



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

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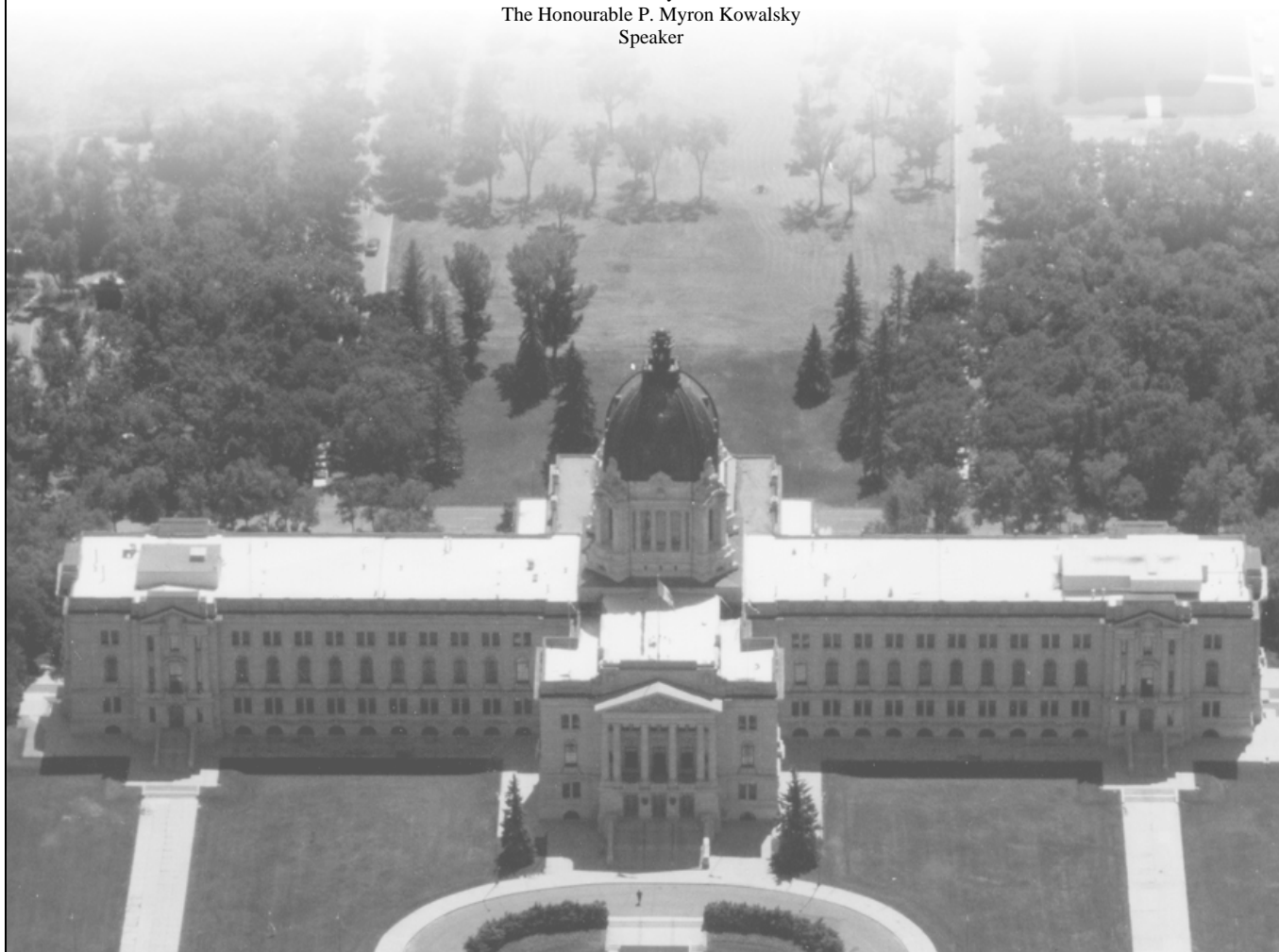
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**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

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Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
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Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
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Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

MOTION UNDER RULE 49

Agriculture

The Speaker: — Order please. The questions before the Assembly are the motions moved by the member for Melville-Saltcoats, 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.

And the amendment moved by the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, seconded by the member for Yorkton:

That all the words after the word “update” 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.

Debate resumes on the motion and the amendment concurrently. The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to continue with this debate. As I was talking before about some of the speeches I had heard in this House, I was quite disappointed on some of the speeches from the other side, especially the member from Yorkton basically just on a rant of our party, not a rant against the federal Liberals or even trying to acknowledge somewhat that there has been failures on their part to address this problem that they've totally ignored.

And I've heard some of the other members say, well what can we do, or we did so much. Well there's lots of things you can do, Mr. Speaker, and one that we've talked about is land tax. That is an issue that has been before this House on a number of occasions. The Premier has addressed SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities]. He's addressed SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] and said numerous times — and I've been there over the six years where he's addressed them — and said this problem is going to be rectified; we're going to address this problem. And every year land taxes for farmers go up. They go up for property owners. But for farmers in these especially hard times, it's especially hard for taxes to constantly be going up along with other costs.

Some of the costs are out of this provincial jurisdiction, but that's not one of them. PST's [provincial sales tax] another one that they could address on start-up businesses out there or farmers that are starting business in rural Saskatchewan. That's a heavy expense on business when you first start up, is you're buying a lot of equipment. Anybody that's ever started a

business out there, that's a heavy expense. And if you can at least eliminate the PST on new businesses for a few years, that's one way you can address some of them problems out there.

But all I've ever heard from the government is just rants against us and against the Conservative Party. Never even heard any rants against the Liberal, federal Liberal Party, their bed partners, Mr. Speaker. I never heard one rant against them. All I've ever heard is rants against the Conservative Party.

You know, Mr. Speaker, you know they seem to forget that irrigation system out there in Diefenbaker was started by John George Diefenbaker. That was one project that he got going that helped farmers in that area immensely. That irrigation was expanded in the '80s under the Devine administration, and what did this government do in the '90s? Have they expanded irrigation in that area? Not one little bit.

There is a group out there that is west of Outlook that would like to expand irrigation. There's channels that can run up almost as far as Saskatoon that aren't being used out there. And they started a group. I was at that meeting about three years ago. You know and there wasn't one government official at that meeting, coming there. But every year from ACRE [action committee on the rural economy] and from the ministers opposite you hear, we're going to expand irrigation. We're going to do this, and we're going to do that.

Well why don't you actually do something? Because, Mr. Speaker, they haven't. That is one thing. They had 14 years. They have not expanded irrigation anywhere in this province. If a member can stand up and say anywhere in 14 years that they significantly expanded the irrigation in this province, I would like to know where it is because that is a potential of agriculture of it.

They talk about different things. He talks about expanding the forestry industry here, Mr. Speaker. And that, you know, maybe that sounds all right. You know it's far-fetched. There's a lot of words in it, but you know it's another example, Mr. Speaker. It's another example of them just talking about it and not doing anything.

I have a letter from a constituent that when they heard about that, they were going to do all this, expand the forest industry, you know, sent a letter that, you know, maybe a lot of people that didn't realize that . . . The letter goes on to read that they are cutting a \$40,000 grant that's used in the university for research and development that helped this particular constituent with fruit trees and expanding a Christmas tree farm. They used that research and they were, you know, they were surprised that that grant has been cut. And yet they talk about in the Throne Speech how they're expanding, and they're going to do this and they're going to do that. But all it is, is talk, Mr. Speaker. I'll read part of the letter for the members opposite:

We were shocked and dismayed to learn that Sask Ag and Food through ADF did not renew about \$40,000 in operating funding for the domestic fruit program of the plant science department of the University of Saskatchewan. This funding has been of great value to

many farmers in Saskatchewan.

In summary, this 40,000 in annual funding not only is supporting the university's domestic fruit program. It's creating new fruit varieties — some unique to North America — developing fruit orchards in Saskatchewan, educating farmers about growing fruit, developing diversifying opportunities in agriculture, creating the potential for job opportunities in rural Saskatchewan, and reducing greenhouse gases as the orchards increase. This funding is essential for Dr. Bob Bors and Rick Sawatsky to continue their fruit breeding research and extension programs which are building the foundation for the Saskatchewan fruit industry.

They go on to say that they use this to develop marketing options for their fruit and their trees. And without, in the letter:

With only 40,000 in government funding, they have rather ingeniously in imaginative ways to involve growers in their program, benefiting both the research and development of fruit orchards all around the province. Without their assistance and guidance, our farm would not have an orchard that we would expect will be generating revenue in the next few years. Saskatchewan is famous for the quality of its agricultural products and the same could be true for our fruits.

That's just a perfect example of how they've cut things out there in rural Saskatchewan. Yet they will go on in the Throne Speech and talk about all the glorious things they're doing. Well if you wanted to keep doing things, why wouldn't you keep funding this or expand that?

Another one is the rural service centres in rural Saskatchewan. Talk about how they want to help agriculture. Why would you cut them? How many rural service centres did you cut out through Saskatchewan and move to Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker? How many did they do that? You know, they cut 22 rural service centres that were used by farmers.

Times are tough right now. They're very tough out there, and the farmers need all the advice and help they can get. And that was one of the tools that they had to help them with their crops. What did this government do? Yanked it away. That's, you know, that's saying one thing and doing another. And that seems to be the theme of this government. It's just talking and bragging about stuff that they are going to do but never did it. They've never expanded the irrigation. They're cutting services to rural Saskatchewan constantly.

And what have they done to really help rural Saskatchewan? They get up and they talk about fully funding CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization]. Well that should be a given. That should be a given when you sign on to a program. And right now it's the only tool that we have out there in rural Saskatchewan, the only tool that farmers have, the only money that they're getting.

So what does this government do? It uses the farmers as a bargaining chip with CAIS. You know, the program, yes, it's flawed. Yes, maybe the 60 formula, if we can change it, yes. But you do not pull the funding out until you get something

better in place. But what's this government do? No they can't nothing better in place. So that's the only tool that they have out there — CAIS.

And I can remember. Was it 2003? They didn't announce the funding to 2005 . . . into December. I think it was 2004 because I knew the one year they didn't. And now it's a programming right till almost to the next year when the government's share of the cheques are already out there. The farmers are ready. The government's share, they didn't know if the provincial share was coming or not. So finally they made that announcement.

Farmers, you know, you need a cash flow. It's not coming. You know that if . . . You've got bills to pay, and you know that government hasn't put their share in. You know what your share is going to be. You've did your CAIS. You filled out the forms. You sent them away. You've got the government's share.

And then you get a statement saying, you know, if the province pays up, this is what you're going to get, whether it's 10,000, 8,000, 5,000. You know it's there. And then that 5,000 or 8,000 or 10,000 you know is going to pay some bills. You know that that's going to pay. You've got a fuel bill that's due at the end of October.

And you know that government is sitting on your money, and it's playing games and won't give it to you to — a program that you were supposed to get the money in June or July or in August. And you are sitting there wondering, do I go to the bank and try to extend my credit to try to pay this fuel bill, or do I just hope that the government is going to stop playing games with us in Ottawa, with the farmers, and come and actually send out the money which they finally announced. I remember that one year it was December. So then naturally they've got to process the cheques. And I know I had lots of calls in . . . And it should come out quick. You know, when that announcement was made in late December, most producers didn't receive their cheques till March or April or May of the following year, you know, another full year behind.

And they did that constantly, trying to hold up bargain against Ottawa, not go down there and fight. Just say, just like a kid, I'm taking my ball and going home. I don't like the way that things are being played here, you know. And you know who you're hurting? You're hurting the producers and the people in Saskatchewan that most need it.

We've gone through some difficult years in farming, and they're getting more difficult. We went through . . . When I first started here, it was drought. We went through three, four years of drought, especially in the western part of the province. You get up to that Rosetown, Kindersley, through that area — bad drought.

Finally last year, last year there was a good crop coming throughout the province, and the farmers are saying well hopefully maybe we're going to get something. Maybe this will be a catch-up year, for a change, because we need a catch-up year. What happens? A devastating drought hits . . . Not drought. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, a frost. A devastating frost hits, as we all know, in August, dashed a lot of hopes, sent the quality of the grades, crop way down, lost yields.

This year the rain came again. You know, hopefully it's going to be a catch-up year. There was a lot of centennial events, and I mean everybody was happy about them until you started talking about agriculture. If you actually started . . . When the topic of agriculture came up, the tone got, you know, a little more serious, and you could just see that, you know, we need a good year. Are we going to get it this year?

You know, the rains . . . They had trouble in the spring. A lot of farmers managed to get it in, then the rains came in the fall. Out our way we had — what did we have? — we probably had 18 inches of rain throughout the year. I mean that's unheard of out our way. Three inches in one rain in September which basically dropped the grades all from one to three. Anything that was laying in the swath was pretty well really downgraded bad, a lot of damage done with wind to canola, and the rains. You know, another year that was supposed to be a catch-up year. It wasn't.

And that just, you know, one more thing with that, with the costs of that, Mr. Speaker, and the government not stepping up to help, saying well the programs are all right, you know. CAIS is going to be all right. CAIS will cover you. Crop insurance is going to cover you.

What about the farmers in the Northeast with the crop out? You know a lot of them won't see any income till spring. It's very hard to get crop insurance. You have to come out. They sometimes will assess it, sometimes they won't. They'll say, well you know you wait till . . . keep waiting. Well you can keep maybe trying to take it off.

[19:15]

And, you know, there's a lot of producers, a lot of good producers out there in my area that they're saying, you know, I don't know if I'm going to keep farming any more. Why would I? You know, I'm just not making any money and not getting any help at all from my provincial government not going to Ottawa to raise, really raise a concern. And I mean really get out there and fight with the feds, and that's something you haven't done not anywhere on this . . . anywhere on that side, Mr. Speaker.

None of them raised a fight. They'll send a tersely worded letter and they'll go do this and they'll go maybe, maybe — I don't even know if they've even had a meeting with Martin over that — but really raise the issue, really drive it home there. And that's something that they have not done for the producers of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They haven't really gone out there to fight.

And you talk to the farmers out there in my constituency, and any of the constituencies that are represented by our side and also some of the members out there. You get in that Yorkton area, you get in that Meadow Lake area, you talk to farmers out there. They're not happy with the leadership here in the government. They're saying, we're getting none. We're not getting any support at the farming end of it at all. We're not seeing any leadership when it comes to Ottawa on the farming issues or the equalization issues or any of the issues that are important to rural Saskatchewan.

And yet you talk to the government here. You listen to them as

in this island, marble palace that the one member pointed out that he just seemed to be just in this island and that he just seemed to think everything is so great and so rosy and this province is booming. Well why, if it's booming, if we're in an oil boom . . . And we've lost people. We've lost 6,200 jobs.

And now in my constituency there's going to be some more job loss in Wynyard, in Lilydale. They're going to lose 150 jobs there, you know. And what's maybe the biggest that would help keep them jobs, would keep changing the quota system in this province with chicken producers. It's huge with them. They haven't adjusted that in years, if they've ever adjusted it.

Well how do you expect processing and manufacturing to expand if you won't allow the producers to expand their production? Have you gone to Ottawa to fight for changing some of that? Or have you changed some of that? The quota, the quota producers, Mr. Speaker, haven't changed. Until you're going to get production or you're going to get jobs out there in rural Saskatchewan, you're going to have to change that. You're going to have to change.

