



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

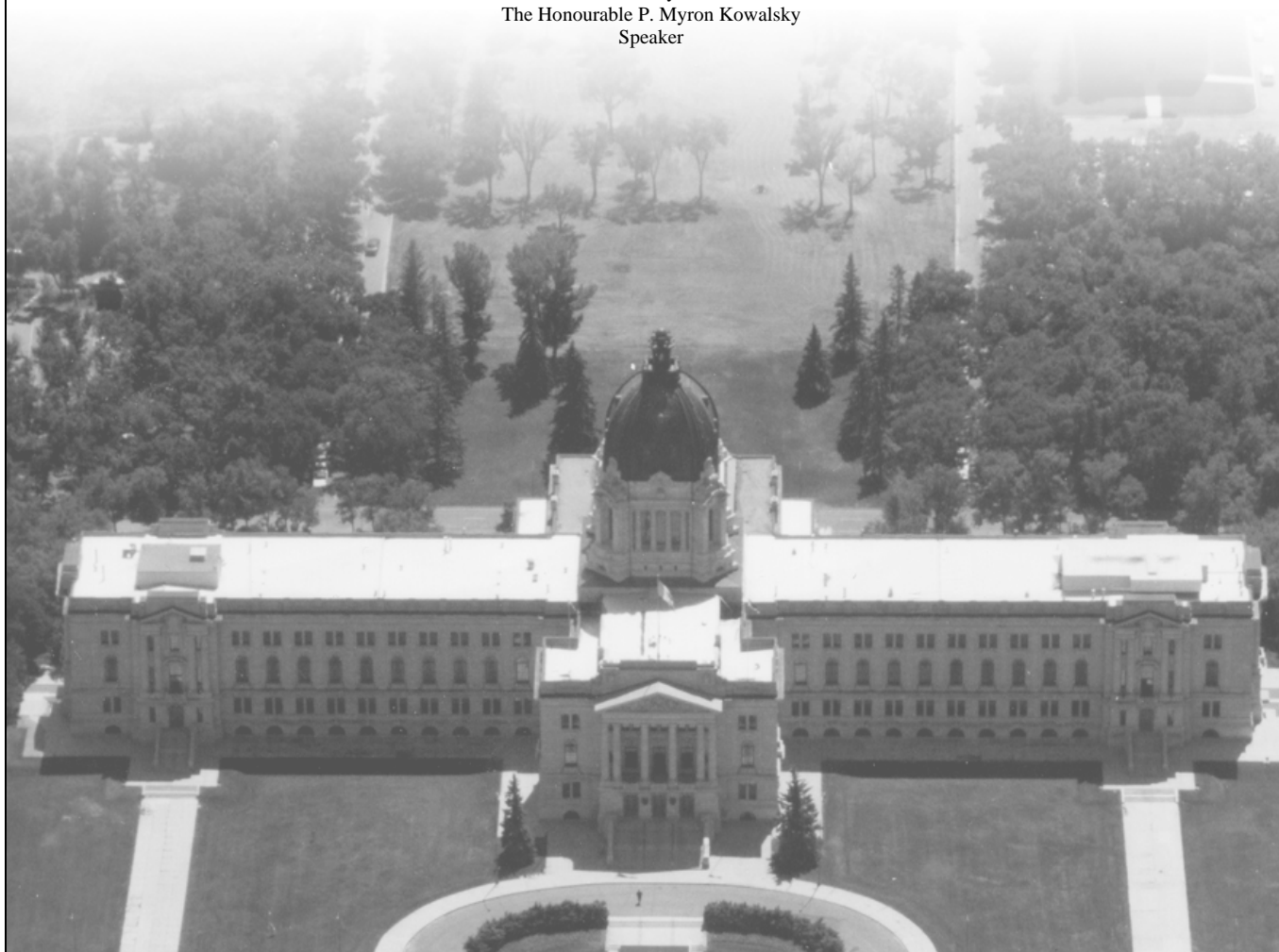
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky
 Premier — Hon. Lorne Calvert
 Leader of the Opposition — Brad Wall

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Hon. Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Bakken Lackey, Brenda	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Hon. Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Ben	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Hon. Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Hon. Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very delighted to rise today on behalf of people who are concerned about the horrendous conditions on Highway No. 310:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to repair Highway No. 310 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth and tourism in Foam Lake, Fishing Lake, Kuroki, and surrounding areas.

The people that have signed this petition are from Wadena, Foam Lake, Elfros, Wynyard; Brandon, Manitoba; Invermay. I do present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition with citizens concerned about safety on Highway No. 5. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are all from Humboldt today.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here with the closure of the SaskPower office in Davidson:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the SaskPower office in Davidson remains open at its current level of customer service available to all SaskPower customers from the Davidson and surrounding service area.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by good citizens from Davidson and Kenaston. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from citizens of Wilkie opposed to reductions of health care services. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Wilkie Health Centre and special care home maintain at the very least their current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Wilkie and district. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14 are hereby read and received. A new petition being sessional paper no. 13 and addendums to previously tabled sessional papers being nos. 2, 5, 7, and 8.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — I give notice that I shall on day no. 11 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how many clients accessed individualized funding program in the Heartland Health Region for March 31, 2000, and March 31, 2005?

Also while I'm on my feet I also have a similar question:

Minister of Health: what was the criteria for accessing the individualized funding program in the Heartland Health Region for March 31, 2005, to the present?

I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 8 move a first reading of a Bill respecting The Legislative Assembly and Executive (Set Election Dates) Amendment Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, I'm very pleased to introduce to members of the Assembly today the energetic participants for the Journalists' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. They are journalism students from the University of Regina. This journalists' institute is hosted by the Office of the Speaker in co-operation with the Legislative Assembly Press Gallery Association and the University of Regina school of journalism.

It's an opportunity for these students to interact with representatives of government and the opposition and with professional journalists to discuss the role of media in a democracy. They've had excellent sessions this morning, some lively two-way discussions with the representatives of both

caucuses on processes and on the topic of women in politics.

Please, members, welcome the participants to the fourth annual journalists' institute.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to add my welcome to the journalism students. The member from Kelvington and Wadena and I did a presentation on women in politics, and we had some very lively questions and a very good discussion. So welcome to the proceedings this afternoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too on behalf of the official opposition would like to join with yourself and the member from Saskatoon, the member from Kelvington-Wadena, and our chief of staff of the Saskatchewan opposition. I had the opportunity to speak with these students this morning for . . . I think we were there for almost an hour, a very good discussion, some excellent questions. And I want to wish them well in their studies as they move forward and become the leaders of tomorrow. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cumberland.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many of you are aware, this is Arts Week in Saskatchewan. And we are extremely lucky to have with us here today some talented people who are sitting in the west gallery to help us celebrate Arts Week.

Lyndon Tootoosis is from North Battleford. And Lyndon is also a member of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, and he's standing up, in a suit. Marcia Chickeness is also from North Battleford. Marcia is a traditional artist whose work is featured in the Clearing the Path exhibition opening at 4:30 today at the First Nations University. Keith Bird is from Regina. Keith is also a traditional artist whose work is featured at the Clearing the Paths exhibition at the First Nations University. And with them today I would also like to welcome Gerald Bird, councillor from the Mosquito First Nation and their sons, Mark Bird, and Dalton Chickeness. Welcome.

I would like to encourage all members to go and visit the exhibition at the First Nations University. And I would encourage everyone to help me welcome our guests to their legislature this afternoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to all my colleagues students from Kelvington school. We have 21 grade eight students and 22 grade 11 students along with their teacher, Jim Lissinna, and chaperone, Sheila Guilbault.

I had the opportunity to meet with these students for awhile this morning, and the Minister of Agriculture will be pleased to know that their main interest was the crisis in agriculture today, and they're keenly aware of what's happening in their community.

Also while I'm on my feet, I'd appreciate also welcoming the students from the journalism group that we had a chance to talk to at noon. I'm sure I won't be disappointed the day after I'm no longer elected if one of them comes and visits me so they can see if I broke my promise or my secret that I told to them.

And also, Mr. Speaker, the individuals that are here celebrating Arts Week, we welcome them to their legislature. We appreciate their attendance and all the work that they do to encourage the passion we have in Saskatchewan for arts and culture.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to be welcoming to the legislature a delegation from the nation of Japan from the city of Tokyo. As members will know, myself, the Minister of Industry and Resources, and a delegation of Saskatchewan business people recently conducted a trade mission in Asia. Part of that mission took us to Tokyo where we had the opportunity to meet our guests. We extended an invitation to Saskatchewan, and they have returned the favour. They are here to visit our province. They are looking at particularly some of the energy resources and some of the carbon sequestration work that's happening.

I would like all members, therefore, to welcome Ms. Mika Sugiura, who is with one of the large Tokyo newspapers and was very kind in her coverage of our visit. With Mika is Mr. Osamu Kano from *The Chemical Daily* in Japan. Michiko Makino is with them as well, and she works in our Canadian embassy in Tokyo and in Japan.

They toured yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the sequestration project in the Weyburn oil field with EnCana. They have toured the PTRC [Petroleum Technology Research Centre] at the University of Regina.

And while we were in Japan, Mr. Speaker, they expressed an interest in snow. We have delivered as a hospitality of this province. To our visitors from Japan, we wish them all the well in their travels. We thank them for being with us.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official

opposition we want to join with the Premier today and the members in the government benches in welcoming the delegation from Japan. We particularly welcome their interest in the energy sector in our province and the potential for that sector to really benefit the entire world as well as the peoples of our province. So welcome here to our Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Our visitors from Japan, Mr. Speaker, have sometimes been described in this country as coming from the Far East. I choose now to see our friends in Japan and Asia as being from the near west.

But we do have some visitors also in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, from the east, in this case from the near east, the great province of Manitoba. Seated in your gallery today are the Reverends Laurie and Bev Simpson, long time personal friends of my wife and I. In fact we were all married together in the year 1975. I want to welcome Laurie and Bev to the Saskatchewan legislature today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

A Have Province with a Heart

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, Monday's Throne Speech makes plain the vision that we on this side of the Assembly have for Saskatchewan as we move into our new century. Mr. Speaker, our vision is of a province where no one is left behind on the road to opportunity. Our vision is of a province with an unbreakable social fabric built upon the foundation of diverse and growing communities and a green and prosperous economy.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech focuses on the children of our centennial and plainly states our goal that they grow up living healthy, active lives and enjoying all the benefits of high-quality education; to live and grow and reach adulthood; proud of and involved in their communities, proud of this province and its diversity and prosperity, proud to call Saskatchewan home; to be from a place where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their dreams, whatever their dreams may be.

Mr. Speaker, throughout 2005 Saskatchewan people have been celebrating with pride all that is unique and wonderful about this province. With this Throne Speech, we are building on that pride and envisioning a Saskatchewan that is not just a have province, but a have province with heart. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for

Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Agriculture Support

Ms. Bakken Lackey: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, agriculture groups, members of parliament, and members of provincial legislatures across Canada are calling on Ottawa and their provincial governments to address the crisis facing farmers. That is, except the Saskatchewan Minister of Agriculture and the Saskatchewan NDP [New Democratic Party] government who are oblivious to what is going on right here in our own province.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has announced just yesterday that they are investing 224 million more into CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] to support their producers. But what do we hear from the Minister of Agriculture in Saskatchewan? He said existing farm support programs, CAIS and crop insurance, meet the basic needs of Saskatchewan producers. He also said the demise of some farmers was because of business decisions.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the facts are, falling income and high input costs are not the fault of inefficient farmers, and safety net programs have failed farmers in that they are deliberately complicated so that farmers cannot determine if they do or do not qualify.

Mr. Speaker, there are things the NDP government has control over and issues they can address if they have the political will to do so and if they really want farmers and businesses that rely on a healthy farm economy to survive.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan used to be known as the breadbasket of the world. Today many of our farmers are wondering if they will be able to put food on their own tables.

Mr. Speaker, when is the NDP government going to make agriculture and our farm families a priority?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Saskatchewan Eco-Network Presents First Annual Environmental Film Festival

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Eco-Network is a non-profit, non-government organization whose membership includes dozens of Saskatchewan environmental groups. The membership reflects the diversity of organizations and individuals who share a common concern for environmental issues but who also represent a variety of different focuses and points of view.

Mr. Speaker, from the 19th to the 24th of this month in Saskatoon the Saskatchewan EcoNetwork is presenting its first annual Environmental Film Festival. The festival will be a celebration of our province's first 100 years and includes films about Saskatchewan, our people, and our environment in a local context and in the context of our place in the country and in the world.

The event begins with a Saturday afternoon double bill that includes the film, *Near to Nature's Heart: Women of Waskesiu*, that looks at the lives of eight women, all of whom made their homes in Prince Albert National Park. The film is a labour of love co-created by Jeanne Corrigan, who I am proud to say is a past student of mine. I've had the honour of seeing this film and I encourage members to see it.

The Saturday evening gala will recognize 100 years of environmentalism of the past 100 years of Saskatchewan and includes a screening of *The Tunguska Project* about the journey of playwright and artist Floyd Favel to the Tunguska region of central Siberia.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the activities of the Saskatchewan Eco-Network and encourage everyone who has the opportunity to attend this First Annual Environmental Film Festival. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Plight of Farmers

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year Saskatchewan agriculture producers spent \$6 billion in this province. There is a great deal of concern that this may not happen again this year. Grain and oilseed prices are down, down from last year's low prices by an additional 25 to 30 per cent. Costs of production have increased dramatically, particularly fuel and fertilizer. Fixed costs including property taxes continue to increase.

Farmers have burnt through their equity to finance operations over the past number of years. In many cases they have burnt through their personal resources, their savings, their retirement savings, and the resources of their families.

The lending institutions are about to pull the plug on many of their clients. The existing insurance and safety net programs are simply not providing coverage that is, number one, bankable or number two, sufficient to meet their needs. The very formula on which these programs are based provide for decreasing protection during tough times. Our farming community needs to be assured that the governments and the people of this entire country are aware of this serious situation. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cumberland.

La Ronge Student Displays Community Spirit

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about Calyn Burnouf, a young woman from La Ronge who is currently working on a nutrition degree at the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition at the University of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Calyn is in the second year of a four-year program. Her long-term goal is to return to her home

community of La Ronge as a registered dietician and a certified diabetes educator and do her part in the fight against diabetes.

Mr. Speaker, Calyn attended Churchill School in La Ronge where she earned a 92 per cent average in grade 12 as well as being on the student representative council and in various school activities. Her academic achievements and community spirit have earned her a Northern Spirit Scholarship, a \$2,500 bursary from the Foundation for the Advancement of Aboriginal Youth, and most recently a two-year, \$14,000 bursary from Saskatchewan Health.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we should encourage our youth to follow their dreams no matter where their dreams may take them. But I am pleased and proud that for Calyn Burnouf, that means not only returning to her roots and community, but with a goal of making it a better and healthier place.

I congratulate Calyn Burnouf on her academic achievements and her commitment to her community and wish her every success in the future. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Condition of Agriculture in Saskatchewan

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, agriculture in Saskatchewan is in an unprecedented crisis. People are totally frustrated with the lack of response by this government and the federal government. CAIS and crop insurance are not working.

Farmers within my constituency in the past years have been hit by drought, frost, summer rain, and severe flooding. We may live in next year's country, but next year isn't going to come for many farmers. Add to these natural disasters the subsidies of grain by other countries, BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy], increased input costs, loss of rail lines, high education tax, and low grain prices, and you have a crisis in agriculture that is going to permanently change the future of agriculture in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, not only farmers but also RMs [rural municipality] are contacting my constituency office, frustrated with the provincial disaster assistance program. It lacks coverage for uninsured losses, and therefore agricultural losses covered by crop insurance are not applicable.

Mr. Speaker, I recently had a frustrated farmer fax me his cash purchase tickets for 159,000 metric tons of wheat which he delivered to the elevator. After deductions he took home a cheque for \$556.75. This won't even pay the fuel for one day of combining, let alone the other input costs. He also sold four loads of barley, and after deductions his cheque was zero. Basically he still owes money on the production of this crop. And this is not an isolated case.

Mr. Speaker, farmers within Saskatchewan feel that nobody cares about the future of food in Canada. Are we willing to trust that the world is going to feed Canada, or are we going to ensure that our farmers receive fair value for their product and

are supported in times of crisis?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Dewdney.

Survey Ranks SaskTel Mobility as Most Popular Carrier

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The J.D. Power and Associates 2005 Canadian wireless customer satisfaction study, an independent survey of cellular customers in Canada, has ranked SaskTel Mobility the most popular carrier in the country. Mr. Speaker, this is a remarkable achievement as customer satisfaction questions were asked of customers of every cellular service provider in the country.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but SaskTel Mobility ranked a full 10 per cent over the national average in terms of customer satisfaction.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have every right to be very proud of the province's Crown corporations. They are an essential part of our social and economic fabric. This achievement by SaskTel and SaskTel Mobility speaks to the commitment, talents, and abilities of their employees, and is one more example of the excellent service provided to the people of Saskatchewan by our Crown sector.

