



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

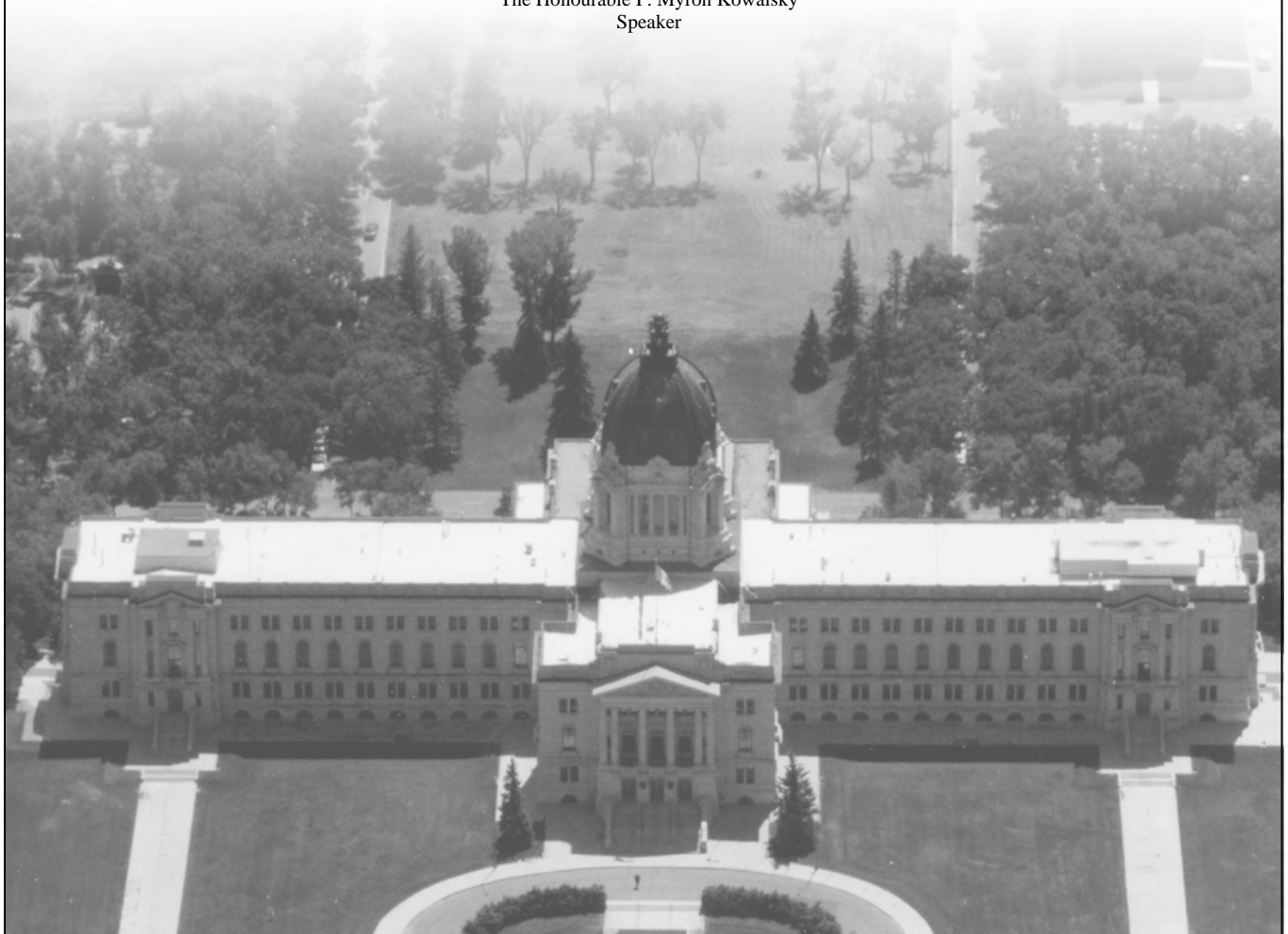
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of the Cypress Hills area. Same topic, Mr. Speaker, different highway. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 21 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these several pages of petitions are signed by constituents, as I indicated, from Cypress Hills, but from communities like Swift Current, Medicine Hat. We've got Maple Creek, Tompkins, Schuler, and we even have a visitor from Bichester, United Kingdom, who thought it was important enough to sign. I so present.