In Lilydale right now there's 450 workers; 150 of them are going to be laid off, Mr. Speaker, coming probably through this winter. It's going to be a pretty bleak Christmas for them. Do you know what the main reason is? Because there's one more plant opening up but there isn't enough chickens for both of them. There should be five plants in this province, Mr. Speaker, let alone two fighting over a little bit of the quota that they can't expand.

I can't get into chickens. I couldn't sell . . . I couldn't get into it right now if I wanted to. I couldn't sell to Lilydale's. I couldn't sell to the plant in Saskatoon because I don't have a quota, Mr. Speaker. I would either have to buy an existing producer out; that's the only way I could get one.

And so how are you going to expand? And that's not only in poultry. That's in the dairy, and that's in the egg industry. We should be flourishing at that end of it, Mr. Speaker. That's where we should be booming. We should be . . . There should be plants here. There should be different productions of different foods that are being grown here.

But no. No, this government isn't doing anything to help expand agriculture. Now we got to expand the value-added of our agriculture if we want it to sustain here. We can't keep shipping everything out and being done in other provinces which is being now. This government isn't working towards that.

All they can do today is I've heard from, you know, some of them, is rants against us and the Conservative Party. Never heard of ranting against the Liberal . . . I mean talking about John George Diefenbaker again, he went to China and made the first wheat sale in 1972, Mr. Speaker. He went and stepped out and did something and brought something home. He just didn't go out and . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. There seem to be two debates going on as one. I'd ask the members to respect the right of the member who has got the floor to continue with his remarks. The

Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We talk here. I'm hoping that this government is going to send a transcript or resolution or something to Ottawa that comes out of this, and go there and fight. I'm hoping that this Premier is going to go down and fight.

You get the member from Regina South chirping there. You know, he's got no desire to go there. Where's the health care, you know? Why isn't something being done at that end? Because I really don't think a lot of the people on that side — maybe a couple of them realize it but not all of them — realize how desperate it is out there in rural Saskatchewan right now.

Agriculture. The prices are the same as they were in the '30s. I think a bushel of wheat, a bushel of wheat will hardly buy you a cup of coffee. Barley right now at the wheat board is 33 cents. You know, it's 33 cents for a bushel of barley. I mean, how can you expect producers to make it on that at that end of it?

You know, I get up . . . I hear the member from Saskatchewan Rivers do a little rant on the big corporations. And yes, I don't know what the government intends to do to try to . . . how he's going to solve that problem, but yes, it is a high problem of high costs.

I never heard him once say about the costs of the wheat board also. The wheat board, they charge to sell my wheat. I'm not sure exactly because their books aren't closed, but they don't do it for 5 cents a bushel. There's a huge cost there and I don't know what that is so I don't know if it's a fair price or not.

I get the member from Yorkton saying something. I don't know if they're actually doing a good job. You look throughout the world and there is only one other market that is a monopoly. The rest are dual. Australia. A lot of them. The States. And they seem to be getting a price or a better price at that end of it. So when it comes to the wheat board, are they getting a good price?

What's it actually cost . . . I wonder if he could answer me what it actually costs me as a producer to sell that bushel of wheat. If they could do it for 5 cents, hey, they've got all my business. But if it's costing me a buck or a buck ten . . . and I don't know that because they won't open the books when it comes to that.

He's saying it's wide open. No it's not; no it's not. But anyways with that side debate I'll get with him another. But it's not.

I've asked the delegate can he tell me exactly what it costs and no, the books aren't open. They will not open the books on their sales. They will not open the books on their total cost of what they take out of the pooling system for demurrage, for what they take out of the pooling system to run Winnipeg, and for basically to have offices all over the world at that end of it. And I would like to know actually what my cost is.

I sold a load of wheat and on the one side they take off the freight charges, the handling charges. They've got a list now. They tell you what they take off. There's various ones now. They've added a different little charge on, a grade inspecting charge. The charges are higher than your net price and what you

get here. I would sooner now have the charges, what they charge me. That's what I would like to take home, the list of what they take off rather than what I'm taking home of the net price. And any time that happens, you know that you're not going to make money.

And this government doesn't seem to realize that, Mr. Speaker. They don't seem to know that there's trouble out there — huge trouble. There is going to be a lot of farmers not farming the land when it comes spring and making huge decisions right now.

Talking about CAIS, sure he said he gets . . . [inaudible] . . . to fund the 2005 but what of 2006? Some of these guys that are making up their minds now if they're going to go ahead — it's going to be a tough year next year — maybe CAIS will keep me rolling through but I need the 40 per cent of the provincial share. Are they going to step up right now, right now in this debate, and say yes we'll fully fund 2006 CAIS? That's something we can do right now. That's something we can do rather than just saying, well a lot of that's out of our hands in Ottawa. Well there's certain things you can do, this government can do, Mr. Speaker, and that's one of them.

Right now the guys are doing their books. They're going to be starting January 1. The banks all want plans. If you farm you've got to start about January doing your finance plan. You've got to do it with the elevators. You've got to do it with your fuel dealer. You all have to do your credit limits and your credit checks at that end of it and it would help if you actually knew that yes, I'm going to get my full share of my CAIS money in 2006 now, instead of getting played again like a violin with politicians in Ottawa or the media here. I'm not sure why they wait and wait and wait. You sign on to that deal, fully funded. That's the only tool we have out there to help us carry on right now, Mr. Speaker.

With the high cost of fuel, fertilizer, there's certain things there that they can adjust there. You know, give more rebates. Natural gas is used to make fertilizer. They're going to be looking at \$500 a tonne this year. I can remember, you know, when it wasn't even close to that at one time. But a lot of it's natural gas costs going up. Well why not try helping the farmers in that way too? Try lowering the cost of natural gas or giving rebates or something along that line to try to lower the cost of fertilizer out there.

I've heard them talk about expanding biodiesel ethanol and that, but still haven't seen anything out there. You know, the farmers are saying, when are we actually going to see something out here, except actually closing things? You know, I can go back to closing the 52 rural hospitals, but never mind the service centres. In Davidson, they pulled out, Mr. Speaker, they pulled out the SaskTel guy to Davidson. Next year it'll be the SaskPower. They just keep pulling the jobs out of rural Saskatchewan and not helping the farmers at all.

So it almost looks like, Mr. Speaker, that they have a plan — you know, I'd hate to think that they would, but I wouldn't put it past some of them over there — to depopulate rural Saskatchewan. There isn't one thing that they did — there's not one thing in that Throne Speech — that addresses how to help rural Saskatchewan, that we're really going to step up to the

plate and go to bat for rural Saskatchewan.

We're sitting on quite a bit of, some oil revenue money. You know, you'd think that they would try to get some of that out. You know, through the '80s with the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program, I mean it was tough. There was some dry years; '88 was one of the driest years we ever seen. But at least, you know, we had the GRIP program. That helped, you know.

The feds threw out some money at that time, Mr. Speaker. They threw out some money to rural Saskatchewan. So did the provincial government. They made some payments. I got through a couple of tough years. There was some tough years in '87, '88, '89 there.

But this government, what did it do? You know, it tore up the GRIP program and didn't replace it with anything. And then went kicking and got kicked and dragged finally to CAIS and still complains about that it actually has to fund it, not realizing the spinoff when out there in rural Saskatchewan that spins into the cities. If there's money out there it's being spent by farmers and this year there's not going to be any.

And you talk to the businesses — and just not rural Saskatchewan, up here in Regina — a lot of them are feeling it that are dealing with the farming industry. Any business that deals with the farming industry, Mr. Speaker, is starting to hurt. And they're going to notice it.

And they're going to start wondering why with this government that there is basically these guys are sitting on cash — they're not helping nobody when it comes right down to it, Mr. Speaker. This government isn't helping anybody anywhere except the only thing they want to try to help themselves do is get re-elected, which isn't going to happen, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that right now.

I've did some door knocking in a couple of city ridings and I mean they are not well liked any more, Mr. Speaker. They are basically going down. There's two generations out there in rural Saskatchewan right now, two generations now, that have a huge dislike for this government. At one time when I was younger it was just the one generation. Now it's the second generation is starting to realize it.

This government up here has no idea what goes on in rural Saskatchewan, doesn't care what goes on in rural Saskatchewan, and probably never will care what goes on in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And that's out there. That's never going to change and that's creeping into the cities with that at that end of it. And I don't even think they realize it because they're sitting here in the marble palace here, you know on their island here, and just thinking everything is great. Well, Mr. Speaker, everything isn't great out there in rural Saskatchewan.

And the members got up and they're the government side. I never heard from the speeches one idea how this government is going to help there. I heard a lot of complaining about this and that, mostly about us. You know I never even heard them complain much about the Liberals, but not one idea from them, not one idea in this debate about what we can do to help rural

Saskatchewan. I mentioned a couple of them.

I never heard one of them get up and say, you know next year we're expanding irrigation. We're going to throw maybe \$50 million and try to expand irrigation. We're going to do some money here. We're going to go here. We're going to try to actually do something out there in rural Saskatchewan. Never heard one thing from them because, Mr. Speaker, they don't have an idea. They don't have an idea or don't care. And you know right now is, I believe they just don't care what happens to rural Saskatchewan.

And that message is out there. When I go out to the people out there, when you go out from town to town and you talk to the people, there is a huge dislike. And they know that, Mr. Speaker. They say there's no leadership in . . . What's going in up there in Regina? They'll say like, there is no leadership. They say maybe, maybe under Romanow. They didn't like him but they said at least there was a little bit of leadership. I mean the Premier they got now they say he's a nice guy but I mean there is no leadership there. And what's left there, there's no leadership in among anything.

You talk about the taxes, Mr. Speaker. You talk about the member for North Battleford, the reception he got at SARM, I don't think it was very nice and it's just going to get worse. You know, he's got 19 RMs [rural municipality] in revolt, 19. You want to think about that? Nineteen RMs aren't going to pay their taxes this year. And that's just the start of it.

[19:30]

There's a lot more that are thinking of joining if this problem isn't addressed right now. I can tell you that right now. There's lots of RMs right now, I can tell you. The member from Yorkton is yelling, which ones? He's going to find out pretty soon. There's going to be some others joining. And that shows you how desperate they are in rural Saskatchewan right now, that they are looking at a tax revolt against this present government, basically for just constantly taking money out of rural Saskatchewan and putting nothing back into it — for breaking promise after promise after promise that this government has said they would do and they haven't done and never will.

I don't think there's one promise that they've ever made that they've actually kept over there, because I know I've never seen one at that. I've heard a lot of broken promises at that end of it, you know, and it's sad because there's going to be a way of life lost in Saskatchewan.

It almost seems like that the NDP socialists are leaning back towards the '70s when they brought the land bank in. And I don't even know if that's what they've got coming up. I wouldn't be surprised at their convention coming up this weekend if there's a few resolutions dealing with, let's bring back the land bank. You know, let the government take over all the land again, Mr. Speaker, or try to like basically they were trying to do in the '70s. Because you've got to remember that this government has very deep socialist roots, I would say even leading really far left with what's left here now. And I don't think they understand at all about business. I don't think they even like business. I don't think there's one of them over there

that even likes big business. I've heard them rail constantly against business.

You know, I've never actually heard them ever get up and say, you know what, we need businesses here. What can we do to help business come? What can we do to help farmers in this province to keep operating? You know, all you'll hear from them is just a few more empty words and empty promises coming there. You've got the member from Yorkton who is the minister of Rural Revitalization. You know, I haven't heard any real plans come out of there. When did that come in? Last year, two years ago? At that end of it, you know, what have we lost — 6,200 jobs.

We've got Wynyard. Is he out talking to the Wynyard people saying, what can we do to maybe switch not losing 150 jobs in the Wynyard area? Has he been out there? I don't know. I don't think so. You know, you'd think he'd want to go out there and find out, what can we do to help Lilydale stay. Because I can tell you right now there may be a chance that they may go after this. And you start losing businesses like that, and we have been losing them, what do you think's going to happen to rural Saskatchewan? Do you have any idea what's going to happen out there? You start losing towns the size of Wynyard; you start losing 450 workers in one crack. Mr. Speaker, do you want to know how devastating that is to a town that size and the surrounding communities at that end of it?

Well that's what's happening out there. And with farmers unfortunately could be going under, there's going to be a huge void out there and I don't know where they think that's going to be filled. I don't think they have any idea at it. You know and I know that most of them don't care. And unfortunately the ones that do care I don't think have an idea at all out there how to do it. They're just basically stymied by it. They don't know what to do on that end of it.

And that's scary because this province right now needs leadership and we're not getting it. We're not getting it from the Premier. We're not getting it from the cabinet. We're not getting it from this government. And that's what we need right now is leadership and basically there is nothing out there at that end of it coming from this government at all. No leadership at all. And that is why, next election, that they will be gone, Mr. Speaker.

So I am supporting this motion, Mr. Speaker, and not the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for The Battlefords, the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an interesting day today, Mr. Speaker. I have listened intensely throughout the day and I have a few comments of my own I want to make.

Just for the clarity of the people at home and for those who will at later times read my remarks in *Hansard* I just want to read the motion that I am speaking to, Mr. Speaker. In fact I am speaking to the amended motion that I am certain will be the

motion that is passed at the end of the day today. The amended motion would be:

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 federal government for its failure to fulfill its commitment to negotiate an energy accord for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to be able to speak to this motion today and I want to remind those who are watching and even my own colleagues here today, Mr. Speaker, that for the most part I've enjoyed support within my constituency at the federal, municipal, and provincial level partly because when we're outside of election periods, Mr. Speaker, I'm a very non-partisan individual. I believe very strongly in seeing both sides of an argument, being able to understand the direction that needs to be taken and the best interests of all of those who have raised concerns, and to be able to take action, Mr. Speaker, in a way in which the constituents and the people of the province ultimately benefit from actions and decisions taken.

Mr. Speaker, in saying that, I bring to this table a history in rural Saskatchewan. I am often equated as one of those urban members from Saskatchewan representing the city of North Battleford and the town of Battleford, Mr. Speaker, two communities that are built on the basis of agriculture, on the basis of rural Saskatchewan, small city, medium-sized town, etc., etc.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think members will remember that for almost nine years I served in the federal House of Commons, a constituency then known as The Battlefords-Meadow Lake, a constituency made up of 95 different communities, the 14th largest federal constituency in Canada; an area that made up a considerable amount of agricultural land, a big part of rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I represented farm families, workers in Saskatchewan engaged in the agribusiness industry, people who were involved in all sorts of rural development activities, and someone that had spent a considerable amount of time working with people throughout Saskatchewan from all sectors of our economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I speak today in reference to this subject matter which has to do with the federal government's activities of yesterday and the federal government's activities relating to the province of Saskatchewan's energy accord, Mr. Speaker, I have some experience at the federal level in understanding the way in which the federal government has operated in the past and the way in which they are operating today.

Mr. Speaker, I was first elected in 1988 under a federal Conservative government. I was re-elected in 1993 under a federal Liberal government. Mr. Speaker, it was interesting that those governments at that time were referred to as Tweedledum and Tweedledee. These were governments who treated Saskatchewan and Canadian people almost identically. You couldn't tell the difference between the federal Conservatives and the federal Liberals.