I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in recognizing the high quality of service delivered by SaskTel Mobility and particularly in congratulating the employees of SaskTel Mobility on a job well done, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mid-Year Financial Report

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the federal government announced that due to a significant surplus it's going to give back taxpayers some of their money in the form of overdue tax cuts. The federal government made the announcement in the form of a fiscal and economic update outside the budget cycle.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow this NDP government will release its own fiscal update in the form of a mid-term report. And we know they are not short of cash. You'll recall a couple of budgets ago, Mr. Speaker, that this Premier and this Finance minister asked the people to tighten their belts, to suck it up and take a 1 per cent hike in the PST [provincial sales tax]. This tax hike, Mr. Speaker, came just months after the Premier promised in the 2003 election not to raise taxes.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister announce tomorrow that he will be rolling back the PST hike and finally give Saskatchewan people a break by keeping their promise?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the member for the question. I want to assure the member and the House and the people of Saskatchewan that in fact we will be presenting our mid-year report on the province's finances tomorrow. The member will have one more sleep until then to find out the details of that report and one more night to reflect on his projection of \$720 million in additional oil and gas revenues and whether or not that projection is correct. So he has another night to now think about that, whether or not that projection is correct, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, this is the same minister who presides over a record that includes the highest taxes for low-income earners in all of Canada.

In February of this year, the Saskatchewan Party proposed a plan that would ensure that everyone making \$15,000 or less in this province would pay no provincial tax and those earning \$35,000 or less a year would pay less tax. The minister has now had nine months to consider this plan.

Will the minister announce tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, that he will be cutting taxes for those that earn the least in Saskatchewan? Will he make sure that low-income earners have more money in their pockets as soon as possible? They've waited long enough.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member will know and the people of Saskatchewan will know that the Government of Saskatchewan undertook significant personal income tax reform beginning in the year 2000 and phased that in over a number of years. Our reform was intended to make our tax system simpler and I think it achieved that.

The Saskatchewan Conservative Party plan would again add complexity to the tax system. I can't say I'm surprised by that, given the fact that member opposite and other members apprenticed during the regime of Grant Devine, when that administration seemed very preoccupied with adding great complexity to our personal income tax system, Mr. Speaker.

We've achieved reform. They haven't, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, not only does this government's record include breaking its promise not to raise

taxes — the highest taxes for low-income earners — this NDP's record also includes the highest education property taxes in all of Canada.

This Premier, Mr. Speaker, told us that the status quo was not on but then he only took half of the Boughen Commission's advice. He hiked the PST but failed to deliver on permanent property tax relief and now he's got a tax revolt on his hands.

Not too long ago, Mr. Speaker, this very Premier said, and I quote:

... is there any wonder that [there's] a tax revolt ... brewing in this province? People are being taxed to death and ... [they] can't take it any more.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's time this Premier heeded his own advice. Can we expect the minister of high property taxes to deliver some much needed permanent property tax relief tomorrow?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I would just point out to the House that in last year's mid-year financial report, the Government of Saskatchewan announced significant property tax relief for people in Saskatchewan, both for that year and for this current year, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

We also announced prior to the report through the Energy Share program that we are mindful of the people's pocketbook concerns, as we have done in the past. I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Party, Saskatchewan Conservative Party has put forward, has put forward a proposal that in their mind makes the tax system fairer. It doesn't in fact do that, Mr. Speaker. In fact their proposal would ensure that ... and perversely their plan would effectively increase the income tax rate for individuals earning less than \$35,000.

I'm not surprised. This is the party of the flat tax, the most regressive tax in Saskatchewan history, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister seems to have a problem getting his parties straight. Well I can assure him there's one party that speaks for the people of Saskatchewan and it's on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, we provided the NDP government with ample ideas on how to lessen the tax burden for Saskatchewan people. We've asked them to look at making changes so that low-income earners and working people stop paying the highest taxes in the country. We've asked them to

ensure that people of Saskatchewan who took it on the chin when the NDP hiked the PST will see some relief on that front.

We've suggested that they provide some relief on the education side of property tax instead of a short-term, 8 per cent, band-aid solution that actually led to substantial tax increases. And what have they done, Mr. Speaker? They've hoarded the people's cash all to themselves. They sit on this mountain of cash with some sense of arrogance and entitlement.

I'll give the minister one more chance, Mr. Speaker. He can pick one. What will it be? Tax relief for low-income earners, for property tax payers? Or a rollback of the PST to benefit everyone in the province. Mr. Speaker, it's time to do something.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — For sure the party opposite is not sitting on anything. They've spent every dollar and then some that they've declared to be additional revenues for the people of Saskatchewan. In fact by my tally, since the beginning of the year the party opposite would have added something like \$1.7 billion to provincial spending, Mr. Speaker.

But then adding things up and making them add up has never been their strong point, Mr. Speaker, has never been and I don't think it is today either. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Martensville.

Lawsuit for Wrongful Dismissal

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks ago David Degenstein launched a lawsuit against the NDP government. In his statement of claim Mr. Degenstein details how several senior members of this NDP government worked together to develop a cartoon depicting the former leader of the opposition as a Nazi. Mr. Degenstein was ultimately fired for this disgusting cartoon — only after he got caught of course, Mr. Speaker. And now he's suing the NDP for wrongful dismissal. Mr. Degenstein has already received over \$37,000 of taxpayers' money in severance. Does the government plan to defend itself in this case or do they intend to give him an even bigger payoff?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, it would be fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that through the election campaign of 2003 there were some unfortunate experiences that occurred. We understand that, Mr. Speaker. And it's our appreciation that some work has been done in making sure that that's been rectified.

This is an issue, Mr. Speaker, that happened from within the party. And because it happened within the operations of the party, it was dealt with through the experiences of the party. And I say to the member opposite, I say to the member opposite

that you tread on some very serious ground here. Because there were issues that were related on the part of your member, Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly, on the part of one of your members and . . .

The Speaker: — I would just ask, I would ask the . . . Order please. I would ask the Deputy Premier to make his remarks through the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, that the member treads on some very, very thin ice. Because, Mr. Speaker, we had in this Assembly and in this province one of their members, Mr. Speaker, who said some very, very serious allegations. And what did the Conservative leader opposite do, Mr. Speaker, what did the Conservative leader do? Didn't condone the behaviour at all, Mr. Speaker. And I say that when this Assembly begins down that path, Mr. Speaker, it undoes the integrity of this Assembly. And I ask the member to change his approach on this process, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He said this was part of their party way that they operate. Yes it is, and that's the unfortunate part. And we'll point out some more of that in just a minute.

Mr. Speaker, in his statement of claim Mr. Degenstein states that he fully expected to be rehired, Mr. Speaker. In fact that's what he was told by the Minister of Agriculture right over there. According to his statement of claim, the minister told Degenstein, and I quote:

Hold on. I have it from the highest authority that you will soon be offered re-employment in an equivalent income. It's all quite hush-hush.

Mr. Speaker, did that Minister of Agriculture give that assurance to Mr. Degenstein, and if so, why?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, to the House and to the members opposite, this matter, Mr. Speaker, has made itself to the court system. It will be dealt, Mr. Speaker, in the court system. It would be most inappropriate, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, for members of this side of the House — or I suggest, Mr. Speaker, for members on that side of the House — to try and find a solution to an issue that in fact is before the courts. And we should allow, Mr. Speaker, the court system to make its way through this particular issue.

This government, Mr. Speaker, and this leader were very clear about the outcomes of the issue, Mr. Speaker. And the party, Mr. Speaker, is dealing with it and should deal with it because, Mr. Speaker, this is a party issue. And I suggest to the members opposite that when you proceed down this path you need to do an examination of what's happened with your own member,

Mr. Speaker. And that may be why he's . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I'll bring to the member's attention once again that he should make all his remarks through the Chair. I recognize the member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes it is a party situation. It is their party situation, the one that thinks it has the right to govern this province forever. And now we find out what they're really all about.

Mr. Speaker, this is really a very simple question. The statement of claim says, and I quote:

Hold on. I have it from the highest authority that you will soon be offered equivalent employment. It's all quite hush-hush.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister, the man of the cloth — and I'm sure he should be somewhat passingly acquainted with the truth — did that minister say to Mr. Degenstein or not that he would find him that work?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, as I've already pointed out to this Assembly and to the House that this matter, Mr. Speaker, will be dealt with in the court system and it will be repaired through that process, Mr. Speaker. If there have been some injustices that have been done, the court system will rectify that, Mr. Speaker, in its process of dealing with this particular issue.

But I say to the members opposite that when you proceed down this path, Mr. Speaker, and you make allegations about what's been said through private conversations with individuals and you make those kinds of allegations, Mr. Speaker, you set yourself up for some issues that there may be repercussions for. And so today we hear, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Kindersley is now leaving his chair, Mr. Speaker, being replaced by the member now who has sat in this Assembly before.

Now there are reasons, Mr. Speaker, for why some of those decisions are being made, Mr. Speaker. And I say to the members opposite: when you go down this path, you need to face the repercussions yourself of those particular issues, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That whole caucus over there, Mr. Speaker, was involved in this. We're finding that out. We're finding that out. And we'll be going a little higher yet today, Mr. Speaker. Trust us.

One more chance for the Minister of Agriculture. Did he make that commitment or not to find that job for Mr. Degenstein? Answer it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I say again to the members opposite that they'll have an opportunity to hear the outcome of the court proceedings. This matter is before the courts and there will be an opportunity for the party to make its representations in court. Mr. Degenstein will make his accordingly, Mr. Speaker. And this Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan will find in time what the realities of those discussions were, Mr. Speaker.

It's not our purview today, Mr. Speaker, to conduct a hearing in this Assembly around the proceedings that happened during the election campaign. In this particular environment, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have decided who they wanted to be government, Mr. Speaker, in this province. They've decided who wants to be speaker.

And the decision that Saskatchewan people made were not about what happened in the discussion with Mr. Degenstein, Mr. Speaker. It was about whether or not Saskatchewan people wanted a NDP government operating in Saskatchewan today and managing the affairs or a Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker. And they picked the NDP, Mr. Speaker, to govern Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed. The Chair recognizes the member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Little did anyone know, Mr. Speaker, the kinds of individuals this province was electing when they elected that group over there.

And I said just earlier on, we're going to go a little higher. Well, Mr. Speaker, pay attention — we're going a little higher.

Mr. Speaker, here's the minister's quote again:

Hold on. I have it from the highest authority that you will soon be offered equivalent employment. It's all quite hush-hush.

Mr. Speaker, according to this quote, the minister, that's the Minister of Agriculture, was speaking on behalf of the highest authority. I can assume, Mr. Speaker, that means the Premier. That means the Premier.

Did the Premier tell the Minister of Agriculture that David Degenstein would be fixed up with a new job?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan will find out in the next while about where in fact the direction on this particular

case will settle, Mr. Speaker.

Now I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if there was a statement of that nature made. Maybe the highest authority, Mr. Speaker, maybe the highest authority that the Agriculture minister spoke to in a long time is way higher than anybody in this House, Mr. Speaker. And so we may not get an answer, Mr. Speaker.

So the member opposite may have to wait for a different time, and he may ask St. Peter about who made whatever statement when the time comes for us to make that kind of understanding, Mr. Speaker. But today these decisions, Mr. Speaker, will be made in a court of law. There will be, Mr. Speaker, an analysis of all that was undertaken and the members opposite will understand that in time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Had the Deputy Premier kept his chair, we could have had an answer from the Minister of Agriculture and we would all know right now. But instead of that he steps in the way of us finding out what the truth is in this particular matter, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this statement of claim paints a clear picture of the culture that exists within this NDP government. It's a culture of gutter politics, entitlement, and secrecy. Gutter politics, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's office had virtually everyone in the building working on that Nazi cartoon, all at the taxpayers' expense.

Entitlement, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Degenstein clearly expected to work in a high-paying government job for the rest of his life. Why? Because of his NDP connections. In fact he says so right in his statement.

And secrecy. Mr. Degenstein says that even after he was fired — after — the Minister of Agriculture promised to fix him up with a new job, but it's all quite hush-hush.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: why is this government such a den of gutter politics, entitlement . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

The Speaker: — Order please. I find the member's line of questioning to be somewhat out of order. I want to bring to his attention a previous ruling that the integrity or motives of members, whether individually or collectively, should not be questioned indirectly in debate. I therefore rule the remarks referring to gutter politics, implying integrity or motives of members across the House, to be offensive and to be out of order and would ask that member to withdraw that statement.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay, I'll reread that question leaving out the part . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I would just ask the member to withdraw the statement unequivocally. Member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — I will withdraw that statement at this time, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize whoever is going to respond — the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, it was a bit difficult to try to understand what we're responding to here based on the question that was put. But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, this, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of the history of our political party on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of it. We're proud of it. We're proud of those people who have led the New Democratic Party over the last 60 years, Mr. Speaker. And we hear every day, Mr. Speaker, on that side of the House, members getting up and condemning the rule of the NDP for 60 years, Mr. Speaker. We hear it on a daily basis.

And, Mr. Speaker, they insult the Saskatchewan electorate every day in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, by saying to the Saskatchewan electorate that they didn't have the wisdom to elect the kind of governments they wanted for the last 60 years. Saskatchewan people in this province have been very astute to the politics, Mr. Speaker. Because they said unequivocally they don't want a Conservative government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Because every time they get a Conservative government, Mr. Speaker, we're in the tank in this province. And that's why for 60 years we have NDP governments. Because the people of Saskatchewan elect NDP governments.

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Federal Government Agricultural Policies

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, let's see if the Ag minister can actually get out of his chair and answer for himself for once. The federal Finance minister released his economic and fiscal update yesterday and the document forecasts federal surpluses totalling \$54.5 billion. The document talked about tax cuts. It talked about innovation. It talked about global commerce and networks. It talked about secondary education. But, Mr. Speaker, conspicuous by its absence, it did not mention agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, why is that? Did that minister and that government fail to get the message across to Mr. Goodale, Mr. Mitchell, and the federal government that we have a tremendous problem in Saskatchewan? And Saskatchewan farmers need help today — not next year but today. Will the minister get out

of his chair and at least respond to that?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy for the opportunity to respond to an agriculture question. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to make absolutely clear that I think the behaviour of the federal government is absolutely appalling. I believe that they have not only abandoned, they have not only abandoned Saskatchewan agriculture and Saskatchewan farmers, Mr. Speaker — and we have made that case over and over and over again — but they have abandoned the people of this province.

The Minister Responsible for Finance for this federal government has abandoned the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, because he has not done anything about the things that he needs to do something about — about equalization, about the royalty grab that the federal government has taken out of this province, about the \$2 billion annualized that that federal government has pulled out of this province that we could be using to support the farmers and to support the development of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that's the problem. We've identified it, and we've been pushing hard.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture should know what he's talking about. He's talking about abandoning people in Saskatchewan. That government has done it for 14 years. Under the last premier, under this Premier, they've totally neglected agriculture and right now, at the worst time for agriculture in Saskatchewan history, they figure there's no problem.

Only a week ago that minister said CAIS is adequate; crop insurance is adequate. The Deputy Premier also made those comments. And Mr. Goodale paid no attention to agriculture because that government didn't pass the message on that our farmers are in trouble.

Mr. Speaker, after question period we will be moving an emergency motion. The members opposite know about it. We've given them advance notice. Mr. Speaker, will that government this week finally debate the issue in agriculture, finally help us get the message through to the federal government? Our farmers need help. Quiet down about all the rhetoric about CAIS is good, CAIS is adequate, crop insurance is doing its job. Show the federal government our farmers need help. Join with us to get that message out, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we're seeing more of the same kind of let's-jump-on-the-bandwagon routine from the members opposite. But the problem, Mr. Speaker, with those members opposite, is that instead of pointing to where the problems have been, Mr. Speaker, they have tried to turn them around on this government. They did it yesterday, Mr. Speaker, with the agroforestry. They've been trying to do that with agriculture.

We have encouraged them. We have asked them. We've asked their Conservative counterparts federally to work with us to try and get a better deal, to try and change the CAIS program so that it is effective. The absolute drivel and nonsense that was coming from the other side suggesting that we said that the CAIS program was okay is just bizarre, Mr. Speaker. We have never said the CAIS program is okay. There's a lot of work needs to be done. We're working at it, and we welcome them finally joining with us to work at it too, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 11 — The Youth Justice Administration Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Corrections and Public Safety.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 11, The Youth Justice Administration Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety that Bill No. 11, The Youth Justice Administration Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 13 — The Archives Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 13, The Archives Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Provincial

Secretary, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation, that Bill No. 13, The Archives Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 14 — The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Provincial Secretary.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 14, The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Provincial Secretary, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation that Bill No. 14, The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, members, I wish to table in the House correspondence from Lieutenant Governor Dr. Lynda Haverstock, pursuant to section 68.7, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, where she advises the Assembly of the membership of the Board of Internal Economy effective July 26 of the year 2005.

Why is the member from Melville-Saltcoats on his feet?

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to move a motion under rule 49, and I might just make a brief explanation, Mr. Speaker.

Due to the federal Finance minister yesterday bringing out a

pre-election budget and neglecting to even mention agriculture and the problems we have in agriculture, Mr. Speaker, we feel that once again this week, as we did last week, that it's necessary to have an emergency debate to bring attention to the federal government and, for that matter, to the provincial government that there's large problems in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to read the motion that I am moving:

That this Assembly condemn the federal government for completely ignoring the current agriculture crisis in its November 14, 2005 economic update and that this Assembly condemn the provincial government for its failure to raise the importance of the current agriculture crisis with the federal government.

The Speaker: — The member has requested leave of the Assembly for an emergency motion with respect to agriculture. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The member may proceed with his motion. The Chair recognizes the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

MOTION UNDER RULE 49

Agriculture

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the government opposite this week has finally saw fit that they would take part in a debate of this nature, remembering that last week we brought this same debate to the table and had we of had the opportunity to raise it in this legislature last week, maybe Mr. Goodale and Mr. Mitchell would have saw fit to include agriculture in their pre-election budget yesterday.