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

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

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

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Bruno, Humboldt, Lake Lenore, Annaheim, Muenster, and Middle Lake. I so present.

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of 600 children under six years of age and their parents in the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency regarding a much needed elementary school in the Arbor Creek area of Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources to build an elementary school in Arbor Creek.

The petitioners today reside on Pehudoff Crescent, Budz Terrace, Morrison Court, and Sears Cove in northeast Saskatoon. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

In duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Davidson and Bladworth. I so present.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from citizens who would like their SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] licensing office reinstated. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to reinstate the Saskatchewan Government Insurance licensing agency in Handel.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Handel, Kelfield, and Landis. I so present.

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again to present another petition on the deplorable conditions of Highway 368. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make the necessary repairs to Highway 368 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And it is signed by the good people of Muenster and Annaheim. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14(7) are hereby read

and received: sessional paper no. 30 and addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 2, 7, 12, 22, and 26.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure for me today to be able to introduce to you and to members of this House through you, a guest from Rockglen area. His name is Shay Keller. Shay is accompanied by his dad who is in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. His dad, Les Keller. Shay is 16. He's in grade 11 at the Rockglen school. His parents are Les and Erin Keller. He has two sisters, Raelynn and Rheanne. Shay and his family live in the hills southwest of Rockglen near the Canada-US [United States] border.

Shay enjoys cowboying, rodeoing, and doing western drawings. Shay is an active participant in the High School Rodeo Association and the Little Britches Rodeo Association.

Shay had the honour of being the first Canadian to win the National High School Rodeo Association art contest. His entry last term won the contest and graced the cover of the 2005 souvenir programs at this year's National High School Finals Rodeo at Gillette, Wyoming. Prints of each rodeo event drawn by Shay were given as prizes for the Saskatchewan high school rodeo finals for 2005.

Shay also won first place in his age group in the Shurniak Art Gallery art contest during the gallery's grand opening at Assiniboia in July of this year. His exhibition at the Shurniak Art Gallery runs November 5 to 25. We hope many will take it in. But those who get an opportunity to go to Agribition, I think, will be amazed at the talent that this young man has when you see his prints there in the Agribition display.

I'd like all members to join in welcoming Shay and his dad, Les, here to the gallery today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I'd like to welcome Shay and congratulate Shay too on his fine artistic talents. And as constituents of mine down in the Rockglen area, I'm very, very pleased to see them here in their Legislative Assembly today and the work of Shay being exhibited in the Assiniboia art gallery. And I would invite anybody and everybody to visit the Shurniak Art Gallery in Assiniboia. It's a tremendous facility and to have Shay's work presented there, I think, is quite an honour.

So again I would ask all members to please welcome my constituents to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Moose

Jaw Wakamow.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House 28 members of the grade 10 Riverview Collegiate class from Moose Jaw. Also one of the students is sitting behind the bar on the floor, Hannah.

But it's always a pleasure to have constituents come to the legislature, have a tour of the building, and for us as MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] to be able to welcome them and have a meeting with them after to answer questions that they may have.

I'm glad to see a number of classes have been here also from Riverview Collegiate — best high school in Moose Jaw without a doubt — right in the middle of South Hill. I'm a little bit biased here, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, Hannah was also telling us that she's the Whip for her caucus when they did their mock parliament or session in class to get ready for their trip. And I asked her if she did it by choice, that she volunteered for this job, and she said no it just happened to be where she was sitting and she got chosen. So her and the Government Whip were kind of comparing stories and stories of woe as to looking after all of their colleagues.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope all members would join me in welcoming the class to their legislature and I look forward to meeting with them soon. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I want to draw the members' attention to three guests to our gallery who are usually sitting in the IT [Information Technology] area of the Legislative Assembly services office. And these people are Marc Langman, Jeremy Phillips, and Darcy Hislop.