And there are numerous policy issues relating to Canadians, rural Canadians and rural Saskatchewan people, from that

period of time that I'd like to reference today when I talk about the folks at the federal level.

Mr. Speaker, in 1988 when I sought my first support from the people of Saskatchewan in that first federal election that I ran in, in 1988 I ran against the Member of Parliament who's now an active talk-show host in the province of Saskatchewan. And he was campaigning for the Conservative Party under then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. The big issue was the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and the GST [goods and services tax], Mr. Speaker — two programs that were ultimately hated by voters from coast to coast. But in that campaign, the Conservative campaign slogan at that time was farmers have to fight the weather, they shouldn't have to fight the government.

In a sense, Mr. Speaker, what that campaign was all about was getting government out of the business of farming. No more subsidies, Mr. Speaker. And they went on to argue the Uruguay round of the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade. They went on to argue through policy development across Canada to get government out of the business of farming. No more subsidies, Mr. Speaker.

And we began the fight to retain the Crow rate and then the Crow benefit. And we began the fight that Saskatchewan people lost at the federal level to retain the rural rail-line rehabilitation program, and of course, Mr. Speaker, the fight that I was most engaged in — protection of and saving of the provision of postal services in rural Saskatchewan and rural Canada, saving rural post offices throughout this country.

Mr. Speaker, those programs that were brought forward under that rubric of farmers have to fight the weather, they shouldn't have to fight the government — no more subsidies — is the same type of program that at that time a conservative party out of Alberta and part of Western Canada, the Reform Party, was very actively supporting that government at the time about no more subsidies for agriculture.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's very odd today to hear the Saskatchewan Conservative Party now talking so strongly about getting government into the business of farming, getting government into heavily subsidizing farmers — a complete reversal of the types of things they were saying at a time when farming in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, was a profitable business and when they were trying to take further advantage of taxpayers across the country. Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Mr. Speaker. Nothing has changed at the federal level.

Here we are today debating a motion that condemns the federal government for actions taken yesterday in outlining a massive federal surplus and no reference whatsoever to the agricultural industry in Canada; no reference to the agricultural industry in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this government, the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party government has been supporting farmers and farm families and farm industries in this province for quite a number of years, Mr. Speaker. We have campaigned against those anti-subsidy, anti-rural program issues at the federal level for years, Mr. Speaker.

When I campaigned in 1988, I campaigned on the basis of

support for Saskatchewan farmers and support for Saskatchewan farmers in the international marketplace, an area that the federal government is of critical importance to all of us.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've lost the Crow rate. We lost the Crow benefit. We lost the rail-line rehabilitation program. We haven't seen a lot of federal support for the types of programs that were supposed to replace the loss of those programs. And as the Minister of Agriculture reported earlier in his remarks, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan producers have lost in the neighbourhood of \$600 million per year as a result of the loss of those programs. Very difficult for the province of Saskatchewan alone to make up the difference of what the federal government decision making, conservative decision making took away from the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, over the years I have been very active in the agriculture debate. I think some members will remember that during my service in parliament I was the federal New Democratic Party agriculture critic. I was a member of the National Farmers Union, an active member of the National Farmers Union. I was a subscriber and supporter and reader of *The Western Producer*. And I talked to farmers on the combine year after year after year and I continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

I understand the crisis in agriculture across Canada today. I understand the circumstances that farmers, farm families, farm industries, and communities that rely on the farm sector are in. I understand those circumstances, Mr. Speaker. And I will continue to do everything I can at this level within the provincial government and in reference to the needs to engage the federal government in what they should be doing. Mr. Speaker, I will do all that I can to ensure the federal government lives up to their part of this requirement to support farm families.

Mr. Speaker, I am well aware, as the members opposite have to be, that Saskatchewan is roughly 4 per cent of the population in Canada, yet we have 45 per cent of the arable land, Mr. Speaker. It is impossible for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan to bear the burden of year after year after year of crisis in the agriculture sector. But we're doing a heck of a job of it, Mr. Speaker.

[19:45]

And before I make some comments on some of those things that we have been able to do, I want to congratulate my colleagues who spoke earlier today. Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, we are engaged in this debate today because yesterday the federal government failed in their economic statement to mention agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, what a contrast to just a week ago when the Throne Speech from the province of Saskatchewan was read in this House and there were numerous references to agriculture and a commitment to fully fund the 2005 CAIS program, Mr. Speaker, which would indeed represent a cost, collectively, to the province of Saskatchewan — an additional cost over budget — of just under \$100 million, Mr. Speaker. This is from the province of Saskatchewan contributing an additional dollar value over budget to a necessary program in the province of Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, the federal government chose not to do that. The opposition earlier today suggested that we debate this issue in the Chamber. And our very first speaker engaged in this debate, Mr. Speaker, was the Minister of Agriculture, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

The Minister of Agriculture spent a considerable amount of time, Mr. Speaker, talking about his understanding and his efforts on behalf of farm families throughout Saskatchewan. And for those people watching tonight and listening, for those people who are picking up *Hansard* and having a look, please read the content of the Minister of Agriculture's speech from earlier today, Mr. Speaker. It will take away any argument that the opposition makes without the facts, take away any argument that they have that this government doesn't care and doesn't work in the interests of Saskatchewan farm families. The Minister of Agriculture made it very clear that is indeed the direction that this government has taken.

For a government, Mr. Speaker, that is criticized by the opposition of not having any rural members, not caring about rural Saskatchewan, we heard from the Minister of Agriculture. Then we heard from the Deputy Premier, the member from Yorkton. Then we heard from the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. Now we're hearing from the member from The Battlefords. Later today we will hear from the member from Meadow Lake. And there will be other speakers from this side of the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, members who represent ridings that rely on rural Saskatchewan for our very success both politically and economically within our communities.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that does not seek to divide this province between rural and urban, Mr. Speaker. This is a party, this is a government that seeks to unite rural and urban members across this province and, Mr. Speaker, there are several issues on this motion today that I'm going to refer to that show how urban and rural members work closely together.

Mr. Speaker, if there's one thing that's very clear, it is the budgeted dollars that have gone to support agriculture from this government over the course of the last number of years. And, Mr. Speaker, again the Minister of Agriculture made this clear earlier. I just want to throw a couple of facts on the table.

In 2004-05 which is the year just concluded, this government, the New Democratic Party government, contributed a total of \$650 million in agricultural support and tax exemptions. Mr. Speaker, those were budgeted numbers. Those come out of the general operating coffers of the province — tax revenues, royalty revenues, and other dollars that are available through our revenue streams. A little under 10 per cent of the entire revenue base of this province has gone to support agricultural support either directly or through tax exemptions. Tax exemptions alone, Mr. Speaker, totalled \$245 million — exemptions on farm machinery, repair parts, fertilizer, pesticide, seed, and fuel tax. This is direct support that comes from all the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

When you break this down, it's probably about \$500 — tax dollars from each and every individual in the province of Saskatchewan. A four-person family contributes roughly \$2,000 of the money that they're contributing to the province of Saskatchewan directly to the farm economy in this province. If

that's not a commitment, I don't know what is because no other province in the country of Canada contributes that kind of money to support their agricultural sector.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we fully understand that it's not just for the grains and oilseeds people, Mr. Speaker. We have stuck by our producers through the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] crisis. We have come up with additional dollars, again money over and above budgeted dollars, to support the pork and livestock sector, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker, the second part of our motion today deals with the area of the energy accord for the province of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that Saskatchewan residents are gaining an understanding today that a few months ago they did not have with regards to the way in which the federal government is treating the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware Saskatchewan has been seeking an energy accord with the federal government similar to that which is already been accorded the provinces of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, those provinces have achieved a deal under the equalization process whereby they can utilize the energy resources that they have available to them and at the same time retain some certainty in the way in which federal monies flow in that province.

Here in Saskatchewan our circumstances are completely uncertain, Mr. Speaker. The volatility of oil and gas on top of the uncertainty of the formula that will be used on the equalization formula in the future means that Saskatchewan is behind the eight ball in our ability to fund our programs and our expectations of new programs, Mr. Speaker.

The opposition opposite, Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Saskatchewan Party over there, has in the last few days been very critical of the Premier's efforts to get some fairness into Saskatchewan's equalizations efforts, fairness that will assist Saskatchewan to ultimately be able to fund programs such as additional revenue sharing for municipalities, fund long-term, sustainable property tax relief for Saskatchewan taxpayers. Mr. Speaker, certainty of an energy accord, certainty under equalization will provide us opportunities to do a lot of the things that we are currently challenged to do.

But, Mr. Speaker, how quickly things change. As I'd indicated, the last few days you'd be pretty hard pressed if you were a member of the media, if you were a member of public to understand that the opposition are residents of the province of Saskatchewan and care about the future of this province as a result of fairness in Confederation.

Mr. Speaker, back in March 2005 there was a debate in this Chamber, a debate that called for support for Saskatchewan's desire for fair treatment under equalization. And the Leader of the Opposition made a number of remarks at that time in support of this program that we now call Saskatchewan energy accord Raise a Flag for Fairness.

But at that time, the member of the opposition had a couple of

things to say, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to quote him from pages 2015 forward in the March 14 issue of *Hansard*. And I'll quote from various parts of the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Swift Current's speech. So he says:

We're going to need a federal government that agrees that this is absolutely unfair to our province and is prepared to act on that unfairness and do something about it.

... I want it to be very clear that the Saskatchewan Party, our position is to stand with Saskatchewan, obviously, with the interests of this province. We will stand for and fight for a fair deal for the province of Saskatchewan. It is our hope that a unified front is not simply about politics ... but that it is about getting the job done, getting a more effective deal.

He also went on to say:

... we'll stand with the government, we'll stand with the province of Saskatchewan, and we will work towards a better deal for equalization.

Mr. Speaker, we applauded the member from Swift Current, the Leader of the Opposition, for his commitment to the province of Saskatchewan.

And yet earlier this week in this Chamber, when confronted by the members on this side of the House about whether he supported Ottawa or Saskatchewan, the leader of the Conservative Party opposite, Mr. Speaker, said he would stand up with Ottawa over this government any day.

An Hon. Member: — Shame.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, that is shameful as my colleague here offers.

The people of Saskatchewan have to stand united, have to stand together, have to call on the federal government as a single body, Mr. Speaker, with no division. Have to stand up and fight for an energy accord that provides fairness to the people of Saskatchewan, fairness within Confederation, and allows the government of the province of Saskatchewan — on behalf and for the people of this province — to provide the type of programming, long-term, sustainable programming like education property tax relief, Mr. Speaker, that we are capable of doing.

Mr. Speaker, I call on the members opposite to support the resolution that says to Ottawa, be fair under equalization; be fair under agriculture. There's no doubt that we've got a case to make and we can make it together, Mr. Speaker. We can make this in a non-partisan way for all of the people of Saskatchewan.

The federal government needs to stand up and support agriculture like it did in the good old days, Mr. Speaker, where the federal government was 100 per cent responsible for those types of agriculture crises that were weather related, emergency related, and trade related. Mr. Speaker, the federal government used to be 100 per cent. They need to be brought back in line under those circumstances, and we need a fair deal under equalization. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Ms. Bakken Lackey: — Mr. Speaker, farmers in the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy and all across Saskatchewan and in Canada as a whole are in a crisis mode. And it's a crisis that's been building for several years, Mr. Speaker.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, the frost was devastating to most farmers in Saskatchewan, and overnight it wiped out hopes of a bumper crop after several years of devastating yields that they'd experienced. This year, Mr. Speaker, the yield varied across the province, and there was and is some areas that are still trying to get their crops off that suffered very severe weather during harvest.

In my constituency, Mr. Speaker, for the most part we were fortunate to escape this weather and had good yields and good grades to most of our crops. But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this does not alleviate the serious situation that farmers are facing in my area. Many farmers still have their bins full from last year because they've been unable to sell their crop. And this year with abundance in bushels that they received, they did not have enough room to store their grain. There is grain piled all over the fields in my area, a sight that has not been seen for many years.

The low commodity prices in many cases will not cover the ever-increasing input costs. And when farmers sell their grain, when they go to the inland terminal in Weyburn or the other elevators or inland terminals, they receive — if they're lucky — half of what their cheque should be after the freight and the elevator costs are subtracted.

And then we add to this the escalating costs, Mr. Speaker, of power and energy, both of which have just seen a recent increase, and also the property tax. These, Mr. Speaker, are areas that the provincial government has direct control over and could address to help alleviate the hardship that farmers are facing.

Mr. Speaker, I have received more calls in my constituency office this fall about the crisis facing agriculture than I have ever before in the last six years of being an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. And the anger that is expressed not only by farmers, but by business people aimed at both levels of government because of their inaction and their unwillingness to address this issue is at a desperate level.

Mr. Speaker, two days ago I had a lady from my constituency who runs a business in Weyburn call me. And she called me to talk about the people that she sees come into her business on a daily basis and the hardship that they are experiencing. What really triggered her call two days ago, Mr. Speaker, was that a lady from a farm in my area came into her business and she was crying. And she was crying because she had to ask a family member for money to help her to pay for her school supplies for her children, and now she's wondering where she's going to get money to put groceries on the table.

[20:00]

Mr. Speaker, this is the face of what is happening all across Saskatchewan. This same lady, Mr. Speaker, took the initiative to phone the Minister of Agriculture's office but the minister would not speak to her and so she was able to speak to an employee in the minister's office instead. And her question to the employee was, why do you not, why is your government not promoting agriculture? And his answer to her, Mr. Speaker, unbelievably, was this isn't our job. And then he went on to talk to her about how he had sold his land to the land bank and now his son was farming it, and then to talk about Tommy Douglas. This was his answer to a lady that had phoned him, wanting to know what this provincial government was going to do about addressing the serious situation in agriculture. She was told, it isn't our job.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote Kevin Hursh from the *Leader-Post* on November 2, who recognized the plight facing farmers and the farm families. And Mr. Hursh said, and I quote:

There will be a lot of soul searching among farm families this winter.

Many will come to the conclusion that they don't want to play this farming game anymore.

It's more than the usual doom and gloom. This seems to be a pivotal year in the farm sector.

Saskatchewan produced a bin buster of a crop. It should be a year to rejoice — a year to make financial gains.

And Mr. Hursh goes on to say:

When you produce a big crop and you still can't make any money, it has a way of sapping the will to continue.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is what is happening to our farm families. They are starting to give up. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there is a huge disconnect between both levels of government and the issues that are facing farmers.

Last February, Agriculture Canada estimated net farm income would be negative \$486 million. This was prior to gasoline and diesel prices escalating. Wheat today is the same price as it was in 1974, yet the price of everything else has gone up. One farmer in my area compared the cost of this year's diesel, gas, oil, and grease with the costs from last year. His costs have increased 35 per cent. Could you or I pay our bills and support our family on 1974 wages with the cost of living going up 35 per cent in just one year? The question is, no. How can government then expect farmers to continue to operate under these kinds of circumstances?

With the price of barley a farmer cannot even afford to buy a cup of coffee. I had a farmer from down in the Big Muddy come in to my constituency office a couple of weeks ago and said he had just delivered barley to the inland terminal. He was very upset because he said, I cannot even now go to the local . . . I've lost my words . . . I cannot even go to the local coffee shop and get a cup of coffee for what I got for a bushel of barley. Mr. Speaker, that's a very serious situation that we are

faced with.