That week could have cost our farmers millions upon millions of dollars. But at least they have finally agreed to join with us, and as the minister said, jump on his bandwagon. Mr. Speaker, I don't know, but I believe that bandwagon must have rubber tires. And they're froze and they're flat because absolutely nothing has been coming out of that Ag minister to help our farmers in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this should be a little bit of education for the Ag minister. He's been too busy doing other things than his Ag portfolio, as the member for Rosthern talked about earlier. If he would just pay attention to the Ag portfolio — as I might mention that he's very weak in that portfolio — but he's been getting carried away into other avenues, promising jobs to people that have screwed up within the NDP Party — but just be quiet; we'll get that job back, Mr. Speaker.

Well what I'm saying, when a person of his calibre is put into cabinet to represent in this case farmers of the province of Saskatchewan, they should be the lobbyist for those farmers within cabinet. But they should also be, as Agriculture minister, the farmers' representative on the national scene. What a failure that minister has made of his Agriculture portfolio.

Once again I say, Mr. Speaker — and I plead with that minister — get back to the job at hand. You don't understand that job. It's evident. We need you in that job. As long as that government's in power we need you to represent our farmers. Either that, call an election. Somebody on this side will represent farmers and we'll actually get the message through to the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday Ralph Goodale had \$54.5 billion to play politics with. And he didn't even know — coming from Saskatchewan, he didn't even know — there's a problem that our farmers have with high input cost, tremendously high input cost, low commodity prices. And they can't even move those commodities if they were getting a decent dollar.

So, Mr. Speaker, we'll start the Ag minister's lesson today, right now. Many members on this side represent rural communities, represent rural farmers — farmers that are really up against it, Mr. Speaker. And I would hope that the Agriculture minister would listen close, after the debate go to his office, get on the phone, and phone the federal government and say, the opposition in Saskatchewan has just enlightened me. I didn't know we have a problem in agriculture in Saskatchewan. And I'm not here, I'm not here to embarrass the Agriculture minister. But if that's what it takes, if that's what it takes to get him to do his job, more power to us, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — So, Mr. Speaker, let's get into the nuts and bolts of what we're talking about today. I represent many farmers in the Melville-Saltcoats riding out there, as do pretty near every member on this side of the House. We have farmers calling us every day and telling us they have no money to pay their fuel bill, no money to pay their fertilizer bill, no money to pay their chemical bill. And the list goes on and on.

And on top of all this, what do we get? We get an increase in SaskEnergy costs for farmers along with everybody else. SaskPower now has asked for an increase which, when it comes out, it shakes out, usually farmers are asked to pay a little higher percentage than everybody else because that's what they call equalization on that side of the House — let's dump a little more on the farmers of Saskatchewan.

You know, I find it amazing, Mr. Speaker. Our 100th birthday — our centennial — and that government forgets that farmers are part of the backbone of this province, have been here for many years longer than 100 and helped build this province. And when it comes a time when that government has money falling out of all their pockets but only that government has money, they see fit to neglect our farmers and rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:30]

Mr. Bjornerud: — And, Mr. Speaker, they keep saying, oh all you ever do is talk about farmers. Well this time we're talking about all of rural Saskatchewan. And actually not just rural

Saskatchewan because very quickly you're going to see businesses all over Saskatchewan, including in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker, your home area, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon are going to be hurting because agriculture is short of dollars. They can't pay their bills and they certainly aren't going to be able to buy things that they normally would be able to afford to buy because there's just no cash out there. The hurt is tremendous, Mr. Speaker.

We're already hearing of farmers giving up rented land for next year. We're already hearing of farmers considering going through bankruptcy. The stress level is amazing, Mr. Speaker, out there. And that's the point we want to get across to this provincial NDP government.

Last spring, Mr. Speaker, we talked — and it's not a subject we like to talk about — but about the suicides that are happening in agriculture due to the stress caused by what's going on out there. And it's not something that we want to publicize, Mr. Speaker, but we feel we need to, to get the point across to that government and the federal government just how bad things are in agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the commodity prices are low. The inputs are higher than they've ever been. Fuel costs have never been this high. Many farmers that have called me and called other members on this side of the House didn't even know when harvest started how they were going to get fuel to take this crop off. In many cases combines out there were taking up to \$1,000 a day just to fill them with diesel. And many of those farmers have three, four, five combines, Mr. Speaker. And when the fuel bulk dealer says, I have to have a cheque in my hand; I'm sorry, you've been with me for a lot of years but I have to have a cheque in my hand before I can deliver fuel, just shows that the problems out there are many and they are great.

And I know members on that side of the House, there are members on that side of the House, including the Deputy Premier, who know very well what I'm talking about is dead on, that farmers have never faced a problem like this as long as they've been farming in Saskatchewan.

And I guess the lonely feeling, Mr. Speaker, that they have out there is that right now, especially after yesterday — they knew before yesterday that the provincial government didn't show much sympathy to the problem out there — but now when Mr. Goodale and the federal government neglects to mention agriculture they really feel alone out there. They're up against the wall and it's a time when the people of Canada and the people of Saskatchewan, I believe the public really want to help our farmers.

They know when they go to the grocery stores and the shelves are right full of food, the luxury we have in this country that many countries don't have. Many countries when they go to do their shopping, buy their groceries, shelves are empty in many of those countries or half empty. We have the luxury of going to Safeway, Co-op stores, every kind of grocery store in this province. We have the luxury of fresh produce, fresh beef. Everything that we might want and anything that we need for our families is right there in front of us. And, Mr. Speaker, what scares me the most is maybe this government won't pay any

attention until our stores don't have those full shelves.

There's going to be a time, if we don't pay attention very quickly, and help agriculture out, that we're going to end up with tremendously big farms. We're seeing farms get bigger now. What happens if we end up 10 years, 15, 20 years from now with about 20 farms left in Saskatchewan? Twenty big corporate farms. And you know what those farmers will do, and I really couldn't blame them if they did — they will be naming their price. They won't be letting the wheat board set their price. They won't be letting Cargill set their price. They will be telling Cargill and all the other buyers out there, this is what we want for our product and if you don't pay it you won't get it.

And, Mr. Speaker, do you know what that's going to come through and do? It's going to, number one, raise the price of our groceries tremendously. We have a cheap food policy; we know that in this province. And it's one of the good things we have in this province. We can afford to buy groceries of all kinds. It's just too bad that the people that are growing the groceries and the products that we need to manufacture into what is in the stores are not receiving money for their products.

We look at barley, Mr. Speaker, and the low price of barley out there. And yet anybody that's gone and bought a box of beer or a bottle of beer lately, they haven't seen that price go down. Mr. Speaker, can you imagine if there was 10 cents more on a bottle of beer and that went directly to the farmer, directly to the cost of barley? They'd be getting like 12, 15 bucks a bushel for barley. And yet at this point many farmers are not getting \$1 a bushel for barley if they can sell it.

Wheat is at an all-time low. Canola is at an all-time low. Every commodity that you could name is at an all-time low and farmers are trying, with the money that they can derive on what they can sell, to pay these high input costs.

Mr. Speaker, there's other things that this provincial government could do if they so wished. And it come up last week at SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention and it goes back even to Tommy Douglas days, is the education tax, the highest education tax on property in Canada. And that's something the provincial government has the ability to deal with. I believe it has the means and the funds right now to deal with it to a degree. They don't have to wipe it completely out in one fell swoop but they need to start addressing the issue.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, they saw fit on average to lower the education tax on property, according to them, to the tune of 8 per cent. But on my side of the province, probably my half of the province, Mr. Speaker, on the east half, with reassessment what has happened? Well what has happened is our assessments have gone up so much on farm land on that side, Mr. Speaker, that when the smoke cleared our education tax has gone up anywhere from 20 to 30 to 40, in some cases 50 per cent higher than it was before this government actually put the 8 per cent in for education tax.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all know how the foundation grant works. The foundation grant works on assessments within a school division. So the school divisions have no choice. In many cases the foundation grant was lowered in their areas so

they have nowhere to turn but the local property tax payer, which in this case many of them out in rural Saskatchewan are farmers and it's on farm land. And, Mr. Speaker, it is without a doubt the most unfair tax that we have in this province. It's not based on the ability to pay. If it was, farmers probably wouldn't be paying any education tax this fall because they don't have any cash and there's not the ability to pay.

What we've saw in the last 14 years under this NDP government the shift from 40/60 — 60 by the government, 40 by the property owners — that shift has totally gone the other way. And in many cases there's zero per cent boards out there that get absolutely nothing from the provincial government. And the local taxpayer, the local property owner is expected to pick up 100 per cent. And something that the Education minister talked about last session was we have to deal with these zero boards; we have to even this out.

Well I don't think for a minute by making the bigger, larger areas out there is going to deal with that problem at all. In fact we're going to be right back to where we were before very, very quickly and what is going to happen is our farmers are even going to be asked to pay a larger portion of education tax. And someone said here earlier today that the Premier, and he did, he told SARM, I think at two different conventions, Mr. Speaker, the status quo is not on.

And I guess the SARM people and the convention people believed him. They didn't realize that what he meant is, we're not going leave the education tax on property where it is on my side of the province. We're going to raise it. We're going to charge you more, we're going to make you pay more at a time when we certainly can't afford to pay more, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I talked a little bit about before and we've talked about this before in here, that the NDP roots going back to I believe it's August 31, 1944, we read a quote in here and I think the members really took notice that day when we read it. I want to read it again:

We are pledged to do away with the education tax as soon as we get the new sources of revenue to take the place of the revenue now realized from that tax. When we develop new sources of revenue sufficient to supplant the revenue now raised from the tax, we shall do away with the tax because we consider it regressive legislation.

Said the premier of the day. That premier, Mr. Speaker, was Tommy Douglas.

Now this government every election — in fact in between the elections quite often but especially at election time — they prop Tommy up, bring about and say vote for us because Tommy did everything right, and we're Tommy's disciples. I don't believe for a minute there's a member on that side of the House that has enough class and respect to tie Tommy's shoes, Mr. Speaker. They do not have it. Tommy did some good things for this province. These people were certainly not around when Tommy was doing them because if they had have been, they might have learned something from those days.

Mr. Speaker, never in the history of Saskatchewan, in my time in Saskatchewan, my time on this earth, have I seen a

government neglect part of society as such as they are neglecting our farmers. And that Ag minister, Mr. Speaker, as we heard in question period today, is busy doing other things than representing the farmers in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to go on and on about this issue, but there's many members on this side of the House that want to speak to this issue. And I think having explained to these people exactly what is going on in agriculture — and I believe there's a number of them on that side are already know but are scared to say anything — but I think they understand that our farmers need help, Mr. Speaker. And I would ask today that the Ag minister and the Premier would get on the phone, do whatever it takes, a email, every federal Liberal MP [Member of Parliament] that there is, get a hold of them and get the point across that we have tremendous problems in the farming community in this province.

We need help, Mr. Speaker. It should have been months ago that this message and this point was got across to them. But it's never too late, Mr. Speaker.

I believe being that there is a federal election looming, whether it's early January, whether it's in February. Mr. Goodale I believe has got more billions of dollars sitting there, and I believe they want to win the next election. And if they want to play politics by putting 2 or \$3 billion into Saskatchewan agriculture, I'm all for it. Won't tell you how I'll vote, Mr. Speaker, and I won't tell you if it'll buy me, and I don't know if it'll buy any farmers. But I will tell you it'll certainly help the economy of this province, and it will certainly help the farmers of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — So this, Mr. Speaker, at this time, seconded by the member for Kindersley, I move the motion:

That this Assembly condemn the federal government for completely ignoring the current agriculture crisis in its November 14, 2005, economic update; and that this Assembly condemn the provincial government for its failure to raise the importance of the current agriculture crisis with the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Melville-Saltcoats and seconded by the member for Kindersley:

That this Assembly condemn the federal government for completely ignoring the current agriculture crisis in its November 14, 2005, economic update; and that this Assembly condemn the provincial government for its failure to raise the importance of the current agriculture crisis with the federal government.

The Chair recognizes the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to join in the debate today. And as the amendment states, we should be condemning our federal government for its complete failure of agricultural policy across

this country.

It's come to my attention that it is not just Saskatchewan farmers right now that are hurting; it is farmers in Canada that are hurting. Farmer receipts were the lowest, the lowest, Mr. Speaker, federally in the last 25 years. This is a deplorable situation. It's been put forth by BSE. It's been put forth by farm subsidies internationally, and it's something that has not been addressed in any meaningful way by the federal Liberal government. It's continued to fail.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas where it's devastated Western Canadian farmers, the repeal of the Crow freight rate has caused cereal grain farmers to see a third of their gross production costs now going into freight. That's something that at the same time that this was yanked, there was no market freedom allowed for farmers to develop their business plans and from that gain access to new markets. No instead we had a wheat board that keeps taking our grain, demanding that we sign contracts for it, and failing to honour those contracts.

Now with that being said, Mr. Speaker, that is the reality on the federal side. But I've had the privilege of living in three different provinces. I've lived in the province of British Columbia in the beautiful capital city of Victoria for four years. I've lived in the capital of Ontario, in Toronto, also for five and a half years. I've worked on Bay Street, Mr. Speaker. And I can tell you when the rest of the country thinks about Saskatchewan, what they think about first and foremost is farmers. We are the farming centre of this nation. We have 48 per cent of the arable acres and the best farmers in the world, Mr. Speaker.

And what we completely fail and have failed more miserably than at any time in our history, Mr. Speaker, is to have a Minister of Agriculture who has a clue about what's going on in this industry and making that case to Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:45]

Mr. Dearborn: — Mr. Speaker, the CAIS program had potential, and this minister completely dropped the ball. They have forced farm families into bankruptcy. They are closing rural communities. They are pitting family against family, community against community, and they will continue to do it because they are callous, and it serves their political interest. And that is the only reason, Mr. Speaker. It is not incompetence alone because one individual or one party could not raise that level of incompetence in agriculture.

We hear the Deputy Premier speaking for it. And what has he done for agriculture since he has been elected, Mr. Speaker? We have seen farm families leave the land. It is more, Mr. Speaker, than just a matter of economics. It is a matter of our history. It is a matter of what makes our country. Farm stock is good stock, Mr. Speaker. Farmers send their children on to university, which go on to run the boardrooms of this country. It is a failure of this government that they have to do that outside this province.

But what do we get, Mr. Speaker? We get time and time again a

failure to represent our case to the government in Ottawa by this NDP government. And they will continue to fail.

And the reason is, Mr. Speaker, not because they don't understand it, not because they don't understand what is right, it is a callousness. This is an intent to fail, Mr. Speaker. It is their intent to fail the farmers of this province. It has been, it will continue to be, until they are booted out of office, Mr. Speaker. And I could tell you the farmers in my area believe this 100 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt about it. There is one sector, one sector, Mr. Speaker, that has had a profitable existence in agriculture over the last five years, and that's the supply-manage sector. Where is this Minister of Agriculture on that sector?

We have 48 per cent of the arable land in this country. We have 3.9 per cent of the quota. Has he asked for more quota? Has he asked to get more dairies coming into Saskatchewan? Has he asked for more turkey quota, bird quota, chicken quota, egg quota? No, Mr. Speaker, he sat on his hands and will continue to fail.

And the reason is, Mr. Speaker, is that it is in his political interest to have rural Saskatchewan depopulated; to have small towns fight each other for school board office jobs; to have people leave this province, go to Alberta, vote for Ralph Klein and hopefully have more left for the rest of us.

Mr. Speaker, the reality of this Agriculture minister is that he did not go forth to put together the CAIS program. And let me tell you about this program, Mr. Speaker. We have had bureaucrats come forth and tell us, this is designed so that if there is one, one, Mr. Speaker, one error that the application is rejected and sent back. And why is this the case, Mr. Speaker? This is the case because it allows for the creation of bureaucratic jobs outside of this province, Mr. Speaker.

The Government of Quebec, Mr. Speaker, they do their own CAIS administration. Where are those jobs in Saskatchewan? Instead they're around in Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, around with the Canadian Grain Commission and the Canadian Wheat Board.

It has been failure after failure after failure on the part of this Agriculture minister to have the agriculture industry centred in this province, so that at the end of the day when Ottawa wants advice, they have to call. They have to call. Not the situation they have now where they're questionable who's on the other end of the line and they don't bother at all, Mr. Speaker.

I would ask the minister, Mr. Speaker, if he has any idea what's coming up in the go around of World Trade Organization negotiations. There is light at the end of the tunnel possibly. What kind of input has he had to our federal minister or our foreign minister? Has he told him, you know, if the Europeans were to cut back their export subsidies by 80 per cent, maybe this would be a good thing?

I pose it to you, Mr. Speaker, what he's concerned about is moving Department of Agriculture jobs out of rural Saskatchewan and into the city on the hope that he's going to

buy a vote. That's where his interest lies, not in the interests of farmers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to tell you a little story now. It's not a happy story, Mr. Speaker. It's about a young boy. He has to ride the bus 25 minutes a day, Mr. Speaker, and he comes home. And the bus stops outside the driveway of the farm. And the farm has a barn and there's a farmhouse and there's a barn, and his dad's half-ton is parked with the nose out from behind the barn. And so he gets out. It's been a hard go, Mr. Speaker, for this family. And he walks past the barn to that half-ton, to see his dad. And he sees his dad, but his dad's no longer living. There's a gun in the truck. You can draw your own conclusions.

These are the realities that are facing farm families. Is it because his father was not a honest man? No, that wasn't the case. Was it because he wasn't hard working? That was neither the case. Was it because he failed to understand his industry? No, that was not the case either, Mr. Speaker.

It was because after years and years and years of things going wrong, things beyond their control, things, Mr. Speaker, whereby hope broke, and it's not just the tragedy of that loss of life, Mr. Speaker, the destruction that that caused to that family. That's a part of Saskatchewan that has died and will not be resurrected.