Now Marc Langman is spending his last day with us here after three years of employment with the Legislative Assembly. He's off to the Alberta Assembly in Edmonton. But a new person coming in as well I want to welcome is Darcy Hislop, who is our new chief technologist here with the IT department. And of course with them, Jeremy is our standby who we all depend on to keep our computers in proper running order in this building.

So I would like all members to welcome Darcy Hislop and also say a farewell with best wishes to Marc Langman.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Ms. Hamilton: — In December 1999 the UN [United Nations] General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring November 25

the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

November 25 was chosen because it is the anniversary of the deaths of three Mirabal sisters who were murdered by the Dominican Republic dictator Rafael Trujillo for their vocal and ongoing opposition to his regime.

Since that time the sisters have become a symbol both of the victimization of women and of popular and feminist resistance to oppression.

Mr. Speaker, historically violence and the threat of violence are fundamental mechanisms in attempts to force women into subordinate positions. Violent acts against women take place in our city, our province, and our country every day. Mr. Speaker, Charlotte Bunch is the founder and executive director of the Centre for Women's Global Leadership. Her words on this subject are worth repeating, and I quote:

The issue is changing the perception — so deep-seated it is often unconscious — that women are fundamentally of less value than men. It is only when women and girls gain their place as strong and equal members of society that violence against them will be viewed as a shocking aberration rather than an invisible norm.

Mr. Speaker, today is a day to remember that all of us has a role in changing perceptions and ensuring that the time when violence against women is an aberration comes sooner and not later. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on November 25 each year we observe the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Mr. Speaker, the statistics are staggering. According to the United Nations, at least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime, with the abuser usually someone known to her.

Mr. Speaker, it is shameful that violence against women remains prevalent in our society and even sanctioned in many countries around the world. It is also shameful that Saskatchewan has the highest violent crime rate in Canada, a rate which is double the national average.

Mr. Speaker, many years ago this Premier dreamed, and I quote:

... of a province where women and children and men can live and walk in their communities and walk on the campuses of our province without fear, without fear of violence.

Mr. Speaker, it is time this government stopped dreaming and start acting to reverse this deplorable record of violence. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Promoting Addictions Awareness

Ms. Bakken Lackey: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the end of National Addictions Awareness Week in Canada. Since 1981 communities throughout Canada have been coordinating events to promote addictions awareness. In Saskatchewan countless individuals and community-based organizations work hard every day to raise awareness about the danger of addictions.

I am proud to say that members on this side of the House have also worked hard to raise awareness about the addictions crisis in Saskatchewan, both here in this Chamber and in the presentations we've been able to make in schools and in communities. Members of the opposition have had the privilege to speak to many students and parents about the danger of addictions, especially crystal meth.

[10:15]

Mr. Speaker, when the Saskatchewan Party was approached more than two years ago by worried parents and concerned police officers about the dangers of crystal meth, we took action to raise awareness and urged this government to also take action. It is unfortunate that once again this government was quick to take credit for reacting to a problem but slow to take action to provide CBOs [community-based organization] and addiction workers with resources and treatment beds necessary to tackle the addiction crisis in our province.

Addictions Awareness Week is an important reminder that those suffering from addictions and their families need action, not words, from their government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Lieutenant Governor's Arts Awards

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week, along with other members of the Assembly, I had the pleasure of attending the second annual Lieutenant Governor's Awards here in Regina. These awards, Mr. Speaker, recognize the outstanding contributions of individuals, groups, and organizations to the arts in Saskatchewan. There were 22 nominations in all, Mr. Speaker, from many art genres and our Lieutenant Governor presented awards to the following individuals.