Another farmer in my area who lives on a farm that received the Century Family Farm Award, he owns his land. He's a good farmer. His wife works full-time off the farm and he works full-time off the farm in the winter. He wonders how much longer he will be able to remain on the farm. And he said in a letter that he wrote to me, and I quote:

We know how to farm our land. We know what our land will do for us. With great sadness, I pray for those who have fought the fight and lost their land and their way of life through no fault of their own.

It is a guilt that hurts your soul as if you have let your ancestors down.

The circumstances are beyond our control.

We have been left behind by this government.

Mr. Speaker, this government made a commitment in the Throne Speech that no one would be left behind but, Mr. Speaker, they have left behind farmers and their families. They've left behind the businesses that depend on the agriculture community. They've left behind businesses that directly service the agriculture industry, and they've left behind the hopes and dreams of the sons and daughters of those farmers that hope to pass down those family farms to their sons and daughters. But these children will not farm that land. They have watched through the last few years as their parents have gone through misery and hardship and depression and stress and they want no part of it because they do not see a future in farming. And this is a sad realization, Mr. Speaker, of where we've come to in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the government is famous for saying one thing and doing another; for breaking promises. I'd like to quote from the deputy minister and also from the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance in September 2004 said, "The NDP government is concerned about the situation," when he was referring to agriculture. He went on to say, "I want to make it clear that when our farmers are struggling that we will be there for them."

Mr. Speaker, and when Neal Hardy in 2004 said that the education tax on property is a tax that the provincial government could do something about, that they have control over, the Deputy Premier said, and I quote: "We have a crisis in agriculture and what farmers need is not less support. They need more support."

And yet today, Mr. Speaker, we heard the deputy minister for Saskatchewan speak for almost an hour with absolutely no solutions to what can be done to help the farmers, with not even one mention of the education portion of property tax, with no willingness to address those issues that this government has direct control over.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Premier committed to addressing the education portion of property tax but again has failed to do anything. Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech, the NDP [New Democratic Party] did nothing, said nothing about agriculture

except to congratulate themselves for CAIS.

Mr. Speaker, CAIS is a program that producers have repeatedly told this government that it does not work. It is complicated, confusing, and has totally failed the farmers of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from a letter from a farm family in my constituency who are directly speaking about CAIS. And I'd like to quote:

We have kept good records utilizing NISA, AIDA, CFIP, and now CAIS.

We are witnessing how inadequate the CAIS Program is now because of several years of poor margins caused by events beyond our control. Your program is designed for accounting firms to make good money while at the same time keeping money from the hands of producers.

We have now been told that we probably won't qualify for a payment for our 2004 year (after a rather large accounting fee) even though we had large losses.

Our bank has asked numerous times how much we might expect from CAIS, but we cannot give them an answer because the calculation process is so complicated . . . Your program is seriously flawed!

We know these programs aren't designed to save every farm. A generation of farm managers has already been lost and we will lose another generation, if things like CAIS do not change.

Mr. Speaker, there is a crisis looming that has been building for many years, with farmers one by one quietly leaving the farm, many leaving the province. A young farmer from Coronach this fall walked into his bank and threw his keys to his farm on the desk. He said, I'm taking my wife and my kids in our half-ton, and we're leaving this province because I cannot make it any more; it's yours. And he walked away.

Mr. Speaker, the lights are going out all over Saskatchewan. They're going out on farms. They're going out in small towns, and they're going out in cities like Weyburn who directly service the farming industry. And as more and more people go, they are going not of their own choice but because the government has failed them.

Mr. Speaker, this is the worst of time for agriculture in Saskatchewan's history. Governments at both levels have failed to recognize the importance of a strong agriculture base and have chosen to ignore the crisis facing farmers. Where has this government been while agriculture organizations and other provincial governments have been there speaking on behalf of farmers? This government has done nothing.

Today, Mr. Speaker, there were three provincial Agriculture ministers in Ottawa advocating for their farmers. And where is our Agriculture minister? Sitting in Saskatchewan and doing nothing.

Mr. Speaker, is this government prepared to join with the Saskatchewan Party to press the federal government to address

the crisis in agriculture, or are they going to continue to sit by and do nothing as they have done continually for the last six years? Mr. Speaker, the need for action has never been greater. I will be supporting the motion.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Meadow Lake.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to stand and rise and enter into this debate today.

First of all, I of course will be speaking in favour of the amendment and against the motion, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say that while some of the sectors in agriculture are . . . Actually I want to sort of be fair here. Some of the sectors in agriculture are actually doing quite well, specifically some of the cattle producers who are producing feeders. The majority though certainly are experiencing an extremely difficult time this year.

I think it as well might surprise some of the members opposite, but on this side of the House I know there are many, many members, while they have seats that they represent in urban centres, all have strong roots in rural Saskatchewan — and even as myself, Mr. Speaker, having grown up on the farm, still involved in farming to some degree. I think it would probably surprise some members on the other side to note that I have been involved in the delivery of probably thousands of calves over my lifetime as I grew up and in the early years before I started in other areas of life.

This government has stood with its producers, Mr. Speaker, in the past and it certainly will stand with its producers in the future. It would help for sure, Mr. Speaker, if the opposition would stand with our government in our fight against the federal government. And I think that would be most helpful and it would make a big difference.

I find it ironic, Mr. Speaker, that the party that says it represents farmers is a party that really stands for the abolition of subsidies for support for farmers. I know that the former leader of the Conservative Party when he was a member of the Reform Party spoke in favour of and voted in favour of, it's my recollection, of the abolition of the Crow benefit which amounts to — my recollection again — is about 4 or \$500 million per year here to the province of Saskatchewan. And I know just yesterday I think it was — I don't know the exact vote — but I listened to the current leader of the party opposite and he said that given the choice between standing up for Saskatchewan people or standing with the federal government, the federal Finance minister, he knew where he stood and that was with the federal Finance minister.

Mr. Speaker, is it any wonder then that people in Saskatchewan wonder where the opposition party stands and that they do understand where we stand, Mr. Speaker?

The other thing that I just note, I was listening with interest to the debate in the House here today and I listened to the member

from Arm River. I would agree with a fair bit of what he said but it's a mixed message. He said, Mr. Speaker, that he's critical of this government for not supporting more subsidization and support for irrigation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, again I reflect back on history. I think it's about \$200 million that was put in by the former Devine government and by the federal government into irrigation for the production of wheat and barley in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And yet I've listened to speaker after speaker after speaker talk about the value of wheat and barley in our province right now. So, Mr. Speaker, either he is advocating that there is diversification of crop production or he's saying, Mr. Speaker, that we should continue producing crops that have little or no value.

Mr. Speaker, yet at the same time I listened to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, who says on a regular basis that he does not believe in support in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, through direct investment like exactly what the member from Arm River was suggesting we support. It's a direct contradiction. And again I say it's no wonder the people of Saskatchewan are just a little bit confused.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has been affected by many things as has most of our country, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to agriculture. There is of course international trade wars. There's things like weather that has hugely adversely affected . . . well most of Saskatchewan last year, but for sure it has affected regions of our province this year with huge oversupply of moisture and it's drowned out many crops. There is the issue of the cost-price squeeze. And with the exception of the weather of course, Mr. Speaker, most of these issues relate directly back to the federal government. The federal government is the government that could make and can really make a difference as it relates to support for our farmers in our country, Mr. Speaker.

But what do those members opposite do, Mr. Speaker? They blame this provincial government instead of joining with this government in our fight against Ottawa. With roughly 43 million acres or 43 per cent of the arable farm land in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and with 3 to 4 per cent roughly of the population of Canada, how anyone can suggest that that small population should be supporting and paying for the programs, Mr. Speaker, essentially without the support of the federal government just simply doesn't make any sense to me, Mr. Speaker.

[20:15]

The current leader also would suggest I think . . . and I've listened again to many speeches over the last numbers of years. There was some reference to some of the speeches here tonight again about their criticism of our government moving away from the GRIP program which existed some number of years ago. Well, Mr. Speaker, that program was simply unsustainable and here's a striking, I think, irony. The GRIP program was projected to run a deficit of about \$1 billion under its current format and current structure on an annual basis. I think it's an interesting comparison to make because the current leader of the party opposite, who was also very involved in the Devine government at the time, coincidentally ran a deficit on an annual basis of about \$1 billion a year. So I'm not sure if he's advocating that that's the same finance model we should go

back to again. I hope not, but I hear a lot of speeches in that regard, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, here's our plan. They say what's your plan and what are you doing? Well, Mr. Speaker, here's what we're doing. We're supporting meat processing with real value-added jobs, real jobs for people, Mr. Speaker. We've done things like taken the provincial sales tax off of feedlots that are expanding and slaughtering facilities. We've talked about in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, agroforestry. Obviously, and I say this, this isn't something new, but this is something that's been in existence for a long time. But it never ceases to surprise me that there's a number of producers don't realize that there's no sales tax or any kind of tax on diesel fuel, so we continue to provide that subsidy, Mr. Speaker. We have fully funded CAIS again. We've announced that. We will be this year, and as long as CAIS has been in existence, Mr. Speaker, we fully funded that program.

Over the last two years, Mr. Speaker, we provided \$1.2 billion in support from our province, and certainly, Mr. Speaker, this is how our province and how our government has responded to the crisis in agriculture. \$650 million alone — I know a number of speakers have referenced this — has been provided in the '04-05 budget. This is the largest amount of assistance in the last decade, Mr. Speaker, the largest amount of assistance in the last decade; 206 million, Mr. Speaker, 206 million was the provincial share for the 2003 claim year, Mr. Speaker, alone. And then 174 million was the provincial share for the 2004 claim year, Mr. Speaker. And it estimated that . . . 183 million for the provincial share for this year, Mr. Speaker.

And also to help producers with their cash flow problems, we've also improved the access to CAIS advances. And that was a significant issue, and that improved circumstances I know for many of the producers in my area. We provided 126 million in CAIS special advances and interim payments, Mr. Speaker. We led the charge in getting CAIS deposit removed, Mr. Speaker, and that as well was significant. And I know and I appreciate the support from the members opposite who talked about that at length, and we appreciate their support on that point, Mr. Speaker. Producers have access to 147 million in their CAIS accounts. Producers have taken out 56 million over the past two years, Mr. Speaker.

The government has and will, as I've said before, stand by and continue to stand by the producers of Saskatchewan. We've stood by the producers in good times, Mr. Speaker. We stood by them when times were bad, Mr. Speaker, and we'll stand by Saskatchewan producers into the future whether it's through crisis or whether it's through good times.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly as I said will speak in favour of the amendment condemning the federal government for its failure to provide the adequate supports that need to be there, Mr. Speaker. But I also want to say just before I close, a little bit about what I think is an important piece of the motion, the amended portion of the motion which speaks to the energy accord.

Mr. Speaker, if Saskatchewan had the same deal as Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, it's estimated that Saskatchewan could look at about an additional \$700 million

each and every year. Mr. Speaker, that \$700 million could go a long ways to supporting our farmers. Mr. Speaker, if we had that extra \$700 million a year, I wouldn't be quite as critical of the 60/40 split though I think it's still hugely unfair. But if the federal government would treat Saskatchewan the same way as it treats Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia as it relates to the energy accord, I think I could accept a little better the 60/40 split although I still think that's hugely unfair.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I've said, our government has stood with farmers. Mr. Speaker, we'll stand with them in the future, and we'll stand with them through all of these difficult times. We appreciate the difficult times that farmers are going through. We do appreciate the huge changes that have taken place in agriculture over the last number of years.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, that many, many producers . . . And I'm going to finish where I started. I know that while many producers are caught in the trap of weather, cost-price squeeze, and issues of trade war subsidies, Mr. Speaker, there are also producers who have been fortunate enough to be able to diversify and who have had some decent years, Mr. Speaker, in specialty crops. There's a number of farmers, as I said again in, who are producing cattle particularly in finishing and in feeders who are having a better circumstance now that the borders have at least been significantly opened up. And to all of those producers I say . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order please. Once again we've got a situation where we've got two debates going on. I ask . . . Order please. Order please. Order. The member will come to order.

And we've got a situation where we've got two debates going on at once, and the floor belongs to the member for Meadow Lake, and I'd ask the members to respect that.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just so that . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The members will come to order. And members will stay in order. The members will stay in order. I recognize the member for Meadow Lake.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, while I want to present a fair picture of agriculture as well, while many of the producers across our province have been adversely affected by things like weather and the cost-price squeeze and the trade wars and we appreciate the very difficult circumstances that they face because most of those circumstances — well all of those circumstances essentially — are out of their control, at the same time a number of the producers across our province have been fortunate enough to be able to diversify.

Although this year again some of the specialty crops have seen some challenges, but many of the producers over the last few years, as it relates to specialty crops, have seen some decent prices. And again with the borders opening up now on cattle back into the US [United States], some of the producers, particularly those with feeders, are seeing a substantial turnaround.

So I want to conclude with what I think is a fair picture of

what's going on in agriculture. Again I say I speak in favour of the amended motion. I certainly think that the federal government needs to be at the table to a much, much greater degree than they have been in the past, particularly in light of the fact that we see huge surpluses nationally, particularly in light of the fact that we have, here in our province, a small percentage of the national population and a huge percentage — 43 per cent — of the arable land in Canada.

It just is unfair that a federal government would completely abandon any policy, agriculture policy at all, and leave Saskatchewan people — that few people — having to pay for programs that really are of a national responsibility. So again I speak in favour of the amended motion, and I thank you for the opportunity to be able to say a few words. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a privilege to enter into this crucial debate that we are having here that started this afternoon and is continued on into this evening.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that the debate on agricultural crisis is almost becoming an annual event. And it's because, Mr. Speaker, that these crises keep reoccurring year after year after year with the odd year in recent . . . in the last five years, perhaps 2003 in some areas of the province seemed to be a somewhat better year.

But there's an underlying fundamental problem in agriculture that we have, not only in this province but across Canada, Mr. Speaker, and it's that our primary producers are caught in this cost-price squeeze that has been continually squeezing and squeezing and squeezing them until there's absolutely no room for them to manoeuvre or to survive in, Mr. Speaker.

And no one seems to be addressing the underlying, fundamental causes. And perhaps I would say, Mr. Speaker, that particularly on that side of the House, there isn't an understanding of the fundamental causes that lie within this farm crisis, Mr. Speaker.

And I think what we need to do is — in order to understand how we arrived at the situation we find ourselves in today and in recent years — we have to step back and see how we got there, Mr. Speaker, and particularly in this year of our centennial, our 100th anniversary or birthday of our province. And we find ourselves once again in a farm crisis, in an agricultural crisis, particularly in the grain, oilseed, and specialty crop sector of the agricultural industry at the primary production level, Mr. Speaker.

And what we, first of all, what we need to understand, Mr. Speaker, is that the agricultural industry . . . the primary production is only one part of that industry. We have all the other segments of the industry that are part of the ag industry that eventually see the finished product in the stores and in our supermarkets and on the consumers' plate. And if we don't understand that, Mr. Speaker, we really have no way of dealing

with the situation, Mr. Speaker. So what I would like to do is just to step back for a moment and try and understand how we arrived at where we are here in this year of 2005.