And when we have a real human face to this kind of story, what kind of reaction do we get from this NDP government? I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, we get the same reaction we do when we get loud and . . . [inaudible] . . . over the fact that they don't understand the economic side. We get no reaction, Mr. Speaker. We get no reaction from a government preventing this from occurring.

The member from Melville-Saltcoats alluded to the rise in farm suicide. This is a reality. It's a reality that when we have these horrific numbers in other areas of our society, they're hopefully addressed. But these are ones that are addressed in silence. They're addressed in the churches where the community members come together. And the real tragedy here is not just the loss; it's from eye-to-eye at those funerals. They're looking at who may be next.

Where is our government on this, Mr. Speaker? Are they camped out in Ottawa telling the Minister of Agriculture this is what we need? No, Mr. Speaker, they're not. They're right here. They're right here silent and incompetent.

What's the answer, Mr. Speaker? Well perhaps this Minister of Agriculture could get on a plane, could take that \$300,000 to show the Premier next to a zero sign, and do some lobbying in Ottawa to bring back the bacon. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, they could send officials to put together a farm program that worked. But that won't be the case, Mr. Speaker, because it is politically not opportune for them to act on those matters. So they will not. They will fail. They will continue to fail. And this minister, this minister in particular will act self-righteous and tell the entire province — he'll tell the media — it's Ottawa that doesn't get it.

You know I've lived in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. When people from Ontario listen to a Saskatchewan farmer, they believe that

we know what we're talking about. This government would like to portray our agriculture industry as *Green Acres*, local yokel, driving a 1952 Massey Ferguson tractor . . .

An Hon. Member: — '44, Massey '44.

Mr. Dearborn: — Massey '44, Mr. Speaker. Just like Lee Pearce the NDP candidate that had to parachute in to run against me drove — with a lovely picture of the Premier on the front of it — down the parade at the Goose Festival in Kindersley. This is their idea of forward-looking agriculture.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's not get away from the fact that there was a new idea came forth, there was a new idea came forth — 4.8 million acres of trees, Mr. Speaker. Bravo. I mean, where are we going to put these? Are they going to line our streets? Who's going to pay for them? You know I've got real worries about putting the crop in next year and trying to peg the market within 45 days to hit the highest of the PROs [pool return outlook]. I suspect that when you plant something for 10 years, it means that your return on the investment is going to be somewhat lengthened and spaced out. This is a complete, is a complete failure to understand the reality of the cash flow crunch which exists today in agriculture.

To put money into trees, Mr. Speaker — 4.8 million acres, larger than the nation of Wales, Mr. Speaker — and for what? Is this a blind attempt for captain potato to rescue Weyerhaeuser that suddenly we'll have trees? You know, we have more than half a province of trees now, and they can't make money. But somehow this is the brainchild. This is what is coming forth. This is this minister's answer — 4.8 million acres of trees.

This, Mr. Speaker, is so ridiculous. It is so ridiculous it defies explanation. Have we heard anything from the minister thus far about who's going to pay for the planting of these trees? What happens if there's a forest fire? Mr. Speaker, how does crop insurance handle these trees?

You know, we don't have a lot of trees in the southwest of 10-25-26. The ones we have, we planted or my great-grandparents planted or my parents planted. But there's not a lot of trees there.

I don't really know how my landlords would react on the three-year contracts I have, telling them that I'm taking this 160 acres and converting it to spruce. It did well for lentils. It did well on coriander. But from the direction of our Minister of Agriculture, two years after my contract expires I'm going to have one great acorn crop.

Mr. Speaker, these are their answers. They're ludicrous. They're ludicrous. And maybe we're going to get a by-product of a squirrel-hunting industry. I don't know if that has been spelled out or not yet, Mr. Speaker.

The long and short of it, Mr. Speaker, is time and time again this government has failed Saskatchewan's farmers, Saskatchewan's farm families. They have cut the coverage on crop insurance at the same time that they've raised premiums. They cancelled the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program. They didn't go to the table on AIDA [agricultural income disaster assistance]. Nobody understood how that

worked, Mr. Speaker. They didn't go to the table on CFIP [Canadian farm income program].

And on CAIS, Mr. Speaker, a program that actually had some potential, they washed their hands of it and then believe they deserve some sort of medal and to say, well we committed to this so we're actually going to commit to it for this year. Next year well that's a different story. We expect that we may be committed earlier, but possibly not to the program, Mr. Speaker. This is the reality that we get out of this Minister of Agriculture.

I sat, Mr. Speaker, with a constituent of mine, an old Kindersley family; been farming in the area since the '20s and done very well. Good farmers. They don't know where their equity has gone. It rained three days in August; they lost \$300,000 when their barley went from malt to feed. Hopefully the minister understands the difference between the two.

However with that being said I'm not certain that the NDP maybe has a plot to convert feed barley to beer and then we could own the whole industry there as well.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is is that farmers have run out of money. They've run out of equity. And what has this government done with regards to our financial institutions? Did it have anything to say when the federal government almost cancelled the farm improvement loans? Farm improvement loans used . . . 80 per cent of them in Canada are used in Saskatchewan and 90 per cent of that 80 per cent are used by our credit unions. This was going to devastate the industry. How come they weren't up on this, Mr. Speaker?

Where is their consistent lobby effort in Ottawa? Why are they not there this week? Why are they not there every week? This is a multi-billion dollar industry, Mr. Speaker. Every week they should be in Ottawa getting results, not sitting behind the bar talking like a peacock and understanding precious little.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, there aren't farmers on that side. They don't get it. They don't understand the fact, Mr. Speaker, that you cannot take your CAIS program to the bank because the bank has come to realize that this is a bureaucratic nightmare. There is no guarantee on receiving funds from it. The formulas have changed year after year and the payouts are 18 months, Mr. Speaker.

Where has that minister been on that fact? This is something that could actually be taken forth to a financial institution. Where have they been, Mr. Speaker? Where have they been on expanding the supply management, the small sector in our province that is making money, Mr. Speaker? Have they raised it at all with the federal minister?

[15:00]

An Hon. Member: — No. Plant trees instead.

Mr. Dearborn: — We're going to plant trees, Mr. Speaker, as the member from Wood River . . . I know that his area will benefit greatly from this. I know that his area, Mr. Speaker, will be able to see, will be able to see the trees lining the highway. And as they come to plant the trees, Mr. Speaker, bouncing

along, there may be from time to time that the holes will already be dug. And they'll put the tree in the hole. And now we'll have trees in our highways as well as potholes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Agriculture has failed. He continues to fail. What he needs to do is this: go to Ottawa. Get us a real deal. Get their attention. Spend that \$300,000 on the big zero campaign on a lobby effort to put money into the pockets of farmers.

It's a minority government right now, Mr. Speaker. We have the most powerful cabinet minister in the country, below the Prime Minister, from this province. It shouldn't be that hard, Mr. Speaker. It is complete, complete incompetence, Mr. Speaker. Why? Why won't they do this? I posit to you again, Mr. Speaker. It is purely politically callous. They choose not to because they know that, regardless, the good people of Cannington are not going to vote for them. They're not going to be tricked again, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, where this government could act — and in another demonstration of its mendacious attempt to bleed rural families — is on the education portion, education portion of property tax, Mr. Speaker. There is, Mr. Speaker, time and time again where SARM has been promised this relief and this relief has not come. They've been told it would come. I was at SARM, the mid-term convention here, Mr. Speaker. SARM does not believe this government any more. They've been misled too many times. Their interpretation of what tax relief means, this government's interpretation of what tax relief means, are two very, very different things, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that this particular tax is so difficult for farmers to endure is that it has no bearing on their income or ability to pay.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, it is highly suspect the SAMA [Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency] assessments and the formulas used to determine the assessment, and thereby the entire tax amount that will be derived from rural Saskatchewan . . . Somehow year after year of recession, year after year where we have a quarter of, 160 acres of farm land falling in price in the actual commercial movement of that property — we have that number falling — yet cumulatively the assessment for rural Saskatchewan rises by \$6 million. That doesn't sound like a huge number across the entire province. But the problem is, Mr. Speaker, is try to find a rural municipality where the price of farm land's increased. Herein lies the problem.

They tinker, Mr. Speaker, with the formulas used to do the assessment so that they can do a larger gouge on the rural communities, on the communities least able to pay. We have 19 rural municipalities now up in arms in a tax revolt. And, Mr. Speaker, it is sad that it has to come to that, but hence it has come to that.

I'm going to read what was put up at SARM at the mid-term convention. And it states:

“We are pledged to do away with the education tax as soon as we get new sources of revenue to take the place of the revenue now realized from that tax. When we develop

new sources of revenue sufficient to supplant the revenue now raised from the tax we shall do away with the tax because we consider it regressive legislation," said the premier.

Tommy Douglas, August 31, 1944.

We have, Mr. Speaker, a situation where this aspect that greatly affects the farm community has gone forth for 60 years — promises, promises, promises — but a failure to deliver. They took part of the commission's recommendations on education, raised the PST, did the amalgamations. It's farm children, Mr. Speaker, it's farm children who are very much distant now from their small schools who are going to suffer because it's those children that are now not going to go to school at all. They're going to go into correspondence because their parents don't want them on the bus for two and one-half hours a day. And then we're going to wonder, are these children adequately prepared?

What has this government done? What has this Agriculture minister done? Well they've done this to them. They've done this intentionally. It's shameful, Mr. Speaker. And like, as I said earlier, that farm child that had to come home off the bus to find that disturbing scenario behind his family's barn, this is a result of this government's lack of action. They're literally killing rural Saskatchewan and doing it with full intent.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to second the motion. I'm going to second the motion. I'm hoping, Mr. Speaker, that we will derive some answers. The federal government is partially to blame but, Mr. Speaker, when you have a complete failure to deliver our message, how are they going to know, Mr. Speaker?

We have now the minister of Social Services, Mr. Speaker, trying to explain agriculture to our members. We're enlightened by her fact that she has an understanding of freight rate subsidies. I would hope that she would also enlighten this House by joining in the debate to demonstrate to us the correlations between our commodity prices, the rising value of the dollar, the monopoly's ability of the CWB [Canadian Wheat Board] of not being able to market our products.

I would hope that she will engage all these issues because I think, Mr. Speaker, as the minister of Social Services she would have something to say about the trauma that that young man who had to walk into his family's farm, go behind the barn, and see what happened to his family because of this government's lack of inaction. I would hope that she would have the decency to enter into this debate and have something worthwhile to say about it, Mr. Speaker, because that is the situation, Mr. Speaker, that farm families and all of Saskatchewan has to deal with, Mr. Speaker.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to second the motion and I look forward to having a number of individuals enter in on this debate today. Hear, hear.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, following my remarks I will move the following amendment to the emergency motion. It will read, after the word "updated" all those words will be deleted and replaced with the following:

and that this Assembly condemn the federal government for its failure to fulfill its commitment to negotiate an energy accord for the people of Saskatchewan.

I will make that amendment following my remarks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that agriculture, not only in Saskatchewan but across this country, is in very dire straits in many circumstances. There are those who are successful, those who are doing well today, Mr. Speaker, but there are many, many who are in dire straits. And there are many circumstances that have brought us to this situation as I suspect the members opposite know.

Mr. Speaker, we welcome today this opportunity for an emergency debate on the situation of agriculture because we did have some hope that we would hear in the federal Minister of Finance's remarks some support for the agriculture industry in this country. We still expect that there may be some announcement from the federal Minister of Agriculture when he arrives here next week for the federal-provincial ministers' conference. But we are also worried that it will be no more than what the announcement in the spring was, Mr. Speaker, an announcement of a cash input which was appreciated by many, Mr. Speaker, but did nothing to change the circumstances other than a short-term fix for a few people.

Mr. Speaker, we need more than political donations into the system. We need more than short-term fixes, Mr. Speaker. Agriculture in Canada needs the support of our federal government if we are going to be able to compete in the world. There is no other country in the world, Mr. Speaker, that expects its states or provinces to compete against other federal treasuries, and yet that is where this federal government leaves us. And so we clearly identify that they are the root cause of many of the problems that we are facing today in agriculture.

I would like to go through a number of the things that have happened over the last couple of decades here in this province that have made a significant difference. Mr. Speaker, when the federal Conservatives were in power, they initiated a split between the federal government and the provincial governments in terms of the cost of agriculture programming — a split of 60/40. When the current Liberal government came into power under the former prime minister, they adopted the 60/40 split for agriculture. And I can tell you . . . And I think again that the members opposite understand this and are well aware of the impact of this kind of division on a province where we have so much of our economy being agriculture.

When we are in difficult straits here, for us to pay 40 per cent of the cost of those programs when so much of our economy, so many of our people are hurting, Mr. Speaker, this kind of split simply hits this province so inordinately compared to the other provinces that we can only feel that the federal government simply has written off Saskatchewan and abandoned us, Mr. Speaker.

When we looked at the numbers when the CAIS program came in, we began to look at what the relative costs were. And, Mr. Speaker, this province, given those numbers, was being expected to pay 10 times the provincial per capita average in order to fund this program, Mr. Speaker — 10 times the provincial per capita average. Well, Mr. Speaker, after much struggling and really working hard to pull the money together, we were able to fully fund that first year of the CAIS program. It was not easy and we struggled hard to get the federal government to acknowledge the inequity across the nation. They did not, Mr. Speaker. They have not yet acknowledged that inequity.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that over the past couple of years as I have been Minister of Agriculture, I have worked very, very hard with the other provincial ministers, and we now have unanimity all across the nation. Every provincial Agriculture minister has stood with us to say that the system is inequitable, and we need to change CAIS. It is not fair, Mr. Speaker. And we have put forward a proposal that is unanimously supported that says when margins drop below 50 per cent, the federal government must cover it all because at that point, Mr. Speaker, it is a disaster. We worked very closely with our neighbouring province, Alberta, and we came up with a program that we know will help in dealing with this program. That, Mr. Speaker, is only one of the fixes that needed to happen to the CAIS program. There are many more that need to happen.

One of the other fixes, Mr. Speaker, was with regard to the deposits. The deposits on the CAIS program, Mr. Speaker, were very, very difficult for many people to manage. And we worked very hard to take the deposit off completely. We were not successful in getting the deposit removed, Mr. Speaker. But I can tell you at getting it at the point four five per cent really did reduce it to a point where it was negligible. And most farmers then were able to go into this program and at least get whatever levels of support were available through the program.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's also been very, very important for us over this last number of years to recognize some of the other changes. There was that 60/40 split that has hit Saskatchewan so hard.

[15:15]

I also want to talk about the Crow rate and the changes there, Mr. Speaker, because behind the taking off of the Crow rate there were actually some good ideas, the need to value-add on agriculture. And we wanted to see that happen, Mr. Speaker. But taking the Crow rate off had one single effect because there was not the one corresponding investment put back into the province, \$500 million a year. Mr. Speaker, \$500 million a year was simply pulled from the Saskatchewan economy — money that could have been used to help develop those value-added opportunities, Mr. Speaker; money that could have been used to help build up the transportation system in this province which is in need of having much, much heavier duty highways to handle that value-added agriculture development and industry development in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

That has been raised time and again with the federal government; I raised it as Transportation minister, and I've

raised it many times as Agriculture minister. And, Mr. Speaker, we try to point out to them that if that kind of investment were made, we would move ahead in this province, and we would not be so dependent on their support on every issue, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, have they come to the table on that front? No, Mr. Speaker, they've exulted, they've exulted in their \$10 billion surpluses, their \$13 billion surpluses, and we have paid, Mr. Speaker, we have paid dearly. Five hundred million dollars a year for the Crow rate being removed and no corresponding investment to make up for that, Mr. Speaker, or to help out our rural or our agricultural economy from whom that \$500 million a year was drawn. Mr. Speaker, the federal government abandoned us on the Crow rate when they pulled it out.

Mr. Speaker, they also abandoned us in '94 and '95. They were at world trade talks, Mr. Speaker. What did they do? Mr. Speaker, what did they do? They chose to be an example to the other nations and simply cut our subsidies, a unilateral decision.

And, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity and the honour to go down to Ottawa in 1999, shortly after I was elected, with a delegation of members opposite and members of municipal government, farm organizations, to lobby the federal government, Mr. Speaker, because you know what that subsidy grab took out of our economy, Mr. Speaker? I bet the members opposite know. They were there, some of them. A billion dollars a year, Mr. Speaker. Another billion scooped out of the agricultural economy of this province by this federal government, Mr. Speaker, and they celebrate their big surplus. Mr. Goodale smiles about the wonderful surplus. Mr. Speaker, that is wrong.

We're talking now \$1.5 billion annually scooped from the agricultural economy in Saskatchewan by this federal government, Mr. Speaker. There is no justifying that kind of a scoop.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about one other area that has had significant impact on the broad economy of this province and, Mr. Speaker, one that the Premier has referenced many times and one that has to be changed, one which we are dealing with now. And, Mr. Speaker, that is with regard to the energy accord.

Mr. Speaker, we are being abandoned in this province by a federal government that has made deals with Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker. If we were getting the kind of deals that they were getting — exactly the same so that there was some equity in this nation, Mr. Speaker, some fairness in this nation — if we weren't getting the big fat zero that the federal government has been pushing on us around this issue, Mr. Speaker, we would be getting somewhere between 5 and \$700 million for that Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you \$2 billion a year would make a lot of difference to our ability to be able to shore up rural Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, we have been abandoned by this federal government, and I have heard nothing substantial. And I tell you I have been pushing as hard as I can push on the federal minister to get some answers, to get some changes, and so, Mr. Speaker, have many other members of our government.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important to note that we have asked for

support from the members opposite in trying to get a better deal. And, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province need to know that that support has been very, very minimal. Occasionally we'll get a supportive comment and that is appreciated, no question. But overall, Mr. Speaker, very, very little support.