The 30 Below or Youth Award went to Holly Luhnig, a Regina poet. Visual artist Edward Poitras of Lestock received the Innovation Award. And I would like to acknowledge two nominees from my constituency, Denise and Rod Simair.

The Leadership Award was presented to Richard Spafford, an arts advocate and collector from Regina. And the Lifetime

Achievement Award was presented posthumously to the well-known sculptor and Saskatoon resident, Bill Epp.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the nominees and the award winners but I also want to make special mention of a performance that evening called "Bringin' Culture and Color to the Core" by an Aboriginal youth group that used song, poetry, and hip-hop music to speak of their lives and of our future. I commend director Mark Deiter and performers Lindsay Knight, Danny Fernandez, Heather Abbey, and Raine Morin for their creative performance.

Mr. Speaker, I convey our thanks to everyone at the Saskatchewan Arts Board for organizing such a successful and well-attended celebration of the arts in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Rama Declared Home of Rider Mascot

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, November 12, 2005, the small community of Rama, Saskatchewan was officially proclaimed the home of Cousin Leonard, a mascot for the Saskatchewan Roughriders. A large number of fans came out for the unveiling of the sign on property adjacent to Highway No. 5 at the entrance to the village of Rama.

The person inside the gopher suit for nearly 10 years has been Joseph Genoway, formerly of Rama and now a resident of Regina. Gainer the Gopher's cousin, Leonard, has been introduced for years as being from parts unknown. But through the efforts of Joseph Genoway, Roughriders president Jim Hopson, and public relations director Steve Mazurak, approval was given by the Saskatchewan Roughriders to declare Rama the home of Cousin Leonard.

My colleague, the member for Kelvington-Wadena, along with most of the corporate sponsors, were on hand for the unveiling. Speeches and a short program, involving both a silent auction and a live auction, helped generate significant dollars for the Rama Recreation Board. Congratulations to all the sponsors for donating over \$2,000 to develop and erect the sign and make the event a tremendous success.

I want to recognize the Rama Village Council, Mayor Darrell Dutchak, councillors Jeff Hunter and Darryl McLeod for being the driving force behind this project. And especially, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Cousin Leonard, a.k.a. [also known as] Joseph Genoway, for your dedication and spirit for the last 10 years and all the best in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Agribition Provides Many Opportunities

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, this past week, Saskatchewan has been hosting the Canadian Western Agribition, one of the premier agricultural shows in the world and an event that plays a large role in raising Saskatchewan's profile in terms of the agricultural industry internationally.

More than 40 different countries are registered at Agribition's International Business Centre this year. The centre provides business services and a meeting place for hundreds of international buyers and exporters of Canadian livestock genetics and agricultural products and services and technology, Mr. Speaker. That's what Agribition is all about, making connections with many countries from around the world and forging relationships that will help grow and diversify Saskatchewan's agricultural industry and our future.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to welcome the provincial and territorial ministers of Agriculture to Regina and Agribition this week who, along with Saskatchewan's Minister of Agriculture, will be meeting to discuss a variety of issues including preparedness for avian influenza, internal trade, traceability and age verification, WTO [World Trade Organization] negotiations, and long-term planning for the Canadian agriculture industry — and of course affordability and changes to the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program.

Mr. Speaker, we are very proud to share with them the excitement of Agribition and the very best in Saskatchewan hospitality. My congratulations and thanks to the board, management, and staff of the Canadian Western Agribition and to the many volunteers who have once again made this a world-class event.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Centennial Project -- From Prairie to Pine

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on January 28, 2005, *From Prairie to Pine - Piano Solos By Saskatchewan Composers* was launched. This is a centennial project created by the Saskatchewan Registered Music Teachers' Association. It is a publication containing 25 compositions from composers across Saskatchewan, five of whom are student composers.