Back when our province was first formed in 1905, western Canada and particularly Saskatchewan was opened up and settled to be the primary production of particularly cereal crops — and to a lesser extent beef, but particularly cereal crops and wheat — to supply Eastern Canada, to be a market for the manufactured goods. And then as time progressed, we became the supplier to Europe. And during the Second World War and even in the First World War but more so in the Second World War, we supplied the Allied Forces with food products. And Saskatchewan, we've always had the struggle of dealing with the elements and as we moved on from the . . . we dealt of course with the drought in the Depression of the '30s.

But the major issue and the major thing that producers had to deal with in the early years of our province was weather and the elements. As long as they could produce most years, there was a reasonable price at least — or if there was one or two years of over-production or depressed prices, they didn't last very long, and then we were back to at least somewhat average prices — where the producers could at least make a reasonable profit, raise a family, build our province, help build this very building that we're in through their efforts and taxes they paid and all those things, Mr. Speaker.

Where we started . . . And the '50s seemed to be a fairly stable time in agricultural production and in the ag industry. We had generally enough rain throughout the province so that we had fairly stable production. Prices didn't vary a lot but neither did the cost side of the equation, Mr. Speaker. They didn't vary a lot. And producers and farm families were able to adjust and make a reasonable living and live the lifestyle that they chose to and raise their families, Mr. Speaker. And we saw a vibrant, thriving rural economy that worked in harmony with the urban economy. And you know, the '50s, I can remember as a very young person growing up, you know, we didn't lurch from one crisis to the next, Mr. Speaker.

But as we moved on, things changed on a global scale, Mr. Speaker. The Europeans during the '40s, '50s, and '60s, and even the '70s, were looking after their primary production and those producers on the land to ensure that they would never go hungry again. And, you know, how can one argue with that objective, Mr. Speaker? I mean it was a laudable objective. The people of Europe suffered great hardships during and after the Second World War.

[20:30]

But by about the '70s things started to get out of hand a bit. The farmers of Europe were quite productive and they started ending up with stockpiles that they really didn't know what to do with. But on the other hand, we had the Soviet Union, Mr. Speaker, during the '60s and '70s who through their system, their five-year plans, they would fail.

I could remember, Mr. Speaker, being a delegate at a United Grain Growers annual meeting here in Regina back in the middle to later '70s. And while we were at the convention here in Regina, the Soviet Union came out with their final grain

production. And it was some 30 or 40 million metric tons short of what they had projected earlier.

Well we all knew, all us delegates who were all farmers at that convention, that that would basically clean out our bins because the Soviet Union, they couldn't afford and they wouldn't let their people go hungry, and so they just bought up everything that we had to offer and at reasonably decent prices. And that period of the '70s and into the mid-'80s was a good time, Mr. Speaker, to be in the grain and oilseed sector of agriculture, the primary producers.

And many individual farm families who started their farming careers and their enterprises in the early to mid-'70s were able to do so and probably . . . And they were able to do so, Mr. Speaker, with their own resources, Mr. Speaker, maybe a bit of a helping hand from their father or their brother or their relatives, Mr. Speaker. I know in our own operation we were able to start with minimal investment with a bit of a helping hand from my father, the use of his equipment. And we were able establish an economic unit that was viable and from there expand and grow our operation and raise our family and all those sorts of things.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that back in the early '70s was probably the last time for a long time — I hate to use the word never, but it will be awfully close to never — that a young couple can start with \$1,000 in the bank, Mr. Speaker, and develop an operation that today is valued at the hundreds of thousands of dollars if current . . . unless the market falls completely out of the price, you know, the price of land takes a complete nosedive, Mr. Speaker — because the times were right.

And I remember one of the ag industry leaders who commented on this ability for young farmers to get into the business with minimal investment and grow their operations. And he said, you young fellows, you may . . . I remember being at an ag conference back in the late '70s. And speaking to us young farmers he said, you may feel pretty cocky that you guys have done well and you were really smart, he says. But probably it didn't have as much to do with your ability as the time you were born and the time you decided to enter the industry and where your dad happened to locate his farm.

And he was right, Mr. Speaker. I mean we like to also say that we had some input into it and that we managed well and I think we did, and so on. But, Mr. Speaker, the best managers and the most capable young people today, Mr. Speaker, cannot enter this industry unless they have the massive backing of their parents or another family member or someone who is willing to take them on as a junior partner and see them get established in the industry. It's absolutely impossible, Mr. Speaker, particularly in the grain and oilseed sector, for a young couple to get established without some significant help, Mr. Speaker, because of the massive investment that's required in the reality of today's operations, Mr. Speaker.

So how did we get there, Mr. Speaker? Well as I said, during the '70s when the Russians were buying grains and the European production didn't get out of hand and the Americans were able to use a lot of their production and were able to still actively trade on the world markets, there was some balance.

In the late '70s and early '80s the Europeans were, as I said, were grappling with this growing problem of overproduction and what are we going to do with all these surpluses. They didn't want to deter their producers from producing because you never know in agriculture at the primary production level. Well you could have two of three years of drought and you could see the bins empty, and they didn't want to be in that position. But the producers were using latest technology. They were being paid well, so they adopted all the modern technology, Mr. Speaker. And they produced and they produced, and they were sitting on tonnes of grain, on mountains of butter, and they said, we've got to do something.

So what did they do, Mr. Speaker? They said, we've got to get rid of this stuff. We're just going to fire sale it out at fire sale prices and it doesn't matter what the price is. We've got to get rid of some of this. Well what effect did that have on the export market? And that's the market that Saskatchewan farmers, Alberta, Manitoba, any farmer that's in the grain and oilseed sector in Canada and particularly here in Saskatchewan, deals in.

Eighty per cent of what the average farmer around Regina or up in my constituency, 80 per cent of the crops that they produce goes into the export market. So producers live and die by what happens in the export market, Mr. Speaker. So when the Europeans started selling this massive surplus at fire sale prices, they were grabbing a lot of market share, driving the prices down, but that wasn't still . . . We could live with that because I mean that's the nature of the business.

But what really started causing the Canadian farmers real problems was when on top of the export subsidies that the Europeans were using to get rid of their prices or their supplies at fire sale prices, the Americans were losing farm share and they said, look this can't continue. We're starting to end up with massive surpluses, Mr. Speaker, and so we have to do something.

So they, in their 1985 farm Bill, they brought forward, they incorporated in that farm Bill — and as you may know American farm Bills run for five years — they incorporated the export enhancement incentive. And what that did is they actually, they got into the subsidizing the sale of their surplus commodities. So what we had from 1985 on is we had these two major, these are the two major exporters in the grain and oilseed markets, Mr. Speaker, who were having an economic battle, an economic war to see who could get most of, the greatest part of market share.

And what happened to the other exporters that were in the next tier of volume and importance — Canada, Australia, and Argentina, primarily, Mr. Speaker? Well when the two big guys, the two schoolyard bullies are battling, and if you're in the same ring as they are and you're just a little guy, you're going to get knocked around. And that's what happened, Mr. Speaker. We got beat up. And we have no ability to match and be in the same subsidy ball game as those two major economic forces in our world, Mr. Speaker.

So it started then. We had a series of programs which came into play to help deal with this situation. We had the GRIP program which to this day, if you ask any grain and oilseed producer

across this province and who'll offer a fair and informed opinion, will say that was probably the best farm program that was ever put forward. Sure it had some flaws and it needed to be worked on and refined, Mr. Speaker, but it was addressing the basic problem that farmers cannot . . . and producers need to have their cost of production covered in order to continue on in the operation. It's not rocket science. Any industry, any business, if they can't cover their cost of production, if the revenues don't cover their cost of production, Mr. Speaker, they cannot continue in the business.

So farmers, along with GRIP and with the advances in technology and with diversification . . . I mean we heard nothing but diversification, diversifications and farmers went out and did it. They went into specialty crops. We had a whole pulse crop industry grow up in the late '80s and '90s, Mr. Speaker, that served this province and this country well, added great, added a large number of dollars in foreign trade, Mr. Speaker.

The producers did their part, Mr. Speaker. And governments, both provincial and federal governments, attempted to do their part, Mr. Speaker, in the '80s and '90s.

And then what happened both at a provincial and federal level, we had these huge budget deficits. And that happened in every province, Mr. Speaker, in this country. These people like to say that Saskatchewan was the only province that ended up with a budget deficit in the late '80s and early '90s.

Well the fact is every province in this country and I would venture to say that almost every state in the US and the US government, federal government was in the same situation because that was the way governments operated at that time. They felt that they could budget or deficit finance for a while and that growth would take them out. They'd eventually get out of the problem they were in.

Well we found out, Mr. Speaker, in the middle '90s, that that didn't work. So all levels of government had to make some very difficult decisions and cut back, Mr. Speaker. In the meantime, the producers were doing what they needed to do to remain viable, to adapt, to change the ways they operated. We saw the development of direct seeding and zero till, all those kind of things, Mr. Speaker, that kept the producers competitive on the world stage.

But another thing was happening, Mr. Speaker, in that time frame and that was the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, as I said, Mr. Speaker, in the '70s and early '80s was the major, major, major customer, the biggest customer by far of the Western farmer.

When the Soviet Union disintegrated and restructured itself in a number of countries, Russia and Ukraine and all these other republics, Mr. Speaker, that market was gone. That market was gone. They had no money to buy what we had to sell, Mr. Speaker, and they were able to become self-sufficient in their own grain production, Mr. Speaker. So when you lose a major market, you add high interest rates, Mr. Speaker, in an ever-changing international environment, and then you throw in some weather difficulties, Mr. Speaker, you can understand where the cost-price squeeze was getting tighter and tighter and

tighter, Mr. Speaker.

And as I said when I started, it seems in the last six years it's almost an annual event where we have an emergency debate on the crisis in agriculture. And that is because we're not addressing the fundamentals, Mr. Speaker, that are causing this problem.

I can remember the first time that I rose to speak in this House, Mr. Speaker, was at the end of 1999. I believe it was December '99. We had a special one-week session to deal with the agriculture crisis, Mr. Speaker. And here we are again. Here it's 2005, near the end of 2005, and we're still talking about the same thing. Nothing's changed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, so how . . . Whose fault is it that nothing has changed? Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess we could lay blame wherever we want. We understand on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that it's all the federal government's fault. It's always their fault. It's never this government's fault; it's always the federal government's fault because it's their responsibility. I can remember after that special session in '99 that then Premier Romanow, in January I believe it was, gathered everyone up and went down to Ottawa and we're going to come back with \$1 billion because that's where the bar was set. Back in the '80s Premier Grant Devine, when we were facing our first crisis, picked up the phone and we had \$1 billion come to this province. Just like that, just like that, as the member from Saskatoon said yesterday in answer to question period, Mr. Speaker.

So as I said, so Premier Romanow gathered everyone up and we went down and he said he came back with \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker. Well what he came back with was, I believe it was around \$200 million or somewhere in that neighbourhood of actual cash for all of Canada and the rest was cash advance, spring cash advance on the crops that Saskatchewan farmers were going to seed that spring. So it was nothing more than a loan, Mr. Speaker, but when you added it all up it was \$1 billion.

As one of the constituents said at that time, Mr. Speaker, what he said to me is that basically Romanow and company went down to Ottawa, came back with a few crumbs and he threw the crumbs out. We picked them up and we put in another crop. And what we did at that time, Mr. Speaker, and what farmers have done every spring in the last 10 years or more is we have a megaproject every spring of something in the neighbourhood of 5 to \$6 billion, and it's called spring seeding, Mr. Speaker. That's the value of the cash inputs of seed, fertilizer, seed treatment, fuel, machinery repairs. You add it all up and there's close to 5 to \$6 billion invested every spring that's put into the ground in hopes that the growing conditions will be right, that prices haven't declined too much and hopefully increased, and that perhaps will reach \$7 billion, Mr. Speaker. That's what happens every spring, Mr. Speaker.

[20:45]

So as I said . . . and then we've had these recurring crises it seems almost every other year. If it isn't weather related, it's price related, and many times it's both of those elements. And then in recent years we've also seen the rapid increase of the

cost of production, Mr. Speaker, to the point now that we've reached here this fall, Madam Deputy Speaker, where we've had a harvest across this province, a bountiful harvest. I know there's areas of the province that had excessive rain and had some great difficulties in completing their harvest, but by and large if you take a drive across this province you will see piles and pile after pile of grain on the ground. And in the past, Madam Deputy Speaker, that was a good thing.

This fall on our own farm we've had the biggest piles of grain on the ground that we've ever had. And in the past when we had piles of grain on the ground, that was a good thing because we had a good year. We had good production. And even though the price of the commodities may have dropped a bit, the total income would still be good because you had many more bushels or tonnes, if you want to use the metric term, to sell.

Well this year that in fact is not the case, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have the piles of grain on the ground, but we have commodity prices — and every commodity price again referring to the grain and oilseed and specialty crop sector — that are either at or are at historic lows. We have canola prices that are at 25-year lows in terms of 2005 dollars. Now if we use constant dollars, they would be at historic lows, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So if you can go out into rural Saskatchewan, there is no joy out there. There should be enthusiasm. There should be activity because in the past when we had these piles of grain on the ground, farmers knew and producers knew that they would have good income. They could look at replacing a piece of equipment, adding another building on the farm, whether it be grain storage or livestock facilities, or perhaps upgrading their house, replacing vehicles. There was economic activity.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, in large parts of this province there is doom and gloom. In fact it's got to the point where now we're starting to see a bit of humour in the coffee shops in rural Saskatchewan because the guys are saying . . . Well the people, not only the men but the women and the young people, the few young people that are involved in the industry are saying, I mean it's so bad that — and nobody's listening — either we go home and hide in the closet or else we just make light of it and carry on. And that's what many people are doing. But we know that the stress level is at unprecedented levels, Madam Deputy Speaker, in rural Saskatchewan and amongst the farm families.

I have had numerous producers come to me and say . . . they ask the question, do they want us? And what they're saying by asking that question is, are they of any value any longer in this economy? And what some of the . . . and those people that are asking that question are saying, are following it up with a comment saying if they don't want us, why don't they just tell us and we'll quit and go away. And that, there's a lot of reality in those comments, Madam Deputy Speaker.

No one has said to that segment of the industry, to those primary producers who without their efforts and their production nothing else in the ag sector would happen . . . There'd be no value added. There'd be no processing. There'd be no transportation. Nothing else would matter, actually would matter because if you don't have that primary production to put into the system, nothing else happens.

To illustrate that point, in the fall of 2002 when we had a very late start to our harvest . . . our youngest son works with a small grain company in Winnipeg. And he was home in September for the weekend and I asked him, I said Mark, I said, what's the scuttlebutt in the grain industry in Winnipeg? And you know his reply was, Mr. Speaker? His reply was, everybody is just waiting for you guys to get out and start harvesting.

And you know why? Because once farmers start harvesting the production is there, it's put into the system and everything else happens. And everybody seems to be making some money. Some are making a lot of money. Some are making a bit of money. But everybody seems to be prospering except that individual or that segment of the industry that initiates all that activity, all the way through the processing and transportation and value added and so on and so on and so on, Mr. Speaker.

So how did we arrive here today, and why are we here, and why isn't anything being done? Because as I said, nobody is addressing the fundamental realities of today's primary production. And I'll tell you what the realities that I see, Mr. Speaker, are.