We called for support from the federal Conservatives, Mr. Speaker, because the federal Conservative government owns many of the seats in this province right now. They hold many of the seats in this province, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, very, very little from those people in terms of helping us. For some reason, Mr. Speaker, instead of dealing with their federal responsibilities they turned around and shot at a provincial government that was working hard to try and get a fair deal for the farmers of Saskatchewan. Why, Mr. Speaker? Cheap politics, nothing more, Mr. Speaker.

We want a fair deal for the farmers of this province. That's what we've been working for, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other areas that we have done, worked hard with farmers to try and get a better deal for Saskatchewan. One of the other issues, Mr. Speaker, that we had to deal with was the whole issue of BSE because our agriculture sector was hurting so significantly as a result of that disease and the resulting border closure and the politics that was being played in the US [United States] around that issue, Mr. Speaker.

This government came to the table, put the money on the table for every one of the programs that were brought forward, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we could put some stability into the livestock industry, to make sure that the support would be there for Saskatchewan cattle producers.

Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to say that, though that issue is not completely behind us, with that support — and there was support from the federal government. I must acknowledge that there was support through that, Mr. Speaker — we were able to weather that period. And things are starting to turn around and look better in the livestock area, Mr. Speaker, and we're glad to see that.

I think it's also important to note, Mr. Speaker, there is one further item that has seriously impacted not just the rural economy, but significantly the rural economy of Saskatchewan and significantly the agriculture sector where so much of what we produce in this province is exported, Mr. Speaker. And that is the value of the dollar.

The rising value of the dollar has taken arguably somewhere between 20 and 30 per cent from the return to producers, Mr. Speaker, and that hurts deeply. Mr. Speaker, this is something over which we have very, very little control, but it's a fact of life that the farmers and manufacturers in this province are dealing with, particularly those in rural Saskatchewan.

One of the other areas, Mr. Speaker, and the members opposite raised it and I think it's a very, very important issue — it's also one that Mr. Wayne Easter the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture pointed out — and that is around the cost of inputs. Mr. Speaker, there has been no break from any of those

companies that have been making significant dollar in this industry.

Last year I asked for a meeting with former Agriculture minister in this province, Lorne Hepworth, who is now with a consortium of major farm chemical companies. And I pointed out to him the kind of situation that we were in, the kind of dire straits that many of our farmers were facing.

And there was a lot of controversy going on around own-use inputs, particularly around glyphosate, Mr. Speaker, which would be a generic chemical similar to Roundup, Mr. Speaker, which most people would be familiar with. And, Mr. Speaker, we have been . . . We pressed the federal government to change regulations to make it easier for farmers to be able to get the generic product because it was significantly less, somewhere between two and greater dollars less than what some of the name brand glyphosates were, Mr. Speaker.

And not only did we do that, when I met with Mr. Hepworth, I said, Mr. Hepworth, your companies, the companies you represent have made a lot of money off the farmers in Saskatchewan and continue to make a lot of money. Don't you think that looking at our circumstances today and looking at where those people are who are your loyal customers, that you could cut the prices some, cut your profits just a little to help out the producers through this very difficult time? The answer is, you want to see the 25-year plan. The 25-year plan has the farmers working for those companies, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's where they're headed.

Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned about this because there are people who want to own their land. They want the independence of farm life. And, Mr. Speaker, there certainly is a lot of work in this nation and in this world to undermine that possibility. And I find that discouraging and troubling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we still are continuing to press for the pest management regulation agency to make it more possible to get the generic chemicals which will help maximize returns for our producers, particularly those chemicals which have wide use in the province, like glyphosate, Mr. Speaker.

Well a number of the things that we've talked about as well around agriculture certainly have been — from my perspective — have really looked at trying to build a solid agriculture for the future, Mr. Speaker. We have sought to find ways where, with whatever resources we can pull together, that we could make strategic investments that really would help the industry to move ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I recently had opportunity to be up in Melfort where one of the members opposite holds a seat, Mr. Speaker, just to show that it's not all about politics, Mr. Speaker. We were up there to try and help a couple of companies along in their process of developing meat processing in the province, Mr. Speaker, and also to advance the toll processing because, Mr. Speaker, we are convinced that if we can put dollars in, we can provide support in these strategic areas. We will see an increase in the effectiveness of those industries in the province. And it will bring more jobs to rural Saskatchewan. And it will bring more security for farmers who are able to sell into our own domestic markets, Mr. Speaker.

And if you look at that in the broadest picture, the way that this will work, Mr. Speaker, is that there is need for livestock to be able to put through those meat processing systems. We can finish those animals right here in the province, Mr. Speaker, because we have abundant feed. That feed is sold into the process for feeding these animals. They're slaughtered and processed here in Saskatchewan, and then we sell the value-added products outside the province, Mr. Speaker.

And we are working with private industry to develop these industries across the province to try and strengthen them by whatever way we can provide support, Mr. Speaker. Why? Because we do care. Because we do have a vision for where agriculture can successfully go in the future, Mr. Speaker. And we're doing everything we can — putting our money right where our mouth is — to try and make sure that happens.

Mr. Speaker, one of the items that was mentioned — and it's not particularly under my portfolio but one that I find quite interesting — is the whole issue of ag forestry. And in ag forestry I just want to say very clearly that despite what seems to be a real flim-flam around everything that's going on, that there is absolutely no federal money that's been put on the table to help move ag forestry ahead. And so I think that's very important that the people of this province know that because certainly it was represented differently by the federal Minister of Finance. But certainly our Minister of Industry and Resources has made clear that that was not the case, Mr. Speaker.

But because one of the members opposite chose to mock out this area, which actually does hold some promise for some farmers in the province, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to talk a little bit about some of the work that has gone on around ag forestry. And it is a hopeful area for many farmers within the province.

I attended and spoke at an ag forestry conference here in Regina last year, Mr. Speaker. And there was tremendous interest from quite a number of farmers from around the province. And the vision around ag forestry isn't that you just kind of immediately go in and plant the crops, Mr. Speaker, and reap a return. Yes it is long term. But the planting is long term. It's staged, Mr. Speaker. And it's particularly helpful for those who are going into farming or who are looking for passing on their farms through the generations as well, Mr. Speaker, because it is a long-term crop that can provide some stability and is one which is nicely rotated through the years.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is interest and there is possibility of selling those products — the trees that are grown there — into a domestic market which again helps increase the value-add. Whether it's ethanol or wood fibre products, Mr. Speaker, it can help move this forward. And we do want to see jobs in rural Saskatchewan, and we know that ag forestry is possible.

And just for a little enlightenment for the member from Kindersley who was talking about planting a lot of spruce trees and laughing about it and then laughing about the harvest of acorns you'd get, acorns actually come from oak trees not spruce trees. I hope his members will fill him in on that.

It's very important, Mr. Speaker, I think to take seriously the kind of interests that people in this province have. And many of

our farmers are interested in the possibilities that are there with ag forestry, and we are working with them to try and help build viable industries on the area where their interests are clearly pointed out, Mr. Speaker.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, we also see some real developments on a number of fronts. One of those areas certainly has been organic where there have been expanding markets. I had the privilege last year of being in Germany for the BioFach conference which is one of the largest organics conferences in the world, Mr. Speaker. And I had opportunity there to help represent Saskatchewan and Canadian producers and to talk with buyers from Europe to encourage them to look at our Saskatchewan and Canadian products.

Mr. Speaker, I was very, very proud of our organic producers there because around the Canadian pavilion it was very clear that Saskatchewan producers are committed to this industry; they're putting their investment there. We are supporting them, Mr. Speaker. And at the banquet following this event, an American representative came up to one of our party and said, you know you people from Saskatchewan have really embarrassed us. You've put on such a very, very good show here. People know that you're here. And, Mr. Speaker, when you're trying to market, that's what it's about. People know that we're here, know that we're out there, that we're marketing Saskatchewan's very, very good organic products. And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to see positive growth in the organics industry in this province.

Mr. Speaker, there's some question that was raised by members opposite about the connections with the agriculture community and the kind of work that goes on there. I have to say that I have been very privileged as Minister of Agriculture to work with a wide, wide variety of agriculture groups, and those are everywhere from the more municipal area working with SARM and their executive, Mr. Speaker, and working with the BSE group made up of producers, Mr. Speaker, to our farm support review committee. Mr. Speaker, there are a large number of groups of producers that I meet regularly with, that I listen to for not only for advice, Mr. Speaker, but to hear clearly the circumstances that they as farmers in this province and people involved in the agriculture industry are facing.

Working with them, Mr. Speaker, we found areas where there was . . . that needed to be addressed. There were concerns that lenders might be pulling back, that they might not be providing the kind of support that farmers needed. And so, Mr. Speaker, we were able to meet with the lenders and deal with some of the rumour that was out there and to find out that in fact, Mr. Speaker, they were continuing to provide support and that they were dealing with farmers on an individual basis and still providing a fairly good level of support.

All that said, Mr. Speaker, is not in any way to minimize the very, very dire straits that many farmers in Saskatchewan are facing because there are many of them who, in terms of cash, are strapped. Mr. Speaker, there are farmers who have been going into their assets. Mr. Speaker, this has been a very, very difficult time.

But any, any kind of assumption or comment or question that would intimate in any way that this government has not been there, that this government has not put the money forward that we could to support this industry is simply wrong, Mr. Speaker. It is wrong.

I want to tell you about the finances that we have put into this industry because we believe in it, because we want to see success in agriculture, Mr. Speaker — \$1.2 billion in the last two years; 1.2 billion to support this industry, Mr. Speaker, \$650 million for the '04-05 fiscal year. This is far, far more than any other province puts in on a per capita basis, Mr. Speaker.

And when we look at the comparison between the province and the federal government, if you take off the tax breaks, Mr. Speaker, and you just simply look at the investment that we make, over \$400 million per capita . . . or \$400 per capita put into agriculture, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan. For Canada, what do you think it is? Seventy-four dollars per capita, Mr. Speaker. We have been abandoned by our federal government in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, over \$400 million put into agriculture. The province closest to us in terms of the amount per capita put in would be Prince Edward Island at just somewhere over 200 million. Next Manitoba and Alberta at just under 200 million. Mr. Speaker, it's just bizarre, bizarre to suggest in any way that this NDP government does not care about agriculture in this province. We have been making the investments, Mr. Speaker, far beyond what any other province has been making and certainly far beyond what the federal government is doing.

Member opposite says, oh what about Alberta? Well let's just take a look at Alberta, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to look at Alberta. Even with their new program in place, Mr. Speaker, even with their new program which is offside with the rest of the nation, a program that they can put in, Mr. Speaker, they said they were putting it in as a pilot project. But no, they're putting it in, Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that we're looking for a broad federal program that will support farmers all across this nation at a similar level.

Mr. Speaker, over the three years the clear estimate is that they will be, Mr. Speaker, over \$300 million less in terms of their support, actual dollars in their support for the farmers in Alberta than we are here in Saskatchewan. Real dollars, Mr. Speaker, that's what it's about. That, Mr. Speaker, is our clear estimate from our department, Mr. Speaker, second to none, second to none in terms of our support for this industry. So any suggestion from members opposite, Mr. Speaker, is naive, ignorant, or just simply ludicrous.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there need to be changes to the programs. We know that very clearly. And we will continue to work as hard as we can press. And we will continue to try and form strategic alliances with the other provinces to get these changes made, Mr. Speaker. Because if they won't pay attention to us because we're just 1 million people, and if the one Liberal member from this province doesn't have the strength to stand up for us, Mr. Speaker, then we know that we have to have strategic alliances with the other provinces. And so we've been forming those alliances. That's why we have

unanimity, Mr. Speaker, on the equity program, and that's what we're working for there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we want to see a successful industry in this province. We know that our producers are efficient. We know they produce the highest quality products. And we want to see them be able to succeed, Mr. Speaker.

One of the members opposite asked about the whole issue of supply manage, Mr. Speaker. And clearly in the long-term national plan for supply manage, one of the items that they refer to is comparative advantage. And this province clearly has comparative advantage in terms of supply management.

Mr. Speaker, because of our space it is much better in terms of disease control to have livestock operations here in this province. You don't have the same kind of concentration for fowl that you would have along the Fraser Valley, Mr. Speaker, and so your disease control can be better here.

Mr. Speaker, we have feed — this is part of comparative advantage — significant, good feed that would enable us to build a larger dairy industry here, to build a larger chicken industry here, Mr. Speaker. And we have pushed that with the federal government. We've pushed it with the marketing boards, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to push that. And we will take the legal channels necessary to try and get a fair deal for Saskatchewan supply manage, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there's something else that I think is very, very important for us as we look at the success or failure of agriculture, not just in Saskatchewan but in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is the issue of world trade.

And in world trade, Mr. Speaker, because we have had so many disparate voices in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, there was the Western Wheat Growers and groups like them that really do not feel supportive of the Canadian Wheat Board as it stands. And on the other hand you've got the wheat board and its many supporters across the province. And, Mr. Speaker, you've got the supply managed industry. All represent very different points of view as we move towards the world trade talks.

And so sometimes when you get into those kind of forums where there is so many things in the balance, to have all these different voices means that we do not have the kind of strength that we need — not just as a province but as a nation — to be able to accomplish what needs to be accomplished.

So, Mr. Speaker, on that front again we look to form alliances. I called together the broadest table that I could in this province, a round table of various representatives from industry to sit and to work together to try and get, if not a consensus, at least a highest common denominator that we could agree to as our focus for those world trade talks, Mr. Speaker. Not only did we meet around the round table but we selected out of that group a subcommittee and tasked them with finding that highest common denominator. They will be reporting back to me and to the larger committee soon.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we go to those WTO [World Trade Organization] talks, we want to have the strongest possible

position that we can have for Saskatchewan farmers and for Canadian agriculture, Mr. Speaker. And that is the kind of work that is going on. Producers involved, producer organizations involved, Mr. Speaker — guiding, challenging, pushing to get the best position that we can possibly get.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to successful agriculture in this province. We are committed to successful development for rural Saskatchewan in this province. Mr. Speaker, there are a whole number of other issues that we have been working diligently on with a variety of groups because it's not just about this NDP government. It's about the canola growers. It's about the wheat growers. It's about the wheat board, about the NFU [National Farmers Union]. It's about APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan]. And it's about the kind of dreams and visions that they have for this province and we can work with them to make a stronger vision, Mr. Speaker. And we can help with the kind of regulation that we can put in place to help build these industries for the future.

One of those industries, Mr. Speaker, that we have already taken some action on and we have seen some building on but there's still more potential, is the ethanol industry, Mr. Speaker. We will see further growth in this industry of renewable fuels, not just ethanol but biodiesel, Mr. Speaker. Because, Mr. Speaker, these fuels are renewable, they're easier on the environment, and we can have the whole loop right here. The production, the sales, Mr. Speaker, we can do it here in Saskatchewan. And our primary producers can get the return, Mr. Speaker. We are working with the producers and the producer groups on these fronts so that we can have successful industry here in this province, Mr. Speaker.

There are many other things that we have been doing, Mr. Speaker, and I know that the member from Yorkton, our Deputy Premier, would like to also address some of these issues. But I just think it's very . . . I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite are clearly saying that they want to go after the federal government for a fair deal as well.

They did say, Mr. Speaker, and it's in *Hansard*, they did say that they would be with us if we fully funded CAIS and I perceive that to be the case now. I'm thankful for that because I know even though we have many differences and even though they seem to enjoy the personal attacks, Mr. Speaker, the fact is if we pull together as a legislature, we can be stronger in trying to get good results for the people in this province who are suffering and who need our support, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm thankful that they have brought forward their motion but, Mr. Speaker, it is in my opinion a little misguided, a little misdirected. And so we have an amendment, Mr. Speaker, that will look at the broader picture. And at this point, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that amendment that, Mr. Speaker, I move:

That all the words after the word “updated” in the original motion be deleted and replaced with the following:

and that this Assembly condemn the federal government for its failure to fulfill its commitment to negotiate an energy accord for the people of Saskatchewan.

I so move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the hon. member from Yorkton, the Deputy Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[15:45]

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, seconded by the member for Yorkton that the motion be amended by:

That all the words after the word “updated” be deleted and replaced with following;

and that this Assembly condemn the federal government for its failure to fulfill its commitment to negotiate an energy accord for the people of Saskatchewan.

The Chair recognizes the member for Yorkton.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased this afternoon to enter into the debate as it relates to the lack of sufficient funding, I think adequately put by the federal government, in maintaining a stronger Saskatchewan agricultural industry. For that matter, Mr. Speaker, a stronger Canadian agricultural industry.

I want to say first and foremost, Mr. Speaker, I've been listening this afternoon both to the very eloquent speech that was given, Mr. Speaker, by the Minister of Agriculture on the issues that he's attempted to pursue and pursued in trying to make a difference for agriculture in Saskatchewan. And I listened with some interest both to the two speakers from the Saskatchewan Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker, in relationship to the motion and the seconding of the motion. And I want to speak briefly, Mr. Speaker, if I might about some of the issues of which I heard and where I think this particular industry is going.