I am proud to mention that *From Prairie to Pine* has a strong connection to the Biggar constituency. The coordinator of the publication, Peggy L'Hoir, who belongs to the west central branch of the SRMTA [Saskatchewan Registered Music Teachers' Association] and is currently the vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Music Teachers' Association, is from my hometown of Biggar. As well two of the student entries come from a couple of very talented young composers who, I might add, are also talented musicians and writers that also reside in Biggar — Ms. Kristina Barclay and Ms. Michelle Meszaros.

I'd like to congratulate all those involved in the creation,

publication, and distribution of this fine collection of piano music that reflects Saskatchewan's diverse musical landscape, as well the dedication of the teachers who have kept music growing in our province. I would also like to congratulate all those composers that submitted entries to be considered for the publication in this book. Special congratulations to Peggy, Kristina, and Michelle.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage members of this Assembly to seek a copy of this tribute to the talents of Saskatchewan's piano teachers and composers.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Surgical Care Wait-List

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for the last few weeks we've been raising concerns about the surgical care wait-list accuracy, this wait-list that the minister seems to boast about any chance he gets.

Despite what the minister has to say about the wait-list improving, that's not what patients are telling us. In fact patients are getting very angry around this province about the government continually boasting about shorter wait times, surgery wait times, when that is not at all what they're experiencing, for example, Jean Reynolds who was told to wait eight months when the registry said she should receive that surgery in three to four weeks.

Mr. Speaker, and every time we raise this, the minister will stand up and discredit patients, saying they haven't gone through the proper hoops. He'll blame doctors who are working at 110 and 20 per cent capacity. He'll discredit me. He'll try and discredit our research staff, our limited research staff, Mr. Speaker. He will never face the facts. The facts are that his registry is inaccurate in what people are facing in the province today.

Will he stand up and give us the real truth of what the wait times are in this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard to make sure that we provide the best care possible for our people in Saskatchewan. The member opposite tries on an almost daily basis to provide information which isn't accurate. He knows it himself. He has many people that he knows that work within the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, this year we have been spending specific dollars in our budget to deal with reduction of the wait-list. We set out the facts that we were going to deal with some of the people we knew now from our registry were waiting too long. We have \$8.9 million which we have been allocating to target patients,

6.5 million of that towards actual providing the service to those people who have been waiting too long, 2.4 million for equipment and tools to make sure we can get that job done.

Mr. Speaker, we are working in a very focused way to make sure that we deal and provide the best service for our Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Well, Mr. Speaker, he goes again and says that our information is inaccurate. What is inaccurate about Jean Reynolds who was told to wait eight months? There's nothing inaccurate about that. What is inaccurate is his wait-list saying it should be three to four weeks. But, Mr. Speaker, there's other people that look at the wait-lists, such as the Health Council of Canada. And they've had a look at our wait-lists. And they say the only way wait-lists will be accurate is if they're reliable and unbiased, Mr. Speaker.

Average wait times don't tell us anything because they don't reveal some of the cases that fall outside of the typical case. Many cases end up being overlooked. Many of these cases end up right here in the legislature, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't take into consideration cases that have been cancelled or overlooked or rebooked. The Surgical Care Network doesn't look at that, Mr. Speaker. It also combines all surgery cases which skews the numbers. It takes cases that are done, emergency cases done within 24 hours, which skews all the numbers, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister stand up and finally admit — kind of like their poll on the raise the flag for energy, new energy deal, how bogus those numbers were — aren't his wait-lists just about as bogus?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm very pleased that that member of Saskatchewan's Conservative Party has looked at the information provided by the Health Quality Council of Canada because that particular agency, the Health Quality Council of Canada, is something that we in Saskatchewan promoted very strongly as part of what we should do nationally, because it was based on our action plan here in Saskatchewan and our Health Quality Council.