Number one, the Europeans and the Americans are never ever going to quit subsidizing their primary producers, their farmers. They may change the way they pay the dollars to those people. They may make some subtle changes and call them reductions, but at the end of the day the total dollars are going to be there in one form or another. And that point was never driven home to me so clearly as this summer when we were so successful . . . Mr. Speaker, and you need to be congratulated in hosting the MLC [Midwestern Legislative Conference].

I got up early on the Sunday morning, the first day of the MLC to drive in to sit on the ag committee meeting of the MLC. I saw the agenda, and I thought I would like to sit in on that meeting. I'd had an extremely busy weekend with centennial activities. I think there was four or five in my communities that I attended various activities. And when the alarm rang at 6 o'clock in the morning, Mr. Speaker, I really didn't want to get up and drive in to Regina, shower and drive in to Regina to attend this meeting. But when I got here and when the meeting was over at 1 o'clock, I was extremely thankful and happy that I did because what happened at that meeting, Mr. Speaker.

The agenda and why I was interested in coming was, was that the first speaker on the agenda was an academic from Michigan State University who was talking about what was happening in the development of the US 2007 farm Bill. The last farm Bill that was signed by the president was 2002, and that's the farm Bill that for the first time incorporated specialty crops into that farm Bill. In other words, American farmers were going to be subsidized to produce things like lentils and peas and chick peas and all those specialty crops that we as Saskatchewan producers were producing very successfully, putting into the world market, and those were the crops by and large that were carrying the farms.

So in 2002 the US government incorporated those specialty crops, and we are now seeing the effect of that. We are seeing lentils and peas being brought into Canada, being dumped at fire-sale prices, because the American producer really doesn't care what he gets out of the marketplace. Under the farm

program, under the farm Bill, they are guaranteed a price. And there is this component of the farm Bill called a loan deficiency payment, and so what ever the marketplace doesn't give them, the loan deficiency portion of the farm Bill makes up. So they basically got a guaranteed price. And so they don't care what they sell it at. If they need to get rid of it, they blow it out, and they get \$2 a bushel and the guarantee is \$5 a bushel. The program makes it up.

So as I said, this academic from Michigan State University was explaining what factors are playing out in the development and creation of the 2007 farm Bill. And so they had an excellent presentation. And I know the Minister of Agriculture and his deputy minister were there, and I'm sure they found it as interesting as I did, Mr. Speaker. I did have an occasion to talk to Mr. Matthies, someone who I have a fair bit of respect for and I was happy to see he was there recording and taking this session in.

And this individual went on to say, you know, the American federal government is in a massive deficit position through a number of their policies, foreign policies, the Iraq war and so on. There's other pressures on the budget, and the actual part of the US federal budget where legislatures actually can make some decisions on is fairly small in comparison to the whole total federal budget because a lot of it is statutory and the money has to be spent regardless.

So that put the farm Bill and the value of the farm Bill which was the 2002 farm Bill . . . the estimated value of that was \$190 billion over five years. That put the 2007 farm Bill . . . in context that 190 or \$200 billion, as part of the overall US budget, isn't a lot of money. But when a good chunk of it is statutory and they only have so many areas that they can manoeuvre, it becomes extremely important. So the individual went through and laid out all these scenarios and I was fairly hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that we could see some significant changes in the 2007 farm Bill that would be beneficial to Canadian producers, Australian producers, and so on — in other words that the Americans would lower the amount of subsidy that they would be paying to their producers and thereby would have the effect of lowering their production, and of course we'd see the increase in commodity prices.

The individual, the speaker was coming to the end of his presentation, and he summed it up this way. He says, well, he says, you know, it looks like we may see some significant changes, he says. But he says, you know what the bottom line is going to be? His best guess was there isn't going to be any changes or very minimal changes from the 2002 farm Bill. And it caught at least myself and a number of the American attendees at MLC a bit by surprise because he laid out such a good case and in such detail as to why we would think that there could be changes. He said, you must remember that the farm Bill is not written by the administration. It's written in Congress. And then he puts, the individual, the speaker put a graph up on the screen. And what it showed was in every year when the House was very close between the Democrats and the Republicans that Congress has its way with the administration when it comes to the farm Bill.

And even though the Republicans control both Houses, the margin by which they control both Houses in the US is very

small. And the farm lobby is very powerful in the US, and that's why he said, he says, you can just forget everything I told for the last 45 minutes. He said nothing is going to happen, Mr. Speaker.

And then I had an opportunity over the next two or three days, as the MLC went on, to speak to a number of the state legislators. And most of them or many of them I would say, Mr. Speaker, were involved in agriculture and were primary producers such as myself. And we talked about various policies and that sort of stuff.

And what I came to realize, Mr. Speaker, is that asking the American producers to give up their farm Bill and their subsidies would be like asking Canadians to give up medicare — it isn't going to happen. So we'd better realize that, Mr. Speaker. So that's the first reality. And the same applies to the Europeans. It's not going to happen. They're going to continue to subsidize.

The second reality, Mr. Speaker, is that the federal government, whether they want to or not, will not or whether want or whether they're able to — and that is something we can debate — but they will not get into the same ball game and subsidize to the same level as what the Americans and Europeans are. So we'd better realize that fact.

And the third reality, Mr. Speaker, is that climate change is for real. And why I say that, Mr. Speaker, is that we've seen a number of weather events which scientists are telling us that in the future we'll see more weather extremes. We will see extremely wet periods of time. We'll see extremely dry periods of time. We're going to see more weather extremes. So we need to recognize that.

And why we need to recognize it is if we are going to protect our primary producers against those weather extremes, we need to have a crop insurance program or production insurance program that first of all provides real and workable coverage at an affordable price, Mr. Speaker. So we need to recognize those realities.

[21:00]

So if we recognize that the Europeans and the Americans are never going to quit subsidizing, when someone says well our problems need to be solved at the WTO [World Trade Organization], we need to take those people to task. I'm not saying that we need to diminish our efforts at the WTO and the world stage — absolutely not — but don't hold your breath waiting for any meaningful changes because it isn't going to happen, Mr. Speaker.

So now that we recognize those things, Mr. Speaker, where do we go from here? Well the answer on that side of the House is it's the federal government's responsibility. We have no responsibility. It's their fault.

We saw that back in 1999 when then minister of Agriculture, Eric Upshall, said, you know, we've got a problem. It's export subsidies and it's a federal program. You guys handle it. I have no ideas. I have no money. Even though he went to Ottawa and bragged about the way Saskatchewan, the NDP Government of

Saskatchewan was able to balance their budget, he wasn't prepared to put one cent on the table and said it was a federal responsibility. Well what did that get us? That got us AIDA [agricultural income disaster assistance].

AIDA was a program, Mr. Speaker, that was designed for the dairy and hog producers of central Canada. And we got that and it was supposed to apply to Western agriculture. Well it didn't work. It doesn't work. It didn't have a fit. But that's all there was.

And why was that the only thing we ended up with? Is because those people on that side of the House had no ideas, had no suggestions, weren't prepared to put any money on the table and said, feds, it's your problem but you fix it and make it work here in Saskatchewan.

Well what kind of reception . . . How do you think that went over in Ottawa? I don't think it went over very well. And we know how it went over. We got a program that was designed for the dairy people and the hog producers and try and make it fit to the grain producers.

Then the next, the cousin of AIDA was CFIP [Canadian farm income program]. It was basically the same program with some minor adjustments. And again it didn't work very well. And on top of it, to add insult to injury, the one year when it did sort of work for Saskatchewan farmers was in 2002 and what did those people over there do? They didn't put their share of the money in. Those people, that government owes the producers of this province millions of dollars in program payments that they didn't put their money into, Mr. Speaker.

And they talk about the unfairness of the 60/40 split. And we've said, I've said in this House on a number of occasions and many of my colleagues said the same, that they agree the 60/40 split isn't fair. But if you don't offer any viable alternatives, viable programs, something that's designed and developed to work here in Saskatchewan, what do you expect, Mr. Speaker? If you go to Ottawa and continually blame them and badger them without offering a viable alternative, you pretty soon will have a deaf ear turned to you, and that is what has happened, Mr. Speaker.

So now we've ended up with CAIS which that Minister of Agriculture, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle, seems to tell the producers of this province that this is the be-all and the end-all or it's a program that's going to solve your problems. Well CAIS is a second cousin of CFIP — which is the first cousin of AIDA — and AIDA and CFIP never worked. How does he expect CAIS to work?

I'll tell you the reality of CAIS, Mr. Speaker. I'm a primary producer. One of our sons farms with us. We have a family farm corporation. The corporation has its fiscal year which coincides with the grain calendar, which is August 1 to July 31. CAIS program, they have their fiscal year January 1 to Dec 31. That program is designed for the way agriculture and grain and oil, the grain and oilseed sector of agriculture was set up back in the '50s and '60s, where you had a mother and a father and a family and they had this small operation. And they worked on a calendar year and they didn't really have any other businesses or any other business enterprises. And that piece may have

worked for that scenario.

Well that's not reality any more. We have partnerships. We have family farm corporations who have different calendar years. By the time we're done with our applications and processing of our applications, we generally end up with a file that's about an inch to 2 inches thick of faxed documents, back and forth, because the program doesn't fit. There's situations that the people who are trying to administer the program run up against every year that there are no regulations that cover it. They're making that up in many cases as they go along.

And both ministers of Agriculture that we have here in the House today, the former minister, the member from Yorkton, and the current Minister of Agriculture, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle, keep saying that CAIS is the program that's working for you.

Well I'll tell you how it's working for you. When a producer prepares their supplementary information . . . And it keeps saying that it's bankable, Mr. Speaker, bankable, that producers can sit down and figure out if they qualify for any support under this program and they can take it to their bank, and the bankers will accept that and you can borrow operating money on those projections. Well nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. This program is anything but bankable.

When you complete the information that's required and you go the post office and you drop it into the mail slot, it's like dropping that envelope into a dark hole. You don't know whether you'll ever see it again, whether you'll ever hear anything about it. You have no idea whether your farm operation is anywhere near qualifying for any support, and if so, how much. Like I said, it's like dropping that envelope into a dark hole. And if you're lucky, in two or three months time you may get some sort of an answer back.

And half the time, unless you're a farm management consultant and an accountant and an agricultural producer — all of those three things in one — you won't understand the information that's returned to you, Mr. Speaker. So even when the information is returned to you, you have no idea whether that program is actually, and the calculations that were done actually apply and are correct and those sorts of things, Mr. Speaker. So farmers are frustrated. They're incurring large costs, Mr. Speaker, and the program isn't working.

We need to have a fundamental shift in agricultural policy, Mr. Speaker. Agriculture and primary production — grain and oilseed sector — are at a crossroads. We're at one of those historic times in the industry, Mr. Speaker. It's been about 100 years since that industry has been in operation. And we're at a stage where, as many participants at the farm income symposium that was sponsored by the agricultural producers of Saskatchewan here in early November, many of the guest speakers and participants there, Mr. Speaker, asked the fundamental question: is the production of grain and oilseeds for export a viable industry any longer? And that's where we are. We're at that pivotal point, Mr. Speaker. And I don't know if anybody over there even recognizes that we're at that pivotal point. And if they do, I don't think they have any ideas as to where do we go from here, Mr. Speaker.

Well there are ideas out there. And you would think, Mr. Speaker, with Saskatchewan having 47 per cent of the arable acres in Canada right here in this province, Mr. Speaker, that at the very least this province could be at the forefront and show leadership in the development of a farm policy, because we don't have a farm policy, Mr. Speaker. That was driven home to me at that meeting back in July at the MLC, because the second speaker, Mr. Speaker, on the agenda was a Dr. Andy Schmitz. Dr. Andy Schmitz is a Saskatchewan person who took either his master's or his Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] at the University of Saskatchewan; owns, has an interest in a farm in Moose Jaw. He's currently at the University of Florida. He was the second speaker on the agenda and he was supposed to talk about Canadian farm policy. And then we were going to do a comparison between US farm policy and Canadian farm policy.

And I knew who Dr. Schmitz was. I read many of the articles he's written and followed what he had to say in the media. But I've never really heard him speak and I was looking forward to hearing what he had to speak. And he was allocated at least, I believe, a half-hour or more on the agenda to make his presentation.

He spoke for two minutes, Mr. Speaker, and you know what he said? He stood up and he said, you know what the reality of Canadian agriculture policy is? The reality is we don't have any. We've got programs that respond to crisis. And he was absolutely dead right.

There is a total vacuum in developing a farm policy, not only in this province but in this country, Mr. Speaker. And you would think with Saskatchewan having 47 per cent of the arable land in Canada that at very least this government who's been in power for what now, some 14 years in a row, who killed the last semblance of farm policy and farm programs that we ever had in the second year of their term, and that being GRIP, and promised the producers of this province faithfully that they would develop a new farm policy, what have they developed? Absolutely zero, Mr. Speaker.

And that doesn't cost money to develop a policy and be a leader and facilitate discussions across this country, Mr. Speaker. All it requires is leadership, vision, and a willing to do it. And I don't see any of that over there, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, in the absence of any leadership from this government, Mr. Speaker, what is happening out there at the primary production level, Mr. Speaker, is a number of farm groups and individuals and groups of producers and participants in the agricultural industry, they are looking at where do we go from here. And they're looking at and they're asking the question, is it realistic to assume that Saskatchewan will continue to export, produce and export large quantities of grain, oilseeds, and pulse crops and put them on to the export market? And they're saying, is that viable in the future? And I don't have the answer to that, Mr. Speaker.

But if we look at what we know, if we look backwards and if we look forward as far as we can and use the best analysis that we have available to us, there are some serious, serious problems with us continuing to be major exporters. And if that is the case that it's no longer viable to export the types of quantities of grains and oilseeds and specialty crops that we've

done in the past.

So what do we do then? Do we seed two-thirds of the farm land down to grass and develop a bunch of golf courses? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. There are farm leaders and farm . . . and academics. And people who have vision and foresight are looking at what services and what functions do farmer producers provide to society besides producing food products.

And if society isn't willing to pay the producers a reasonable price so that they can make a reasonable living, then maybe we need to look at using the production for other areas. And there are growing uses, Mr. Speaker, for the production that Saskatchewan farmers are producing. The areas of food, we'll always produce for food, Mr. Speaker. It may not be in the quantities, anywhere near the quantities of wheat and barley and canola and those sorts of things, but we'll always produce for food, Mr. Speaker.

But also there's fibre. There's a growing requirement for fibre and a renewable, sustainable source of fibre.

But the big one, I think, Mr. Speaker, is energy. Energy. Renewable energy. Environmentally friendly energy.

And what did we see from this government, Mr. Speaker? We saw them — what was it, two or three or four years ago? — they were going to develop an ethanol industry in this province. In fact, they bused out a group of schoolchildren out to Belle Plaine. They put up a tent. They hired a couple of backhoes. They partnered with a company from the US that had absolutely no expertise or history in ethanol, Broe industries, and they said, we're going to build four ethanol plants around the province that would produce 80 million litres of ethanol annually.