I've had the pleasure, Mr. Speaker, for the last four years, five years to work very closely with the body of men and women who represent all of rural Saskatchewan called the action committee on the rural economy, Mr. Speaker. And why I want to preface some of my comments this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, is because in all of the research and work, which by the way, Madam Speaker, has not been endorsed only by the men and women who did the work, but it's been endorsed, Mr. Speaker, by people who serve in this Assembly irrespective of what their political affiliations or associations might be. They've had an opportunity to examine the work of ACRE [action committee on the rural economy] in Saskatchewan. They've had an opportunity to speak about the work of ACRE in Saskatchewan and have given it credit, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the kind of work that they've done.

And I find it passingly strange today, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the House today where you have the opposition members stand up and say that the reason why agriculture is going to hell in a handbasket is because it has to do with the provincial government, Madam Speaker. And we hear that from the members opposite on a regular basis.

It was just only about a little bit more money for agriculture.

Then you know what? And we got rid of the NDP? You know what? We would have a better agricultural industry in Saskatchewan, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And there is absolutely no evidence to support that in the work that men and women have been doing in this province for the last five years. Not by the academia who serve in the universities, Madam Speaker. Not by the members of the federal government, Madam Deputy Speaker. Not by men and women who live and work in rural Saskatchewan today. There is absolutely no evidence to the position of which the official opposition is making today.

Because this is what's happened in Saskatchewan that ACRE has identified. You've had a massive shift in the agri-industry, Madam Deputy Speaker, where in fact today you have only but 30,000 people who live in rural Saskatchewan as opposed to 70,000 in urban, which is an absolute complete shift over the last 60 years. There's been an absolutely complete shift in that period of time.

And the other thing of which they're saying is that this has happened because people have made those decisions in rural Saskatchewan because the farms have gotten bigger. And not only did it get bigger in Saskatchewan, they got bigger in the Midwest of the US. They've gotten bigger in Manitoba. They've gotten bigger in Alberta.

And all of the evidence that Mr. Partridge has presented at the University of Saskatchewan just recently out of his rural department of agriculture, in the department of agriculture, makes all of those statements — that agriculture has had a major, major shift over the last 50 years.

And it isn't about putting additional money into the industry to make it survive because there is evidence all over the place that show that governments across Canada and North America have put tons of money in it to prop the industry up, and it is struggling. It is struggling. When I listen to the members opposite, they appear to say that they have the corner on knowing what should be done in agriculture in Saskatchewan.

And I want to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have only but a small farm today in Saskatchewan. We farm about 1,700 acres on our farm together, my brother and I. And we seeded this spring a variety of crops. We had six crops on our farm this year. And our production this year was as good as it's ever been in many years. And we've got grain piled outside which we haven't yet been able to market. And it's a pretty good quality, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's pretty good quality.

But you know what? The price of that commodity today — which every farmer in Saskatchewan is facing today — is in the tank. The price of what we got for our commodity today is lower than it's been in the last 20 years. We are getting today the cheapest, the poorest return for what we produce on our farm in the history of the last 20 years. And the members opposite know that. The members opposite know that. We all know.

We don't need to recite the problems in Saskatchewan that agriculture producers are facing by saying yes, we have high input costs. We all know that we have high input cost. We

know that fuel prices have gone up. We all know that the fuel prices have gone up. We know that there's been an increase in property taxes and fewer people who are paying the property taxes. We know that.

But who over there, who over there, Madam Deputy Speaker, has stood up in the last two speeches that they gave and said this is what we should be doing for Saskatchewan producers in Saskatchewan? Not a word. Not a word. They recite, Madam Deputy Speaker, what the issues are today in Saskatchewan, which we all know what the issues are in Saskatchewan. But not a word about what the solution should be. Not one word about the solution.

And I say why there is no solution, Madam Deputy Speaker, is because they don't know what the solution is. They don't have any idea what the solution should be. And they got 25 members over there who run about rural Saskatchewan and say that we have the answer. And what are they doing? The member from Kelvington, Kelvington-Wadena was on a combine a couple of weeks ago taking pictures of water — water, guys combining in the water. And what does she say? She said boy, I tell you, you know the farmers are in trouble over here.

Well we were in Nipawin right after the rains, and we know that the farmers are in trouble. And we provided for those producers in that area an opportunity to draw on the disaster program. And what did the member opposite do? She took pictures of it, not only on her own but with her good buddy Mr. Breikreutz; with her good buddy Mr. Breikreutz, the good old Conservative from our area.

And every day they stand up here and they say well, we're not Conservatives. But do you know who they get into bed with the first time they get a chance? With their good old Conservative buddies.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — And that's what they're doing — and not only, not only our good member, not only our good member from Kelvington-Wadena, but our good friend from Saltcoats.

I was at an event not long ago in Yorkton where we had Mr. Harper on the podium. Mr. Harper is on the podium, and he's talking about agricultural policy for Canada. And what does Mr. Harper say? Mr. Harper says, you know what we should do? We should have today a cost-shared agreement in agriculture that is one-third paid by producers, one-third paid by the provinces, and one-third paid by the federal government.

And we had both of the members from Saltcoats and Kelvington go to the mike and say you know what? Mr. Harper, that's a pretty darn good idea. And I . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes you were there. The member from Kelvington was there and so was the member from Saltcoats there because I was there, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I saw the member from Kelvington-Wadena at the event in Yorkton with Mr. Harper. And she was there.

And when they said one-third here and one-third here and one-third here, you know what that means for me as a producer? If I'm picking up one-third of the agriculture subsidy

programs, it means an escalation in my premium on every front, is what it means.

And this is what we have our good old Conservative friends doing here — getting into bed with Mr. Harper in Yorkton, Saskatchewan and agreeing to a farm policy which would destroy producers in Saskatchewan and in Canada . . . is what it would do. And then they have the audacity to stand up and say to us that we're not Conservatives. Because you know what? These people are as clearly Conservatives that we've ever seen, Madam Deputy Speaker, and they're exactly in the very same camp.

Why don't we have, why don't we have on one occasion, why don't we have on one occasion, Madam Deputy Speaker, the opposition say to us what their solutions to this problem would be? I listened on GX Radio not more than a week and a half ago — two weeks ago maybe, Madam Deputy Speaker; I can't remember — when the caucus of the Conservative Party met in Humboldt. And what did I hear the member from Saltcoats say? Well this is what he said. We're going to Humboldt, and we're going to have a conversation in Humboldt as a caucus, as a Conservative caucus. And what we're going to do is we're going to figure out what's wrong with agriculture, and we're going to make a statement on agriculture.

And you know what I did? I called into the radio station, and I said to Saskatchewan people, well why don't we just wait until they come back out of their meetings? Because when they come out of their meetings, we're going to be able to get some measure of direction that the Saskatchewan Conservative Party are going to be going. And then what happened is they met in Humboldt. They met in Humboldt. And then I heard the next day the Leader of the Opposition, the new Conservative Party, not one word about agriculture. Not one word about agriculture was mentioned coming out of Humboldt. And why is that? Because they have no policy on agriculture, Madam Deputy Speaker. They have no policy. They have no direction.

And I tell you where the policy is. The policy is in Kindersley. That's where the policy is. Because when the member from Kindersley left the last time, he took the agricultural policy with him. And when he returns to the legislature, which won't be all that long, Madam Deputy Speaker, because if you've got an opportunity to make the kind of trade that they're making, you want to take old over new any day from what you see over there, Madam Deputy Speaker. And so when the member from Kindersley returns in the next little while, not only will be he delivering a new agricultural policy; he'll be delivering a speech to be the new leader of the Conservatives because that's what they need, Madam Deputy Speaker — a new leader over there.

I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, when the opposition stands up and says, what have you done for agriculture today in Saskatchewan? You can take a look, Madam Deputy Speaker, of this, of the history of this party in supporting agriculture in Saskatchewan and being leaders in delivering what we want for Canada.

The new CAIS program, Madam Deputy Speaker, wasn't devised by a group of individuals. It was devised by all of the Ag ministers in Canada led by the federal government. And

when we devised a new agricultural farm policy plan, it was previously preceded by the old AIDA program.

And I've said on other occasions in this House where I haven't had the opportunity to tell the whole story . . . And I expect that what will happen when I tell this story, that my member from Thunder Creek will stand up and say that that's not quite right. But let me tell the story, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We were, Madam Deputy Speaker, in Ottawa and we took with us the member from Saltcoats to that meeting, and we took with us, Madam Deputy Speaker, the member from Kindersley to that meeting. And we came home with some money that time when we went. We came home with some money collectively, and we did some work with our friends from Manitoba.

And then we said before we left, we want to make sure that we get a better deal for Saskatchewan Canadian farmers, that we don't have a 60/40 formula. And we also said, Madam Deputy Speaker, that what we wanted is that we wanted to get rid of the AIDA program and replace it with a new system.

And I've said on other occasions, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I say it again today. Our plane barely touched the ground when the member from Saltcoats was already saying, you know what? We need to get back to the old 60/40. The province should put its money in, and we should cover AIDA. We should cover AIDA in the interim. He couldn't stay with us for two minutes, Madam Deputy Speaker, to help us with the farm policy. Couldn't stay with us for two minutes. Why? Because it's only about politics. It's only about politics. Don't have any idea over there, 25 men and women, about what good agriculture farm policy is because they don't know. They don't have any idea of what it is, Madam Deputy Speaker.

But I say, well the member opposite from Saltcoats says how many farmers out of there. I'd like to know how many acres the member from Saltcoats seeded this given year. Instead of standing up and being the critic over there, tell me how many acres you've seeded, and I bet you I'll know how many acres the member from Saltcoats seeded, Madam Deputy Speaker. He seeded this many this year — absolutely this many is what he seeded.

And so what you shouldn't do, Madam Deputy Speaker, is you shouldn't throw stones when you live in a glass house. And the member from Saltcoats shouldn't throw stones. He understands some of the issues; I give him that. He understands some of the issues, as does the member from Humboldt understand some of the issues having been the critic in the past. But I'll tell you what the member from Humboldt didn't do. She did not degrade herself to the kind of debate that I heard in the House from the two animated individuals that I heard earlier today on the Saskatchewan Conservative Party. She did not do that.

[16:00]

What she did, Madam Deputy Speaker, is she worked with this administration on a regular basis through some of the toughest times that we had in the province. She did. That's exactly what she did, Madam Deputy Speaker. She helped us through the BSE piece. Never tried for a minute to politic around it and to divide Saskatchewan people with rural and urban — didn't do

that. Worked through that process, not like what we see today.

What we see today is we see a clear division of what we get from a Conservative administration when they have only in their mind, power. Only in their mind, power, Madam Deputy Speaker, and this is what we see today. That kind of a division, that kind of a division where they stand up on a regular basis and say the solution to agriculture is only about taking a bit more money and putting from the treasury into the pot. That's what they'll need to make a difference.

There isn't one person today who knows anything about agriculture who would say that the way in which you solve the agriculture problem today is to put a ton of money into it. Nobody would say that, not even, not even the people who studied the agriculture industry today to a larger degree than the wisdom of all the men and women in this Assembly, they wouldn't suggest that, Madam Deputy Speaker, because we're in a trend today and a change in agriculture that will require far more than that.

Do we need a new disaster program for agriculture and the industry? Of course we do. Are the current programs today covering that off in the way in which we'd like to cover them off? Of course we don't. But should there be a greater, should there be a greater contribution on the 60/40 piece as a national program? Of course there should be. Canadians, Canadians should be paying for an agricultural farm policy, for an agricultural farm policy that isn't covered 60/40; it should be somewhere in where the Minister of Agriculture today says that it should be. It should be a 20/80 formula. It should be a 85/15 formula, where the larger portion of the dollars are contributed by the national government. That's what it should be. And you should have a broader expansion of it.

The member, the member, the Minister of Agriculture talks about having a Saskatchewan-Canada national agricultural farm Bill. We should have a Canadian farm Bill. We should have a Canadian farm Bill. And we're working on a Canadian farm Bill to make a difference, not just standing up and saying, you know what, what we should be doing is dumping a bit more money into this thing because we put more money into the agricultural community in Canada every year for the last 10 years, which the issue is not the money. The issue of course is making a different or recrafting, recrafting the structure of the current policies that are in place today.

I'll tell you why, Madam Deputy Speaker, why the opposition hasn't gone to the subsidies, a national subsidy in the way in which the Europeans and the Americans have.

Why they haven't gone there is because they have a couple of members who are old Reformers, Conservatives but old Reformers. And what did the old Reformer say, from Rosetown, what did he say? Well what the old member from Rosetown said is that — you know what? — we don't believe in agricultural subsidies is what he said from Rosetown. Is that what he said? And you see because they don't believe in it, they're not prepared, Madam Deputy Speaker, to support a national program that provides for a national subsidy for the game.

I'll tell you why they don't do that. Because Mr. Harper doesn't

believe in it; Mr. Harper doesn't believe in it. Mr. Harper believes on unloading the larger share of the cost on the producer, of which the member from Kelvington and the member of Saltcoats support, by the way. They support that and they're on record. We have them on record in Yorkton for what they said. And I say when you have a Conservative administration like we have across the way where you have Reformers and old Alliance people and old card-carrying Conservatives, you get this kind of a policy today which you see over across the House, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is what we find.

I want to say this, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was at Mr. Easter's speech a couple of days ago at SARM. And some of the Saskatchewan Conservative Party members were at that, and they heard Mr. Easter speak. And what did Mr. Easter speak . . . and by the way, Mr. Easter got a fairly comfortable, a fairly comfortable . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well you got now the member from Canora-Pelly chirping. He's chirping over there. The member from Canora-Pelly is chirping from over there, Madam Deputy Speaker, you see. And I say to the member from Canora, I wouldn't put you in the Conservative camp. I wouldn't put you there. You're one of the guys who didn't have a membership over there. The rest of you have had one or two of those along the way, but you haven't, sir. You haven't.

But you see what you did is you took your old Liberal soul, and you sold it to the Conservatives which is as bad as carrying the card.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — And so I say this, Madam Deputy Speaker, I say this. When I was at the Wayne Easter speech the other day, when I was at . . . when Mr. Easter was speaking at the SARM convention, when he was speaking at the SARM convention and there was other Conservative members there, Madam Deputy Speaker, they were there. And of course the SARM convention gave Mr. Easter a fairly warm reception I thought. In fact I thought they gave him an extremely warm reception for what Mr. Easter said.

Well what Mr. Easter said is that what we should have today in Canada is that we should have a national farm Bill. And then what he went on to say is, he said, well you know what? If we got in the game because the other guys aren't getting out of the game . . . And I think the member from Kindersley today said, you know what? We're making good progress on the Doha agreements or on the Doha discussions.

Yes we've made wonderful movement on the Doha discussions. They've now delayed the issues on whether or not we're going to have national subsidies in Canada and in the US [United States] and in Europe by another 10 years. Where we're supposed to have decisions on this piece in 2009, now they've moved it out to 2025. And the good old member from Kindersley says, you know, we're making good progress on this piece. Because what happens of course is that the Americans and the Europeans are staying in the subsidy game, and we're getting out of the subsidy game. And we say, and Mr. Easter says — and he gets nearly a standing ovation — we should get in the game. We should get in the game.

Well here you have, Madam Deputy Speaker, a member of the Liberal government today standing up, standing up . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member from Canora is chirping again. The member of Canora is chirping again because, you see, the member of Canora is having an extremely difficult time controlling himself in his chair. And I know that he'll stand up. I know that the member from Canora will stand up, and he'll provide us a debate . . . No. When you're red . . . you're not always red because you've proven — the member from Canora — that you can be red and you can be blue. So you should not be going there. The member from Canora can show us that he can be two colours at the same time. But I say it doesn't matter what you do. You can grow your hair longer. You can have a beard. You can have hair transplants. You can do whatever you want. But at the end of the day, when you're a Conservative, you're a Conservative. It doesn't matter how you change your colours.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to say, Madam, I want to say . . . You see, Madam, you see, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to say this. You see, on this side of the House for 60 years, we've all been New Democrats. We've all been New Democrats.

And we don't stand up on a regular basis and we don't insult, Madam Deputy Speaker, we don't insult the people of Saskatchewan on a regular basis by saying, you know what? You shouldn't have voted NDP. Saskatchewan people, you were all wrong about this. You are the people who were to blame about this.

And so on a regular basis, they stand up and say that the people of Saskatchewan have made the wrong choices. The Leader of the Opposition gets up on a regular basis and says, Saskatchewan people, you've made the wrong choice. You should have never voted NDP for 60 years because we know better than you do. And you know what? We've had this province in the tank on two occasions, and both times they follow Conservative governments. And they're lining up again, Madam Deputy Speaker. They're lining them up again.

The Deputy Speaker: — I would ask the member to speak to the motion before the Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you for bringing me back, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I wanted to talk about, I wanted to talk a little bit more about my good friend, Mr. Wayne Easter. Because here you have Mr. Wayne Easter showing up at a SARM convention and making an eloquent speech about how it is that he wished he wasn't a Liberal. And he talked at length about how it is that we should have a national Canadian farm Bill, how it is that we should be getting into subsidy programs and taking on the Europeans and the Americans. And he talked about working on a different price system for Canadian commodity. And he said more about Saskatchewan . . . Canadian farmer power is what he said, Madam Deputy Speaker. Well that's exactly what we've all been saying in this side of the House. On this side of the House, that's exactly what we've been saying.

And what happens of course is that you have a Liberal government, Madam Deputy Speaker, who is saying to us

today, you know what? Our agricultural industry needs to limp along by diversifying. What else in this province can we diversify to? What else are we going to diversify to because today we're growing all kinds of grains, all kinds of pulse crops. I think the member from Indian Head yesterday said we're growing canaries I think in this province. We've got all kinds of livestock diversification in Saskatchewan today. We've taken our 60 million acres of arable land and we've converted it in a variety of different ways. And we want to do agroforestry.