Mr. Speaker, what they have done is looked at the wait-lists across the country and identified the problems. Mr. Speaker, if that member would look more carefully at that particular paper he's just referencing, he would also see that the learnings from what we've done in Saskatchewan are what's informed the academics who are writing that paper. Mr. Speaker, everybody's looking at what we're doing here because we're leading the way.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian

Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, they're leading the way. They're leading the way for some of the longest waits in Canada. That's what this government is leading because the Health Council of Canada goes on to say about wait times in this province, he said the only way that they can be accurately gauged is if . . . the wait intervals should be defined as the time from initial referral to completion of procedure — from initial referral to completion of procedure. That's when you get a true reflection. That's not what our surgical care wait-list does.

It doesn't deal with the issues of patients that wait months to see specialists, for patients that wait months to get diagnostic tests, and once that is done then they wait months to get surgery, Mr. Speaker. That is what's happening in this province.

It's typical NDP [New Democratic Party] speak. They talk three to four weeks for actual surgery when it's six to eight months. They talk three or four weeks when it's actually eight months, Mr. Speaker. When will the minister actually come up with the real goods of how long it takes for people from referral to end of procedure?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It's quite obvious, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite, the Saskatchewan Conservatives, don't like it when you actually have facts to work with. Mr. Speaker, we have been working hard to get the information so that we could . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order, order, order. Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we have been working very hard to make sure that we have the actual information. In Saskatchewan we are the only province that has information about all of the surgeries that are required to be done, and we are taking that information to make sure that we use the budget dollars that we have to specifically target them where they can make a difference.

Mr. Speaker, that is not a simple task because there's so many parts to that. It's equipment. It's staff. It's about how you manage the flow of the patients through there. We're going to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker. On a national basis, the academics are using information they have obtained in Saskatchewan to write the policy about where we should go.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:30]

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

Availability of Bone Density Diagnostic Services

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Surgical wait times are one thing, but diagnostic wait times are another. This

month is Osteoporosis Awareness Month. Osteoporosis is a disease that affects mainly women. One out of four women over 50 can be stricken by this disease. And what it is is when the increased bone density . . . decreases bone density, which can increase in fractures of hips and wrists and issues like that.

But women in northern Saskatchewan for the last number of years have been going to Lloydminster to receive bone density scans. Until recently, these bone density scans were covered by the provincial government. But just recently, women have been going for the same bone density scan and realize now that the government is not covering these scans.

Can the minister tell me why the government is no longer covering bone density scans in Lloydminster?

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, what we have in our province is a process whereby if people require certain procedures outside of the province and it's not in an emergency situation, we have a prior approval process. Mr. Speaker, that includes the bone density tests. It also includes some other diagnostic tests. That's been a long-standing policy.

There is a bone density testing service in the Alberta side, in Lloydminster, that has had some patients go to that one. Those ones aren't covered unless they receive prior approval, like residents of all parts of the province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, women are furious that the NDP has cut the funding for the Lloydminster program. Mildred Reinhart from Lashburn went to Lloydminster to get bone density testing. This year she found out that it was not covered in Lloydminster, that she'd have to go to Saskatoon.

When inquiring about the same scan in Saskatoon, it was going to take 18 months to two years to get this scan. She opted to go to Lloydminster and had to pay out of her pocket. When she went to Lloydminster, she only had to wait two weeks for that bone density scan, Mr. Speaker. This what she had to say in the letter. She writes:

This is definitely not what Medicare is supposed to be. You . . . [can] call it . . . [medicare], but I think it's more like Health-careless.

Mr. Speaker, that's what she describes this government's health care system as: health-careless. Mr. Speaker, why is the minister forcing women to wait up to two years for a bone density scan when it could be done two weeks in Lloydminster?

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we are working to make sure that we can provide services as are identified by the physicians and others within the province. We know that on some of the diagnostic procedures, that we have them set up in a way that

will deal with the urgency and the priority.

This particular issue around all of the diagnostic procedures is exactly the issue that Dr. Peter Glynn and the diagnostic imaging committee have been working on since last January, and it's around what are the . . . what's the accessibility? How do you assess urgency? And how do you assess priorities?