Now think of that. Think of that for a moment, Mr. Speaker. If you were serious about this, Mr. Speaker, why would you partner with a company that has absolutely no expertise, no experience in ethanol production, and say we're going to partner with these people? And they're going to secure some money from private investors and we're going to build these plants and we're going to have an ethanol industry up and running that's going to buy grain, Mr. Speaker, from our producers and turn it into ethanol and we'll have an environmentally friendly source of gas, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know for sure. I don't know for sure what the reasons were. But I think one day the people of this province will know what the reasons are when those members on that side of the House are sitting on this side of the House and the truth will be known, Mr. Speaker. But that's a whole other issue that we've talked about in this House before.

[21:15]

But what was the outcome of those actions? Well the outcome was that there were . . . Prior to this government's announcement of their grandiose ethanol plan, there was ongoing, active discussions all across the province with legitimate ethanol producers and community groups and private interests, and they were working their way through the business plans and all those sorts of things to develop ethanol plants in

this province.

When the government, this NDP government, made their announcement on ethanol, you know what the effect was? It was like throwing a pail of cold water on all those discussions. Those companies couldn't get out of this province fast enough because they said if government is getting involved in this industry, we don't want anything to do with it.

And what have we seen since then? We finally are seeing some movement when the federal government came out with a plan that was workable and sensible and we are finally . . . Maybe by 2006 we may see some new production in the ethanol industry. In the meantime we wasted five years.

In 2002 when we had . . . there was some quality problems in 2002. There was major quality problems with the crop in 2004. If this government would have kept out of that ethanol industry and just done nothing, absolutely nothing, we probably would have had one or two ethanol plants up and running which would have helped utilize some of those low-quality grains, Mr. Speaker. So instead of helping, they were hindering, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, energy is one area where we can see this grain and oilseed sector moving. But we're missing, we've missed, or we may have missed the opportunities on even, in my mind, an even bigger economic opportunity.

I know if the member from Athabasca wants to get into the debate, I'll be done in a few minutes, and he'll have an opportunity then we can hear his expertise in agriculture and his vision and his foresight. But I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if he was just quiet he might learn something, Mr. Speaker.

There's a tremendous opportunity out there, Mr. Speaker, and we're not, we're not latching on to it. We're not even in the ballpark as far as getting involved in this industry, and that is biodiesel. Biodiesel, Mr. Speaker, is an industry that will use the oil from our canola crops and blend that with diesel. In fact you can use canola oil if it's processed properly. You can run a diesel engine on it. But the reality is that if we used 5 or 10 per cent canola oil in diesel, hence biodiesel, it would mean — I think the figures are — 5 per cent across Canada would probably use up all the canola crop in Saskatchewan for sure and probably western Canada. I mean, it is huge. It is a green source of fuel, and it's a renewable source of fuel.

And you know, there was a recent announcement by Archer Daniels Midland, a major processor in agricultural projects. They're a major shareholder in Agricore United. They're putting up a biodiesel plant, Mr. Speaker, 190 million litre biodiesel plant. And you know, in their news release, Mr. Speaker, they said in their news release that they're going to use Canadian canola as the feed stock for that plant, and they've got a major investment here in Canada. As I said, they're a major shareholder of Agricore United.

Do you know where they're building it, Mr. Speaker? A few miles south of the American border at Velva, North Dakota — at Velva, North Dakota. And they had said in their news release that they're going to use Canadian canola as their feed stock.

Why aren't we doing those sorts of things? That's where we need some vision and leadership from the provincial government in co-operation with the federal government. I would ask the question, has biodiesel and a real plan for biodiesel, has it been taken to Ottawa, and have our cabinet ministers that are responsible for that area, have they sat down with their federal counterparts and say how could we develop that? I would say not. If there has been, I would like to see some evidence of that, Mr. Speaker. I have heard absolutely nothing. I've talked to industry people in the industry. They know of no such discussions, Mr. Speaker. Those are the types of things that we need to look at.

Another area, Mr. Speaker, that is being talked about is the concept of alternate land use services, ALUS [alternative land use services] for short. And what that is, Mr. Speaker, is it is looking at those ecological goods and services that farmers are providing to society, and they're providing them absolutely free of charge and taking up all the costs associated with providing them.

We're talking about things like providing the wildlife habitat, providing the repairing areas in the watersheds so that the citizens of this province can have good quality drinking water. That just doesn't happen, Mr. Speaker. We need to have a clean source of water for our water treatment plants, Mr. Speaker. And those are the things that may be the future.

Basically the concept is this, is that there are other income streams available to the farm other than being paid for the food they're producing, Mr. Speaker. But we need government policy to lead that discussion. It's happening in the US, Mr. Speaker.

If you talk to Lionel La Belle, who is without a doubt the expert in the ethanol industry in this province and I would suggest all across Western Canada, he will tell you that the US, that those ethanol plants that are being built and are operating in the US just didn't happen. They happened because of good government policy. The same thing is happening in the biodiesel industry. Do we see any of that happening in this province and in fact in this country? No. Why? Because no one is taking a leadership role.

At the very least, a province that has 47 per cent of the arable acres should be at least leading the discussion and putting ideas forward. Do we see any of that happening, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan? No. Why? Because there is no willingness or desire to do that. I don't know whether there's the ability or confidence.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House would be more than happy to work with those people on that side of the House in the interim to get something happening. But we have nothing happening, Mr. Speaker.

And the bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that the Canadian public, the taxpayers of this province — which farmers are — they pay huge amount of taxes. Many of them pay income tax. They pay tens of millions of dollars in other forms of taxes whether it be through the royalty tax that's incorporated in the cost of diesel fuel and gasoline, the royalty taxes on natural gas that goes into the making of nitrogen fertilizer, the petroleum products that

are used in crop protection products, Mr. Speaker. An average farm in Saskatchewan, even if they didn't pay one cent in income tax, would pay tens of thousands of dollars in taxes to this government, Mr. Speaker.

And at the very least they could expect that this government would at least have some ideas and at least be willing to lead the discussion in farm policy. But none of that is happening, Mr. Speaker. And that is why . . . And in the meantime we see the cost of inputs rising, the cost of commodities dropping to historic levels, and farmers are in the worst price squeeze that they've ever seen themselves in, Mr. Speaker.

And nothing is being done, and that's why there is depression out there. That's why there is disillusionment out there. That's why we don't see people out on the steps of this legislature like we did in 1999 because the fight is out of the producers, Mr. Speaker. And as that individual, that constituent of mine said: if they don't want us, why don't they just tell us, and we'll wind up our operations and we'll leave, Mr. Speaker.

So I would call on this government to take a leadership role and quit blaming Ottawa. When a provincial government can't, as the former minister of Agriculture said many times in this House and the current Minister of Agriculture, they can't match the treasuries of the United States and Europe, absolutely not. But they can help on the cost side, Mr. Speaker, of the income equation.

They can provide a reasonable crop insurance program. They can take the high burden of education tax off the property. That's an issue, Mr. Speaker, that needs to be addressed in times of surplus revenues, Mr. Speaker, because it is a large ticket item. And as in a family, you don't go and replace your vehicle or make major repairs to your vehicle if you haven't got any money. You do that when you have surplus money. And that's the situation that this government finds itself in. Are they willing to do that? No, Mr. Speaker.

We heard they can't fix the property tax issue because there isn't an equalization formula and equalization payments. Now they can't do anything over and above what they've committed to — basically the two programs of CAIS and crop insurance — because we haven't got an energy accord.

Yet in the meantime they have hundreds of millions of unexpected . . . millions of dollars of unexpected revenue, Mr. Speaker. It's not that they can't. They don't want to, Mr. Speaker. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I certainly will not be supporting the amendment, Mr. Speaker, but I will be supporting the original motion.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, colleagues, for this. Mr. Speaker, I plan to speak fairly short tonight. I have a few things I want to say around this and perhaps another matter.

First I want to start by reminding colleagues on both side of the House that I have some pretty deep farm roots. My grandmother represented the constituency of Maple Creek. My father grew

up on the farm at Lemsford where we spent many, I spent many, most of my summer growing up on the farm there. Incidentally to get to the farm at Lemsford as I was growing up, I had to leave the farm at Beechy that was ours, but to be with my family, my siblings. This was the gift that my grandparents gave to us.

Mr. Speaker, there are rural roots everywhere in this Assembly. And I'm not going to try and out rural root anybody. But let us, let us acknowledge that all of us have got families farming in Saskatchewan. In my case I have family farming in literally every corner of this province. I have a daughter who her and her husband managed to pull a crop off this year. They've been in the dried-out part of the province, west of Kindersley. And this was the first year they were able to get a crop. Until this year, the cost-price squeeze didn't mean a thing. It was just cost. There was no squeeze there at all. It was just cost. They paid for diesel fuel. They paid for machinery. They paid for seed. They paid for . . . and they did what it took to keep their farm going.

And they were grateful because crop insurance actually paid the hard bills . . . crop insurance that many of us are proud to offer in Saskatchewan. I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that crop insurance has been improved a number of times over the years, and I defy anyone to tell me that crop insurance has ever been improved in any significant way by anyone other than New Democrats. I defy that. We're proud of crop insurance.

We're proud of the fact that my constituents in Regina Coronation Park and constituents of all of us pay a third of the premium of crop insurance. It's funded a third by taxpayers provincially, a third federally, and a third by farmers. I haven't got the . . . I'm very close when I say a third, a third, a third. I'm within about 2 per cent variance. And we're proud to do that for our farmers. I'm proud to do it for my daughter and son-in-law and my cousins. I was proud to do it for my uncles when they were farming. Their time on the farm has passed. And family picked up the torch, so to speak, and continue the fine tradition.

I think of Uncle Jim's farm east of Carrot River at Papikwan. He literally, literally cut the bush initially with an axe by hand, carved out one of the most beautiful farms that his, two of them, sons and daughters-in-law now farm out in the Smokey Burn area about 18, 20 miles east of Carrot River. And it is a gorgeous farm. And I have many, many happy memories of many trips to Carrot River.

And I want to acknowledge that farming is different in each part of the province. I talked about Carrot River, where chemical and fertilizer costs are phenomenal, not to mention seed and machinery and the fuel and transportation and all of the various challenges. The insect challenges that they have that necessitates spraying more — by far more — than in many other parts of the province. But the rewards are also usually greater there, Mr. Speaker — not always, but usually greater. You better not be asleep at the switch, although I'm quick to say you better not be asleep at the switch anywhere.

[21:30]

I want to just respond to one thing that the hon. member for Lumsden was . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Last

Mountain-Touchwood, thank you, had said in his speech. And he talked about this government, New Democrats, having done away with the last vestige of an agriculture program. And, Mr. Speaker, he was talking about GRIP, the gross revenue insurance program that I stood and voted away, and colleagues that were in the legislature in 1992 stood and voted away.

And I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't because any of my constituents had farmed the GRIP program and, in fact, I'll say that a fair number of farmers didn't. But too many farmers did farm the program instead of farming the land. And this is a historic fact and farmers who may read this or may hear about this debate, if they care to, they know that I speak the truth. They know this. They may themselves not have been farming the program but they have neighbours and others in the community that did.

And I want to remind members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that it was not us that bankrupted Saskatchewan. It was not New Democrats that left the treasury so broke that we were not sure if we could meet payroll. And the revisionism that comes from across the side, Mr. Speaker, is unbelievable, absolutely unbelievable. Unbelievable.

Mr. Speaker, we had to send not only the Minister of Finance but the Premier to New York in the middle of the night, Sunday night, so that we could just push a borrowing just enough so we could continue to meet payroll. That's the legacy that the Conservatives . . . that's the Conservative legacy. That's what they left us and then they have the audacity to say, how dare you do away with GRIP? Well how dare you do away with the treasury and leave us where we couldn't even borrow enough money to meet payroll, much less fund a GRIP program? How dare you? How dare you.

The Speaker: — I ask the member to direct all of his remarks to the Speaker, and through the Speaker, and we're going to continue with the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for that.

And what do we hear? We have today a debate, Mr. Speaker. We have a debate. We have a debate here about condemning the federal government for completely ignoring the current agriculture crisis. And the resolution goes on. And it comes to criticize the provincial government for our lack of action in getting the federal government to recognize agriculture as their problem.

Well, Mr. Speaker, here we are on the brink — on the very brink — of a federal election. We're staring it right in the face. The brink of a federal election in Saskatchewan. Let me remind the Conservatives opposite, we have 13 Conservative MPs [Member of Parliament] and one Liberal — 13 Conservative MPs in Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, what is the job? What do we send Members of Parliament to Ottawa for? If ever I heard an argument to not ever elect a Conservative MP to Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, this debate absolutely epitomizes that very thing. Why would we send a Tory to Ottawa?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — And I watch the news whenever I can. What do I

see and what do I get in my mailbox from occasion? I get from my federal MP, I get a nice little questionnaire about some issue that they've managed to make so muddy and confusing it's almost impossible to know. Agriculture's seldom mentioned. This is what I get from Conservative MPs. I have never heard or seen a better campaign debate for everybody but Conservatives.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I grew up and I had relatives — not surprisingly — who said, you know, Conservative times are tough times. Well you bet they are. And I don't know why we would ever, ever dream of voting Conservative. It just makes no sense.

Mr. Speaker, this motion, I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, the motion misses the boat. The opposition motion misses the boat. It's fair enough that they should say that Ottawa has a responsibility and an obligation to agriculture. It's constitutionally so.

And it makes no sense at all that we should in Saskatchewan, on one hand, if you believe what the opposition says, we're taxing farmers. Okay. So we put farmers' money in here, into the treasury pocket. Then we take it out of the treasury pocket and give it to who? Farmers.

Well we'd love to do that but it doesn't seem to be a great deal of logic. Maybe some organic logic but it's all organic because it makes no sense at all that you would fund somebody out of their own pocket. And that's what the opposition would have us do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just say again, I want to say again that my grandmother sat in this Chamber. My grandmother represented Maple Creek and she did it to the best of her considerable ability. My grandmother's lineage is something that this member could not be prouder of. I can never, I can never, Mr. Speaker, live up to my grandmother's strength of person. She had many strengths. I simply do the very best I can and I pray that it's good enough for the constituents of Regina Coronation Park. I pray it's good enough for the people of Saskatchewan. I pray it's good enough for the government and my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, while I talk of lineage I want to say that I left my house earlier this evening to be here to attend to this important issue. We're in the process of celebrating my mother's life. Tomorrow is her funeral. I left my father and my brothers, most of them, and their wives and family at our place this evening so that I could be here to talk about what is a very important issue. I always honour the ability to come here. I honour the ability to speak my mind.

I thank members for their expressions of support to my family, particularly myself, in this moment of considerable trouble. It's not every day one gets to celebrate one's mother's life and passing.

But I know, I know with every fibre of my being that not only my mother, my father, my family, my grandmother who sat in this very legislature would say, if ever I heard an argument not to elect a single Conservative federally, this debate absolutely epitomizes it.

Mr. Speaker, I take my leave. I thank you for the opportunity to speak in this debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say that it's a pleasure to join in the debate, but of course any time you have an emergency debate that means there's some major problems.

And in agriculture there are some major problems and we've heard a lot of people speak on it from various angles, from the government's side of the benches and from the opposition's side of the benches. And there have been a lot of good arguments made both ways. Of course when you hear from the government they're talking certainly about it's everybody else's fault. From this side of the Chamber we're certainly talking about solutions and what this government could do to control its destiny.

I would like to first of all start by saying my condolences to the member opposite that just spoke from Regina Coronation. My condolences for him and the issues that they'll be facing tomorrow and the passing of his mother. And certainly condolences from this side of the House.