And, you know, I listened today when they were talking about the agroforestry piece, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I see the member from Kelvington crouched over in her chair in laughter saying, well we're not going to plant all these trees in Saskatchewan. In her own riding, Madam Deputy Speaker, in her own riding or in the riding from Melfort — I'm not sure in where that farm belongs to — but it's either in the Kelvington constituency or in the Melfort constituency where there is a farmer today who is planting a number of acres of trees into agroforestry.

And you what? And the member from Melfort and for sure the member from Kelvington thinks it's a joke. She thinks it's a joke. She thinks it's a joke that somebody in her own constituency is planting . . . You see, the member from Kelvington-Wadena doesn't know. She doesn't know that they're doing it in her riding.

And we should be converting more of our Saskatchewan farm land into agroforestry. And there should be a national program for agroforestry. And we should be taking some of our land today that isn't arable in the way in which we can produce good farm crops today and transplant it back to somebody else, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And the member from Kindersley stands up and thinks that this is a joke. This isn't a joke. We should be doing those kinds of things. We should be making a difference in that kind of a way because farmers are already doing that in Saskatchewan, Madam Deputy Speaker, and they don't need to have people from the Saskatchewan Conservative Party standing up and condemning them for their efforts. They should be supporting them because they're in their very same ridings of which they're doing that work instead of sitting in their chairs and condemning the work that their own producers in their own constituencies are doing. This is an extremely important process.

And I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, for those who stand up today and say that we have the best farmers in Canada are right. They're absolutely right . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member from Canora says maybe on my farm one day I might have 1,700 acres of trees. We might have 1,700 acres of trees one day on my farm. We might have that. We might have that. And we might convert that over time. And we may have in Saskatchewan a forest industry that will take, as we do today, the agroforestry that we have today and convert it to the kinds of wood and lumber of which my farm might be able to make a living from. Those are the kinds of options that we will entertain over time.

Well you see, you see there are many examples in the world today where agriculture has made that kind of conversion to a

variety of different diversifications. But that's not what we hear from the members opposite on the other side, Madam Deputy Speaker. That's not what we hear from our Conservative friends, you see. Because you know what? They're only about providing division. They're only about providing division and the only agenda they have is to say to Saskatchewan rural people that we have the answers, that they have the answers.

And you know what? There hasn't been an answer, not one answer from that Conservative Party in the last 10 years. Not one suggestion, not one idea, not one direction other than saying, you know what, we need to put more money into this piece. That's all we ever hear from them. We just need to put more money in and you put more money in and this will salvage the industry. And I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are no ideas, there are no initiatives, and there is no direction over there.

And that's why our good buddy, the member for Kindersley, is coming back. Because he's coming back not only to . . . I mean the job that the member from Kindersley really wants is he wants that job right over there that the member from Swift Current sits in. That's the job he wants and that's the one he's after. And that's why he's coming back — not only to bring a bit of direction to that operation but he's going to plant back the old Conservative roots that were there before. Because what did he say in Saskatoon last year when they interviewed him right after the Saskatchewan Party convention there? He said, yes there's other men and women in this party who come from other parties. But I tell you who wears the pants in this party, it's the Conservatives that wear the pants in this party. And our good old Conservatives are coming back to wear the pants in that party across from us.

[16:15]

I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, for those members in the House who stand up on a regular basis, that stand up on a regular basis and say that Saskatchewan producers are the best producers in the world are absolutely right. They're absolutely right.

We've diversified our farm land in a massive way in this province today. We're planting crops today that 15 years ago many of us in this Assembly and those of us who are involved in the agricultural industry haven't even heard of. You go to the Crop Insurance office today and they'll show you a board of 65 crops that we grow in Saskatchewan today, of which I bet you that there are many of us who wouldn't be able to identify. And I can tell you I couldn't identify some of the crops that we grow today in Saskatchewan and the kind of fruits and vegetables that we grow in the province today.

The member from Rosetown . . . Kindersley, he has a group of men and women in his constituency that we're going to do some work with because they're asking us to do some work with. They want to get engaged, Madam Deputy Speaker, in having a horticultural industry in Saskatchewan. They're going to build, I think, probably one of the state-of-the-arts, one of the most state-of-the-arts operations in Saskatchewan where we can grow some of our own vegetables right here in Saskatchewan. We should be doing that. And they're going to be using some of the water that they have close access to on the irrigation system. They're going to use some of SaskPower's and SaskEnergy's

resources that are close to them.

And we can build yet another value-added industry in agriculture in Saskatchewan. Why? Because people in this province have that kind of initiative and they're coming to us. They're coming to us to see how we can develop that in a far broader way.

I haven't heard from the member from Rosetown on one occasion on this issue, not one — as a rural development issue — not one.

And I say that we can build a stronger, well . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I hear the member from Wood River chirping away about who's government. Well we're government and he should try to be a more effective opposition member, you see.

And a good opposition member would come to the government, would be able to provide for government and the people of the province some ideas about where to go. And all we ever hear from the member from Wood River is what we're hearing today, just a whole lot of noise. Just a whole lot of noise and a whole lot of air — this is what we hear from the member from Wood River.

And I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, we know that in Saskatchewan today there has been tremendous growth on a number of areas in the agricultural industry, but there has to be a national farm plan. There has to be a national farm policy. There has to be a national agenda that provides the kinds of resources that are necessary for the industry. There needs to be further diversification. There needs to be greater investment in the areas of supply management of which we've been able to move the supply management piece. Both in the feather industry and in the egg industry we've been able to move that. In an environment where we started a long ways back, we've been able to move that. And we've made some progress, Madam Deputy Speaker, on that side of the file.

And I want to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, I listened to the member from Saltcoats, Melville. My vision is not about 20 farmers is what he said. He said we're going to have 20 farmers left in Saskatchewan. That's his goal. My goal is not to have 20 farmers left in Saskatchewan, Madam Deputy Speaker. That's not my goal.

My goal, Madam Deputy Speaker, is to make sure that we have a number of more organic farmers in Saskatchewan. My goal is to see that we have a tremendous number of additional specialized farmers in the province that are growing a variety of different crops. My goal, Madam Deputy Speaker, is to see that we see some of that land today that's in production that's marginal come out and planted into the forestry area. I want to see, Madam Deputy Speaker, a growth in the livestock industry where we can take some of that value-added grain today and put it into the livestock industry and build the processing and feedlot industry which is happening in the province today.

That's what we want to see as a major plan that we're working on in Saskatchewan today. Why? It's because we have an agricultural strategy. We have an agricultural plan. We have a direction in terms of where we're moving towards and it isn't only, Madam Deputy Speaker, about finding another bag of

money and providing the kinds of divisiveness which our friends in the Conservative Party opposite continue to portray in this province.

And I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, you know what? I'm proud on this side of the House to serve as a New Democrat. I'm proud on this side of the House to build policy for the betterment of Saskatchewan people today as a New Democrat. And I'm glad that we've stayed, Madam Deputy Speaker, on the principles of which we support and that we don't have to change our spots on a regular basis to try to find a solution in terms of just seeking power. It's not about power. It's about developing good public policy, good relationship with Saskatchewan people, and painting a good agricultural industry.

And that's why, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am voting and supporting the amendment as opposed to supporting that motion that's put on by our newly formed Conservative friends about what it is to build a Saskatchewan agricultural industry, which by the way has failed on every occasion. And not one idea that we've seen, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the history that I've been around this Assembly of which this member here . . . Well I hear the member from Canora again. And I guess this time he's going to tell me, I guess this time he's going to tell me now he is a Conservative and doesn't want to be red any more.

Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to have been part of this debate today. I look forward to the additional support that the opposition will give us in getting new resources from the federal government. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm delighted to add my voice to this debate we're having today on agriculture. I was listening to the Deputy Premier and my first question has got to be, whatever this man is smoking today is what every farmer in Saskatchewan needs to get him through this winter, because there is nothing this provincial government is doing to make them make this winter bearable.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — The only thing we can do is listen to that garbage that the minister has been spouting for the last 45 minutes to let us believe there is something happening for our farmers, and there is nothing, Madam Deputy Minister.

Madam Deputy Minister, I was elected 10 years ago as a Liberal, I think maybe the person on the other side of the House . . . And that was after the reds over there closed 52 hospitals and got rid of the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program. The reds over there decided that the only way they could balance . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I believe the House itself set the rules that there are some words that will not be used within the Assembly. And so I'd ask the member to get back to using

words . . .

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I would like to . . . That word has been used . . . No.

Madam Deputy Minister, Deputy Speaker, I have listened for two years being called a Conservative. I am not a Conservative, and if I'm going to be called a Conservative, they're going to be called a red.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I believe there are certain words that the House Leaders agreed upon would not be used within the Assembly, and we'll stick with the rules that the Assembly has set for themselves. I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena to get back to the motion before the House.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Deputy Speaker, I was elected in what was called red square. I was elected in what was known as red square at one time, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I was elected when this government decided that the only way that they could keep their political party alive was to cut out rural Saskatchewan, was to listen to the Stabler report that said there was only 51 viable communities in Saskatchewan, and they were going to do whatever they could to make sure that only 51 communities survived.

We had Mr. Olfert and Stabler go and do an economic feasibility study of this province and they listed them. And you know what, Madam Deputy Speaker? There wasn't one community in my constituency that would survive under this government. We had . . . [inaudible] . . . we watched our hospitals closed. We watched the amount of money that was spent on roads cut back. We have saw everything that has happened to farmers in my constituency to just be a mess just to make sure that they could keep their political favours on that side of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Premier said that this wasn't about politics. There wasn't one word said this afternoon that wasn't politics. There wasn't anything said that was going to be positive for the farmers of our province.

And I really . . . the Deputy Premier made a statement about me going to my constituency and riding on a combine. I did that. I rode around on a combine that had dual wheels on it, for farmers who were trying to take off a crop that has absolutely no value. And the only way they can manage to even get a little bit of crop insurance if they took garbage crop off the field and spent the money that it took to fill up their combine and their grain cart — which you had to buy because you can't get a truck on the field when there's been 17 inches of rain. Going around the field with a tractor with dual wheels left ruts that were a foot and one-half deep and as they moved the ruts became full of water.

And do you know what? That same day that people that asked me, Madam Deputy Speaker, to ride with them phoned the Deputy Premier's office. And Monday morning the Deputy Premier phoned the lady back and she called me. And she was quite upset because you know what she said? She said the Deputy Premier had nothing to say about the farm prices. He

only had something to say about me. He wanted to say that I had changed political parties, so they shouldn't listen. This has got nothing to do with whether there was a crop in the field, had nothing to do with whether . . . [inaudible] . . . the fact that you couldn't combine.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when I sat in that combine, for the first time in my life, I saw these people trying to take the crop off, just the heads, because if the header of the combine lowered too much, they would put water into the header, which would go immediately into the grain hopper and ruin an entire tank of grain. That's the kind of heartbreaking, sickening thing that's happening to farmers in rural Saskatchewan. And the Deputy Premier phones and says don't listen to the member that's elected to represent you because she changed political parties. That's got something to do with agriculture? And you wonder why we've got frustrated with this government over here.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the farmers that were crying because they need help . . . There was 30 farmers came to that farmer's yard just a few days before to talk to their MP and explain what kind of a problem there was in farming, 30 farmers who could have been in the field but instead were trying so desperately to get somebody's attention. They couldn't get the attention of this Deputy Premier because he's too political. He can't care what's happening to the real people.

The farm wife that I talked to had tears running down her cheek. She said that her kids were not going to be on the farm this winter. She said for the first time, their family sat around the table wondering how they're going to pay their gas bill. It cost \$1,200 to fill up their combine and their grain carts and the augers and the machinery it took to combine for one day.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, do you know how much you get for barley right now through the wheat board? You get 45 cents a bushel. How long does that take to combine, to pay for just the fuel, let alone the fertilizer and the chemical and the taxes and the property taxes, Madam Deputy Speaker?

So here we have this government who thinks they're doing something for farmers, and they're an absolute insult. And the Deputy Premier, the Deputy Premier also said that they have a provincial disaster assistance program. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have to read a letter that came from the RM of Porcupine regarding this provincial disaster assistance. She said:

As of this date, our municipality has yet to receive the claim forms for private losses due to flooding.

This was dated on November 14. For just about two months, they've been writing to this government and asking them for the claim forms they needed to get this provincial disaster allowance that this government is talking about. They've yet to get the forms. So this is a lot of help, isn't it? This is what we're doing to help our farmers. We're going to announce it to make everybody feel good, but we're not going to get the papers ready yet.

Then, Madam Deputy Speaker, that wasn't the only problem. She goes on to say that as the provincial administrator, she was also required to estimate the total losses before the claim could

be established. For municipal losses, she could just about understand that. But she also was required to estimate private losses.

The administrators are not insurance adjusters. They're not loss assessors. They don't have the ability to visit every site and determine an estimate for losses. This just added another step in what was happening to farmers who so desperately needed help, that this government absolutely refuses to acknowledge as even happening in our province.

[16:30]

This program lacks coverage for agricultural loss. The position of the provincial disaster program, the administration, is that the program is to cover uninsured losses. And therefore agricultural losses covered by crop insurance are not applicable. This appears to be a little bit short-sighted. Crop insurance has proven to be more of an impediment to cost recovery under the current circumstances. The percentage of loss in comparison with the value of insured is not high enough to trigger a payout.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if you want to hear some of the real problems that farmers are having trying to even deal with the few programs that are there, they have to go out and listen to them.

I had a farmer that phoned into my office and said that they . . . that faxed me the grain tickets. Basically on six semi loads of wheat and after all the deductions, they took home a cheque for \$575. Not \$575,000, not \$5,000 — \$575. There are people that maybe live in an urban area would think that \$575 is a lot money. Do you know what it costs to fill up a fuel tank? Probably one of my colleagues can tell me because I myself am not a farmer. But I do know that the people that I'm dealing with are at their wits' end trying to figure out how they can actually make ends meet.

I have one farmer that phoned my office, said he had to borrow gas from his neighbour to get to town to pick up the mail to see if his CAIS cheque was there. And of course it wasn't because it's only 2003 CAIS so of course they haven't got around to doing that yet. I do understand that this government knows that they laid off a bunch of CAIS workers last year in March and didn't hire them back until the end of August. And we wonder why the CAIS applications aren't being processed at this time.

I also listened to the Deputy Premier talk about some of the issues that are going on. In 1989 Canadians realized farm income was just over \$3.9 billion. That was in 1989. Do you know what it was in 2003? Negative \$5 billion. That's what happened in that short of time — eight years it went to negative \$5 billion.

The price of combines during that time — and I think maybe this is some information some of the members on the other side of the House should hear — the price of combines during that same eight-year period increased by, from 1992 and 2003, 74 per cent. The cost of a new combine from 1992 to 2003 went up 74 per cent. Fertilizer costs since 1992 went up 67 per cent. Pesticide cost increased 60 per cent. And the price of seed increased 50 per cent. And prices for crop have gone down every year for three years.

At the same time, the country of Canada relies on agriculture. We keep saying that we're the bread basket, we feed the world. That in Canada, agriculture contributed \$81 billion to the GDP [gross domestic product] in 2002. It provides one in eight Canadians with jobs. It was a leader in Canadian productivity between 1984 and 1995. Exports grew 150 per cent between 1990 and 2003. Canada's the fourth largest export of agriculture and agri-food products. Only US, EU [European Union], and Brazil are larger.

Madam Deputy Speaker, all farm income as a percentage of total farm increments has increased from 72 per cent in 1980 to 87 per cent in 2002. Now that's telling us in order to put food on the table of Canadians, our farmers are working off the farm. They cannot live on their farm and eat themselves. They have to go out and get a job. What's that telling us, Madam Deputy Speaker? We're not doing enough.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the member opposite indicated that bigger is better in many ways. We've heard them say that, not just about farms. And we know that's happening because of their interest in the larger hog barns. But we're doing that in health care and in education.

But just today on the radio, Madam Deputy Speaker, Mr. Florian Possberg who is the owner of one of the largest hog operations in Saskatchewan has said that bigger is not better when it comes to the hog industry. He's learned after 10 years of trying to do it that it isn't working. A 10,000-head barn should only be 2,000. That's more profitable. And that's what the leading producer in Saskatchewan is saying.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, this year I went to . . . one of the best things about living in rural Saskatchewan is going to the fowl suppers around our constituency. And I found that even there, there was fewer people. And when I talked to the people that were there, they were saying the cost of \$9 a person, which is really cheap when you consider the meals that you get at a fowl supper, it's too much for a lot of farm families. They don't have that kind of money to give to organizations to basically keep their communities going. For as much as they try to and want to support them, they can't do them. They don't have \$9 that isn't accounted for.

Madam Minister, the beginning statement that we made in our motion today had a lot to do with the mini-budget that the federal government put down yesterday. And we were very disappointed that Goodale did not mention the word agriculture. And it made us wonder why in a community or in a province like Saskatchewan, when we know he talks to farmers, why he didn't do it.

We started to question that maybe the provincial government would have had to put some more money into agriculture. Is that true? You think maybe there's the chance that the province said to Ralph, no don't put any more money into agriculture because then we're going to be expected to add 40 per cent and that we don't want to do? We don't want to have to say to our people again we're not going to support rural Saskatchewan.

I think there's people not just on this side of the House but outside the walls of this building, they're wondering if maybe this government is again not wanting to support farmers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have tried for 10 years to represent the people in the Kelvington-Wadena constituency from this side of the House. I've brought their issues to the floor of this Assembly. I've been trying to make people realize that there is a real need for rural Saskatchewan.

