'Autremont	Wiberg	Weekes
Harpauer	Hart	Allchurch
Huyghebaert		

The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.