But I would say one thing about him standing here and speaking in this House for about eight minutes. He ensured a Sask Party win in every rural seat in this province and I would say a Conservative MP win federally in every riding in this province.

He stood here for the first part of his speech and absolutely accused farmers of fraud, of defrauding the GRIP program. And that's what he stood here and had to say. He went on to say about how . . . And we heard it from the other side many times — well we keep getting elected as NDP; are you blaming the voters? Are you saying the voters don't know? And that's what the Deputy Premier said.

Well what did the member just talk about? He said he can't believe that 13 out of 14 MPs were voted in as Conservative. In other words, the voters in all those constituencies were wrong, but if they happen to vote NDP, then they're all right. Is that what they're saying on that side of the bench? I think it is.

It's absolutely amazing in eight minutes that he could alienate as many voters as he did. And I would think the next time if he's under as much stress and personal issues as what he is under, he would be better to sit in his place and not stand and enter into the debate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, many times when I first started farming back in 1979 or 1980, when I first started renting farm land and farming our family farm, there were many years especially at the start when it seemed overwhelming. There was more work to be done than a person had time for. There were more decisions to make than perhaps what I had the experience to make. It was overwhelming for the first number of years.

And some of the best advice I got when I first started farming,

from many of the farmers in the area, when they'd see you in the local co-op or in the grain elevator and you'd be kind of stressed out because you couldn't do all the things that you felt you needed to do to run a proper farm, and they gave me just some advice that I really think would go a long ways for this government. I think it applies directly to where this government is today.

Because what those senior, what those veteran farmers, what those experienced farmers were saying is, control the things you can control and don't let the rest bother you. Control the things you can control. Control what you put in the ground. Make sure you've got proper germination. Control the fertilizer that you are putting in the ground. Know what prices are and the purchasing of the fertilizer. Control the fuel. Control the controllables, Mr. Speaker.

You can't control the weather. You know we'd get caught where we'd have half a crop in the field and it would start raining in the spring. And so many times I said the hardest work I ever did was not being able to do the work. You'd sit at home and you'd say geez, I'd love to get out and do that last 160 of wheat before I change over to flax. But you couldn't because it kept raining and raining and you'd sit there and the anxiety and the pressure and the stress would be on you. Until somebody said, control the things you can control and don't worry about the rest. I couldn't control the weather. I couldn't control whether I could finish that last quarter of wheat.

Mr. Speaker, if there is ever advice that I could give this government, control the things you can control. You can stand there and point at Ottawa all night long and all afternoon long and that's all we've heard from that side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker.

We've never heard one thing, one person address what they can control. And what you can control are a number of things that you hear every day. I talked about it briefly last night, but the minister of municipal affairs from North Battleford went to SARM and he heard from the delegates. The one thing that he could control, the property tax, the educational portion of property tax, is what this government can control.

Now let's quit blaming everybody else and control what you can control. Address the issue around property tax. Farmers are talking about it around the province. Well the minister from North Battleford says, that's a good one. You're darn right it's a good one, because you haven't done it and that's what they're asking you to do, Mr. Speaker.

They have promised to deal with the education portion of property education tax, and they haven't done it. They can control issues around crop insurance. They can control a number of issues around irrigation. They can control issues around biodiesel. The last member that spoke for us from Last Mountain-Touchwood talked about ethanol and talked about biodiesel. He had a lot of good words to say as far . . .

[21:45]

The Speaker: — Order please. Once again I see two debates starting to develop. There should be only one at a time. The member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member from Saskatoon Nutana said, oh let's just vote. This has just been a real inconvenience for her. I am really feeling sorry for that member from Nutana. Mr. Speaker, I am sorry we kept her up to tell her the plight of what's happening in agriculture today. And if you don't want to listen to it, if that member doesn't want to listen to it, go behind the bar. Go outside the House. I'm sorry we're keeping her up because you know what? Let's just vote on it because it's not an issue. It is an issue. It's a huge issue.

And, Mr. Speaker, the problem is, is that this government has not controlled the things it can control such as property tax, such as crop insurance; such as using our products in ethanol and biodiesel. They haven't controlled the controllables. And because of that, they have lost the fact of leadership. People look at a government for leadership, and part of being a leader is controlling what you can control. And this government has failed.

So I'll guarantee you when this government goes to Ottawa and when the Minister of Agriculture — the minister of promising jobs to certain members that have lost their job — the Minister of Agriculture goes to Ottawa and asks the Minister of Agriculture from Ottawa, or the Minister of Finance from here in Saskatchewan, Ralph Goodale, if he says, it's all your fault, why aren't you doing this? Why aren't you doing that? Why aren't you helping us here?

What do you think that minister would say to this minister here? Why aren't you controlling what you can control? Why aren't you controlling education portion of property tax?

I would guarantee you, I will guarantee you in the conversations that that minister has had with the Finance minister of this country, the Finance minister has definitely told him, clean up your backyard before you worry about what's happening in our yard.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Every time we hear this government talk about what's wrong in agriculture, not once — not once in how many hours of debate — have they ever looked at themselves. Because you know what? It just isn't our fault.

You know, they'll blame the Liberals. I find this extremely ironic, extremely ironic, that they'll blame the federal government. And often I've heard them say, well it's all the Liberals' fault because, you know, really, they've only got one member in Saskatchewan. It's all the Liberals' fault because they've only got one member in Saskatchewan. They don't really care about Western Canada; the federal Liberals don't really care about Western Canada. Why? Because they don't have any representation there.

Well guess what rural Saskatchewan thinks about the NDP government right now? Think about what rural Saskatchewan thinks about the NDP. The NDP don't give a hoot about what is going on. They don't care with what is going on in rural Saskatchewan. Why? Because they don't have any representation there.

They have the member from Saskatchewan Rivers that spoke about his solutions, which I just absolutely couldn't believe. I heard him speak about — last night when he replied from the Speech from the Throne — about what solutions should be or could be. He never identified any, but he talked about solutions.

But today he happened to talk about some solutions to the agriculture problem in Saskatchewan. And for those of you that weren't tuning in at that time, let me tell you what his solutions were. His solutions were more credit unions — not that we have a problem with credit unions — but more credit unions. That would be the solution to the agriculture problem.

The other solution was the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool is a solution to the agriculture problem. I know he's got a huge problem with Monsanto and AgrEvo and all the different companies that are involved in agriculture, in seed research and development, in chemical research and development. He's got huge problems with those companies. That's great. Does he honestly believe the Sask Wheat Pool is going to pick up the slack and follow through on R&D [research and development] for seed and chemical and fertilizer? Absolutely ridiculous.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, my whole theme when I replied to the Speech from the Throne is how this government talks about one thing. And when you look at what is really happening in rural Saskatchewan, they are so out of touch. And when I look at the solutions that that member gave from Saskatchewan Rivers, the solutions for agriculture, it is absolutely unbelievable. He talks more that there needs to be a stronger wheat board.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ with him in many different areas. He talks that the solution is more co-operatives. There's nothing wrong with co-operatives, and that may be one small part of the solution. But I mean it's unbelievable that he thinks those four ideas are going to turn around agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly do want to go back though about the NDP, this NDP government, how they like to tout Jack Layton over certain issues. They really like Jack Layton. He's kind of their hero in Ottawa for some reason.

I haven't ever heard Jack Layton talk about agriculture. I've heard Jack Layton support corruption. I've seen Jack Layton support corruption which, you know, is quite ironic. Then that's exactly where these people are. These people are in the same boat supporting . . . I mean it's all fine if they pick and choose which subjects they want to support Jack Layton on, but frankly Jack Layton has supported corruption in the Liberal Party by propping them up and that is no different than this NDP government right here.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard a couple of different times from people that spoke before me that were talking about how our leader had talked about, if I could pick between Ralph Goodale and believing Ralph Goodale or believing SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], I'll take Ralph Goodale 9 times out of 10; I'll take Ralph Goodale 10 times out of 10, Mr. Speaker. And I couldn't agree more.

You've got a person here that has misled the public for six

years. He stood in this House and misled the public for six years. Can you tell me, has Ralph Goodale misled the public for six years? Who would you believe? If I had to put my support behind the federal Finance minister in this province or the minister of SPUDCO, I think we'll pick the Minister of Finance 10 times out of 10, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the time is drawing to a close, but I think the bottom line is when this NDP government . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well frankly, apparently we're not keeping the member from Saskatoon Nutana up any more. She's woke up. She's shaking her pen at me. She's real upset over something. First of all she's asking for the vote. Now she's shaking her pen at me. I'm not quite sure what she's saying, but I do notice that she never entered into the agriculture debate. She's sure got a lot to say at 10 to 10, but for the last six hours she didn't have too much to say, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I implore this government, I implore this government to quit blaming everybody else, to take some leadership and control the things that they can control. Don't look at Ottawa for all your help because quite frankly this government has a huge role to play in this province, a huge role to play in agriculture. The producers of this province are looking for leadership from this government and they haven't seen it. Is it too late? I don't think it is. But stand in your place and take your rightful role as leader, as Minister of Agriculture, and do the right thing — do the right thing. Remember that statement and support our farmers.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The question's before the Assembly, the motion moved by the member from Melville-Saltcoats, 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.

And the amendment to the main motion as moved by the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, seconded by the member for Yorkton.

That all of the words after the word "update" 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.

First we will vote off the amendment. Is the Assembly ready for the question? Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Those who favour the motion say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those who oppose the motion say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I do believe that the ayes have it. On division, on division. The motion therefore stands amended.

We will now vote on the motion as amended, which would read:

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 federal government for its failure to fulfill its commitment to negotiate an energy accord for the people of Saskatchewan.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion as amended?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Junor, seconded by Mr. Harper, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wall.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege for me to enter into the Throne Speech debate tonight. I've always enjoyed this debate because it's our opportunity to hear from each member and understand the fabric of their constituency, the priorities that they would highlight, and the new ideas that they could be added to and bring forward during the debate.

Listening to the debate you can learn a lot about the members of the Assembly and how they serve in their constituency and within these halls. I would like to take a few moments to thank those who sometimes we all take for granted but we know how valuable they are to the operation of a democratic session. And I'm sure, knowing the hour this evening, they'd appreciate a bit

of a thank you.

So I will begin with you, Mr. Speaker, and your office. Between sessions you've been extremely busy with school programs and hosting for the first time ever the Midwestern Legislative Conference. So, Mr. Speaker, to your office and staff and yourself — job well done.

To the Clerks at the Table who keep our processes moving along and in good order — many thanks. And welcome back to the Pages. I do wonder, Mr. Speaker, if they've ever kept track of the kilometres that they put on in one day to keep us all connected to our offices and to each other.

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order. Order please. I would ask the members to come to order. The member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, we all had the opportunity at last May's CPA [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association] dinner to have a production from Hansard. And this production was at one time entertaining but also very telling of all of the challenges that they face in keeping a written record of everything that's said and spoken here.

Then there's the audiovisual staff, the Legislative Library, our IT [information technology] support, the caucus offices and House business — many, many people working to make sure that this session runs smoothly.

And last but never least, the Sergeant-at-Arms, Patrick Shaw, and the security staff who are ever mindful of our safety and our well-being.

Mr. Speaker, it's indeed an honour to be joining you in the role of Deputy Speaker to appreciate and recognize everyone who sees to the work of the Assembly. And as I mentioned in my acceptance speech, my goal would be to see that we encourage respectful debate on policies and programs and not on personal attacks.

[22:00]

Mr. Speaker, this month is a special month for me. It's 20 years of elected office and I guess I shouldn't say just for me because it's for me and my family. This is the 14th anniversary representing the wonderful people of Regina Wascana Plains. And when I'm asked to mention what my constituency looks like and who are reflected, I like to mention that my constituency reflects urban and rural, First Nations life.

I am thankful for the many acquaintances, friendships, and partnerships that have been developed over the years. Special thank yous must go out to my constituency assistant, Tammy Watt, and the executives who keep me supported and informed. And lots of love to my family, especially Bob, Noel, and Amber, who give me the courage of my convictions and give me their unconditional love, a blessed gift indeed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, all of these thank yous are important for to me they form the backdrop to my wholehearted support for the visionary Throne Speech that was placed before us. This Throne Speech speaks to our youth, to seniors, pioneers, to new

Canadians, First Nations, and to welcoming immigration. What a beginning to our next 100 years.

From the vantage position of Legislative Secretary to the Premier for the Voluntary Sector Initiative, it has been a year to celebrate not only our centennial but the people who make so much happen right across the province, our volunteers.

The Centennial Leadership Awards were designed to recognize . . . Mr. Speaker, it's also been quite a year to recognize the work of volunteers across the province. And I'd like to take a moment to say and make special mention of the member from Moose Jaw North — as we've all called him, Mr. Centennial. Because it's through Mr. Centennial and the work of the centennial office that members on all sides of this Assembly have been able to throw . . . what a party — the party of a century right across the province. And we heard it in the pride that was in the voices of all members from all sides of the Assembly as they joined with their constituents to celebrate 100 years together.

For me one of the highlights was the Centennial Leadership Awards. They were designed to recognize at the individual Saskatchewan organizational levels, the achievements of one person who gave of themselves to build up the structure and goals of their member organization . . . and to one young person with vision for the future and the future health and long-term longevity of the organization. Presenting these awards along with the centenarian medallion was an extremely high point for me. And just when I thought I couldn't be more proud of these accomplishments and achievements, I would hear of some new contribution that volunteers have bequeathed to this province, Mr. Speaker, and I was even more proud.

I'm very proud to have been able to be at Ruth M. Buck School to help them celebrate our centenarian, Ruth M. Buck, who has been a long-time educator and a woman who has always kept a historical record of the events of her life. And, Mr. Speaker, she comes from strength. Her mother was the first woman to receive her doctorate degree in the province of Saskatchewan.

Well last Monday, Mr. Speaker, grade 8 students from White City School were able to be here for most of the afternoon. And I met with them when they arrived and spoke with them about the role of the Throne Speech and its importance to the work that we do here. And then I asked them what would they put in their speech if they were going to do just what we've been able to put before the House — a Speech from the Throne.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm satisfied that everything that they mentioned would be addressed. And so in their order, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to highlight the first thing that they mentioned was jobs for young people and keeping people here and letting other countries know that their people would be welcome to be here and join in the jobs and the new economies for this province.

Next up was the environment and protecting wildlife. They were very important to the students. They felt very fortunate because they enjoy clean air, water, and safe food production.

And on their list, energy and our resources and finding new energy sources and new renewable sources of energy. And of

course they mentioned it would be good if we would help them to keep warm this winter, Mr. Speaker.

As a mother and an early childhood educator, many initiatives especially speak to me on a personal level, and I'm going to name just a few. The pre-kindergarten program for four-year-olds; high-quality, accessible daycare; Project Hope; support for midwifery; children's hospital; Gradworks; leaders of tomorrow; and Saskatchewan's Green Teams to name a few. Those programs and others that have been mentioned and highlighted in the Speech from the Throne that was presented by the Lieutenant Governor have me tonight on my feet to provide wholehearted support for the motion before us and to support the defeat of the amendment. With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I would now move to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Wascana Plains that debate on this motion be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:05.]

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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
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Hon. Joanne Crofford
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Hon. David Forbes
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