As we grow the province, you're not going to see oil wells on Albert Street in Regina. The growth that's coming is going to be from rural Saskatchewan. And we have to have the infrastructure there — the roads, the hospitals, the schools, and the people to build rural Saskatchewan. It's not happening.

And the only thing that I can say is when, after leaving this Assembly and going back to my constituency this weekend, is that when we debated this issue in the House the only thing this government could do was, again, be political. They could blame the federal government; they could blame the opposition; they could blame the farmers; but they can't blame themselves. And that's the type of thing, Madam Minister, that makes us realize that these guys only care about being in power. It's nothing to do with representing all of Saskatchewan's citizens. It's got everything to do with staying on that side of the House to the detriment of anybody that stands in their way.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there isn't anything we can do to make them change their mind. They've already made up their mind because as long as they can get their urban voters to think, okay, they're trying, that's all they have to do.

And we have to go back home and tell our people this government doesn't care. I'm quite prepared to do that, Madam Minister, and that's what I will be doing. I'll be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Saltcoats and I will not be supporting the motion brought forward by the Minister of Agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think it's entirely appropriate at this time, Madam Deputy Speaker . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I know the debate before the Assembly is very close to everyone's emotions. I'm judging the decorum of the House based on the Speaker being able to hear the person who has been recognized. So I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think it's entirely appropriate that I begin this particular debate by reading a piece from a letter that I received from a constituent last spring. And this was after a visit to this legislature. This young woman, this young lady, visited this legislature with her class and wrote a letter to me afterwards. And I think this is an entirely appropriate time to read it to all members. I'm going to read just an excerpt from the letter and the excerpt goes like this. She says:

I thought it was extremely rude, especially for adults, to behave in such ways. I do think that one has to voice their opinion but I totally disagree with the interrupting someone. Let me tell you that you should be ashamed of yourselves and others, because remember you are representing the people of Saskatchewan. If you think of it, [she says] Saskatchewan's land and environment are all peaceful things, not a commotion of noise.

I read that, Madam Deputy Speaker, to begin this talk because I will not engage in any histrionics. I want to talk to the debate itself, to the issue that's been raised this afternoon, which is an issue that's very near and dear to my heart.

So what I would like to do first of all is do a little then-and-now and what has happened in between. And when I talk about then I want to go back to when I grew up on the farm.

Now one of the members opposite talked about being on the farm and driving a Massey 44. And I listened very intently because a Massey 44 is the first tractor that I ever drove on the farm as well. It was a mixed farm, a mixture of grain and beef. My father's philosophy was that you have both because when times are difficult in the grain market you can always depend on beef to get you through, and if times are difficult with cattle you could depend on grain.

It was a good way of life. It was a way of life that I'll always value for the rest of my life but there were tough times. I can remember, I can remember when I was in my teens hearing my father swear for one of the first times ever. And it was because we were shovelling out rotten grain during the grain glut of the late '60s. Because at that time as well, farmers were caught in a cost-price squeeze. Low prices for their commodities; high cost for their inputs — not to the extreme that there is now but that was a pressure on farming at that time as well.

And so as a result of that, my father had very little confidence on the open market and depended greatly on orderly marketing and the Canadian Wheat Board and the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.

And at that time, Madam Deputy Speaker, as everyone here knows, there was a richness in community across this province. On a Saturday night everyone would go to town and the main street would be full of people shopping and visiting, and there'd be a movie that night at the Dreamland Theatre and a dance at the community hall. And it was a rich way of life.

What has happened since then? Let's look at what's happened since then. That was then. What's the situation now? We've ended up of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, with fewer and fewer farms, and the farms have become larger and larger. The communities in rural Saskatchewan have gotten smaller and smaller to the point where, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are communities in this province that have signposts but no people. And none of us are happy about that.

We've reached the point now as well where many, many farm people are employed off the farm. The farm that I grew up on, the farm that I was talking about earlier, is now rented out. My brother, my sister, my brother-in-law work off the farm for their income. And it's not a great situation on the farm, as members

on both sides of this House have already indicated.

As an MLA I see this in my constituency. I see the same pressures, this year exacerbated by the weather. This year rain, last year frost, and the two years before that, drought. And the talk in the country where I come from and the constituency that I represent is that a lot of farmers are going down this year. There are going to be a lot of farm auctions. We're in a farm crisis.

The net farm income now is at 54 million — negative \$54 million in Saskatchewan. So why has this happened? Why has this happened? I'll give a few of the reasons from my perspective as to why it's happened. And I'm pleased to be speaking to this because it's rare that I have a chance to talk about these kinds of issues in the House.

[16:45]

So let's start with the first item on my mind, and it is this. You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe in the power of symbols. Symbols are often more powerful than anything else and the greatest symbol in terms of federal farm policy was the ditching of the Crow rate in the 1990s. That was symbolic. That was symbolic of a federal government that had decided that it would have nothing more to do with farmers. You're on your own and it was survival of the fittest as far as the federal government was concerned.

Now I listen to the members opposite shouting at me at this time, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is a speaking list and I will listen to them as intently as I can, but I ask for their ear at this time. We were given two ears and one mouth for a purpose, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So first of all the Crow rate, which has cost farmers half a billion dollars a year in freight costs, and the ditching of the Crow rate done by the federal government.

Second, federal policies that said, either you get big or you get out. I can remember my father saying, it's reaching the point where I have to get big to stay in farming, that I can't afford to stay small. And so many farmers did.

And federal farm policies that said, farmers got to get efficient. They're not efficient enough. They've got to get more efficient and they have to diversify. So farmers did.

But there was a concerted federal policy in this country that moved farmers off the land. And I have read pieces from the federal government, from the deputy minister of Agriculture years ago that essentially said, it's time that farmers woke up and got off the farm and realized there's no future for them. So federal farm policies as well as the Crow. Federal farm policies.

Third, a flurry of trade agreements that have inflicted incredible damage in this country. The MAI [Multilateral Agreement on Investment], GATS [General Agreement on Trade in Services], FTAA [Free Trade Area of the Americas], WTO [World Trade Organization], and NAFTA [North American Trade Agreement]. There has been a push in this country to force farmers to join the market economy, to join that global casino and play that little game. This is not fair trade. This is free

trade, not fair trade. This is one-way free trade and as a result of that farmers have had another blow from the federal government.

The responsibility for addressing issues of trade injury and unfair subsidies is not a provincial responsibility. That is a federal responsibility.

So we have the Crow rate. We have farm policies from the federal government and we have so-called free trade agreements — federal, federal, federal responsibilities.

And in this global market, in this global economy, what has also occurred — and probably this has put the most pressure on farmers — is a corporate concentration that has put more and more of the agricultural economy in the hands of fewer and fewer people. And one of the members opposite was talking about the high costs of inputs. That is the greatest pressure right now on farmers. From the seeds, from the seed to the shelf, there has been a corporate concentration that has put more and more pressure on farmers.

When it comes to inputs I'm reminded of a discussion I had with a constituent of mine a few years ago. And I wrote her words down and I've pulled this out now for this talk. And this was a young woman. They had one child. It was a farm family and she said, we're badly in debt. It's just hard to make land payments and combine payments and all the chemical and fertilizer bills and the freight on the grain. We can't seem to get ahead and we seem to always get punished for diversifying. It's a no win situation. If we don't get a decent crop this year, we won't make it.

Which government in this country has the power to address corporate concentration? Which government in this country has the power to address the high input costs that farmers are experiencing? It's the federal government.

Fifthly, farm support programs. There's already been discussion this afternoon. Well the member asks, what would you do? Be patient, I would say to the member opposite. I'm talking right now about the situation that exists for farmers. I'll get to that. So the fifth point . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I ask that all remarks be made through the Speaker to the Assembly.

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. So the fifth point is the whole area of farm support payments. As other people have already indicated this afternoon, the 60/40 split that exists within this country is unfair. And that is a formula that is imposed upon us by the federal government and is the responsibility of the federal government to fix.

So these are some of the issues, and again the common theme in all of them is that the federal government, the federal government has the power to do what's right for farmers.

Now the deputy minister earlier was talking about the presentation that Wayne Easter gave at the SARM convention last week. And I encourage opposition members to read the report that Wayne Easter gave to provincial Ag ministers last July. The report is called empowering farmers in the

marketplace. And the title indicates exactly what I was talking about, empowering farmers in the marketplace.

And in that paper, Wayne Easter, Member of Parliament, Liberal Member of Parliament, talks about the cost-price squeeze that farmers are experiencing — the low prices, high costs of inputs. He addresses the imbalance between agribusiness and the primary producer and says that governments, all governments have to focus more on the primary producer.

But he was addressing particularly, as the Deputy Premier indicated, he was addressing particularly the federal government and its responsibility to put more emphasis on the primary producer. And as the Deputy Premier explained, Mr. Easter received a standing ovation from the SARM delegates. Now my question is, will his own government listen to him? And that's the question we don't know.

But it is incumbent on all of us, it's incumbent on all of us to look carefully at the recommendations from the Wayne Easter report and to encourage his government to implement the recommendations that are contained there.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, federal responsibilities regarding freight rates and how the Crow . . . elimination of the Crow took that away; federal farm policies that have encouraged farmers to leave the land; trade agreements that our federal government has signed that has compromised the integrity of farming in this country; corporate concentration that the federal government could address, particularly in the area of high inputs; farm support payments that are unfair, which again are a federal responsibility; and then lastly, the ability and the power of the federal government to do something about it.

Twelve billion dollars in surplus, the federal government has — \$12 billion. And I would say here that in this province, this government has the will but not the resources to properly address the farm issue, the net farm income issue, the farm crisis. Whereas the federal government has the resources, but I don't see the will to address these problems.

So the member earlier asked, what is the answer? Madam Deputy Speaker, I am a student of history. I know that 100 years ago when farmers faced some of the same problems this is what they did, and maybe we can learn from them. When they couldn't receive support or credit from the banks, they formed credit unions. When they couldn't receive a fair price on their inputs, they created co-operatives. When they were getting poor or inaccurate grades or weights on their grain at the elevator, they formed their own system of distribution; they created wheat pools. When the marketing system wasn't serving them, they organized and as a result we have the Canadian Wheat Board.

So maybe the answer, maybe part of the answer, Madam Deputy Speaker, is getting back to this idea of working together, of developing more supply management in this province — community-based co-operative answers to this solution. Maybe that's part of the answer. But certainly an important part of this answer is that the federal government assume its responsibility for farm policies, for addressing the farm crisis. And in fact some people would see the disaster

that's occurring in rural Saskatchewan and in other provinces at this time — this is a federal responsibility.

I will say this, Madam Deputy Speaker. As a provincial government, we have committed 650 million in farm support and tax exemptions in 2004-2005. That is an indication that we are doing our share in terms of supporting farmers at this very difficult time. But the root problems, the problems I talked about earlier — the cost-price squeeze, the high inputs, trade injury — all of those issues are federal responsibilities. And we as members in this province should stand together and ask the federal government with its resources to address those issues.

And one way they could address those issues is to address the issue of the energy accord so that the dollars that should come to this province, come to this province so that we can respond to all people including farmers in the best possible way.

And so I'll conclude by saying this, Madam Deputy Speaker. One thing is for certain, with 45 per cent of the arable land in this country, 43 million acres of arable land — and as my father-in-law used to say, and they're not making any more of it — this is our most valuable resource in this province, and we have to take good care of it. We grow food for people, and that is a value that all of us understand at the deepest level. And so I say, we will stand by our farmers as a provincial government. We will work together looking for solutions.

But I tell you, I support the amendment to the motion from this side because it puts the major responsibility where it belongs — on the federal government. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to get in this debate. I'd like to make a few remarks on it. But first of all I want to congratulate you on your new Speaker role, Madam Speaker.

I also want to make a few comments. Member from Yorkton, he did a nice little rant. I've heard him make some speeches in here, but I think he made one of the poorest ones. This motion is dealing with agriculture. He did a rant on the Conservative Party, attacking our members. I never heard him once, Madam Speaker, mention the federal Liberal Party that deals with this motion. I never once heard him condemn the federal Liberal Party. You would think that that member from Yorkton was going to run federally for the Liberals next election at that.

He talks about our party. What about their party getting in bed with the Liberal Party? I've hardly heard them condemn the Liberal Party at all, Mr. Speaker. They're cousins, Madam Speaker. They're cousins of the Liberal party. I don't know. Maybe they're going to join a new party. I don't know what they would call it. I would say maybe the DLS party which stands for democratic liberal socialist party.

But the member from Yorkton, the rural revitalization minister, Madam Speaker, I was quite disappointed in that speech. I

didn't hear about one plan about how he was going to help rural Saskatchewan. That's his ministry, Madam Speaker. That's his ministry that . . . I never heard him say one thing about rural revitalization at that, how he was going to do that rural revitalization through Saskatchewan.

You know, my constituency when I talk to the farmers out there, the biggest thing I hear about this government, the most thing they criticize, Madam Speaker, is that, no plan, no action, that this government has been in power for a number of years. The running joke out there, what they say the NDP stands for is no darn plan. And that's a shame when people talk about a government that way.

You know what they say also about the Premier? They say he seems like a pretty nice guy, but he's not a leader. We are in trouble in this province. We are in trouble in agriculture, in losing population, in a number of things, of losing 6,200 jobs and no plan yet. And that is not only spread out in Saskatchewan that there is no leadership, that has filtered all the way to Ottawa — that there is no leadership in Saskatchewan. Nobody stepping forward and taking it.

And that just shows with equalization. The amendment. He comes home again with no money, no deal. How can you go to Ottawa, when Newfoundland and other provinces are getting deals, and you come home constantly with no money? How can you come back and face the people? Come home with a big fat zero. So now he's doing a campaign here in Saskatchewan that nobody in Ottawa is even heard of. Has he talked to the Minister of Finance at the Liberal end? Has he met with him? Is he working with him? Is he working with the parties? No plan again.

But getting back to the motion on agriculture, it is desperate out there, Madam Speaker. This party wants some ideas on how to do something that's under their power? Tax. That's one of them. That's under their jurisdiction — land tax. That has been a problem in rural Saskatchewan and throughout Saskatchewan right from one end of Saskatchewan to the other. And it has been brought up constantly in the House. It was brought up under different parties in this House — is the property tax — education tax on property, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is something that this government can look at and address and do.

Our taxes in the RM of McCraney have gone up again this year, have gone up even with the minister saying, well we put money in. Well it didn't hit where it was supposed to of. It didn't hit where it was supposed to, Madam Speaker. It didn't hit the farmers that needed it. Their property tax has gone up again. You check the assessment throughout Saskatchewan. That property tax has gone up, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — It now being 5 p.m., the House stands recessed until 7 p.m. this day.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
PRESENTING PETITIONS	
Draude	163
Harpauer	163
Brkich	163
Weekes	163
READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS	
Deputy Clerk	163
NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS	
Brkich	163
Hermanson	163
INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS	
The Speaker.....	163
Junor	164
Krawetz.....	164
Beatty	164
Draude	164
Calvert	164, 165
Wall.....	164
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS	
A Have Province with a Heart	
Iwanchuk	165
Agriculture Support	
Bakken Lackey.....	165
Saskatchewan Eco-Network Presents First Annual Environmental Film Festival	
Borgerson	165
Plight of Farmers	
Chisholm.....	166
La Ronge Student Displays Community Spirit	
Beatty	166
Condition of Agriculture in Saskatchewan	
Draude	166
Survey Ranks SaskTel Mobility as Most Popular Carrier	
Yates.....	167
ORAL QUESTIONS	
Mid-Year Financial Report	
Cheveldayoff.....	167
Van Mulligen.....	167
Lawsuit for Wrongful Dismissal	
Heppner	168
Serby	168
Federal Government Agricultural Policies	
Bjornerud	171
Wartman.....	171
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS	
Bill No. 11 — The Youth Justice Administration Amendment Act, 2005	
Prebble.....	172
Bill No. 13 — The Archives Amendment Act, 2005	
Beatty	172
Bill No. 14 — The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2005	
Beatty	172
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	
The Speaker.....	172
MOTION UNDER RULE 49	
Agriculture	
Bjornerud	173
Dearborn.....	175
Wartman.....	179
Serby	184
Draude	190
Borgerson	192
Brkich	195

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Lorne Calvert
Premier

Hon. Graham Addley
Minister of Healthy Living Services

Hon. Pat Atkinson
Minister of Crown Management Board
Minister Responsible for Public Service
Commission
Minister Responsible for Immigration

Hon. Joan Beatty
Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation
Provincial Secretary

Hon. Buckley Belanger
Minister of Northern Affairs

Hon. Eric Cline
Minister of Industry and Resources
Minister Responsible for Investment
Saskatchewan Inc.

Hon. Joanne Crofford
Minister of Community Resources and
Employment
Minister Responsible for Disability Issues
Minister Responsible for Gaming

Hon. David Forbes
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for the Office of
Energy Conservation

Hon. Deb Higgins
Minister of Labour
Minister Responsible for the Status of
Women
Minister of Property Management

Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Minister of Highways and Transportation

Hon. John Nilson
Minister of Health
Minister Responsible for Seniors

Hon. Peter Prebble
Minister of Corrections and Public Safety

Hon. Frank Quennell
Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Hon. Clay Serby
Deputy Premier
Minister of Rural Development

Hon. Maynard Sonntag
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations

Hon. Len Taylor
Minister of Government Relations

Hon. Andrew Thomson
Minister of Learning
Minister Responsible for Information
Technology
Minister Responsible for Literacy

Hon. Harry Van Mulligen
Minister of Finance

Hon. Mark Wartman
Minister of Agriculture and Food