Mr. Speaker, these kinds of procedures can end up costing many, many dollars for the health care system. We have to make sure that we're providing the basic services across the province, and we have to be monitoring very carefully when individual entrepreneurs will set up bone density systems outside the province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also received a letter from Joan Beisel of Livelong. And she wrote how ridiculous this government policy is. The government is now forcing women to either pay to get a bone density scan done in two weeks or wait two years. That is unacceptable. Many of the women are on medication for bone-loss prevention and need to know if the medication is working. They can't wait two years for a bone density scan. These scans are needed and are needed when? In a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, why will the government risk women around this province, regarding fractures, when . . . And he's forcing them to pay to get the services they need. These two women are now forced to pay for bone density scans which are covered by this province and have been covered by this province. The government is forcing them now to wait two years. That's unacceptable. Why are they doing it?

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we are making sure that people have access to these services in an appropriate way within our province. When people require to go outside of the province, there is an appropriate procedure to follow to get approval to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we now, if the estimates are approved this week, we'll be spending just over \$3 billion in this year on our health care system. We allocate that money very carefully. We try to make sure that we can provide — especially — emergency, urgent services, and we try to make sure that we have many of the other services as raised by the member.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's all about making choices, using the dollars that we have. And we will continue to be very careful to try to provide services as best we can within the resources that we have.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Wood River.

Property Tax Relief

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, how much longer can that revolutionary, socialist government ignore the public? The people of Saskatchewan are screaming at this government for property tax relief, and as usual there's no action from that side. They dither and dither hoping the problem will go away. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not going away; it's getting bigger.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister of high property taxes, why are they ignoring the public's demand for property tax relief?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. It gives me an opportunity to again remind the opposition that we continue to work on this issue. The language of doing nothing of course, Mr. Speaker, means nothing.

We have provided, over two years, \$110 million — 55 million in the current year, 55 million in the coming year. Mr. Speaker, \$110 million are significant dollars. And in the process of while that short-term program is in place, Mr. Speaker, we are working on a long-term sustainable program that will provide, Mr. Speaker, property tax relief for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we hear that continuously from that side of the House — that they're working on it — but there's never any results.

Yesterday the member from Massey Place went on and on about how this government is doing the right thing because they accept recommendations of the many commissions they put in place.

Mr. Speaker, the Vicq commission put forward a recommendation back in 1999 — 1999 — to lower property tax. And there's the Boughen Commission which again told that government to lower property tax. And finally, Mr. Speaker, we have Jack Vicq again yesterday telling everyone how Saskatchewan is burdened down with property tax. Mr. Speaker, there's three commissions telling the government that property tax is too high — and the member had said that they would accept the recommendations — since 1999.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister accept the recommendations of the commissions and lower property taxes now?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again the member from Saskatchewan's Conservative Party

opposite doesn't quote entirely what's in the reports or what the people of Saskatchewan have said. These selective quotes that the member opposite and his colleagues use continually, Mr. Speaker, are not fair to the people of Saskatchewan . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. The Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Vicq yesterday indicated that it was outside his purview to deal with the issue of property tax. Mr. Boughen prior to that had indicated that dealing with the property tax issue would require taxation on restaurant meals, Mr. Speaker, something the opposition has said over and over again they don't support, but they keep saying to implement it. Mr. Speaker, you can't have your cake and eat it too.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, that member of the revolutionary, socialist party is dealing totally and solely in rhetoric on a continuing basis. I'd like to quote what the Premier said back in 1987. And he said, quote, ". . . is there any wonder that a tax revolt is brewing in this province?"

The old is new again, Mr. Speaker. Nothing changes. That government's inaction has brought about a revolt. We have three commissions — three commissions — telling that government to lower property taxes. The public is screaming. To the minister of high property tax: when will the minister remove the tax noose from the necks of Saskatchewan families?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is amusing the member of Saskatchewan's Conservative Party opposite continuing to raise these things. The member will know that Mr. Vicq's first report asked the government to deal with significant personal property tax reform.

This government acted, acted quickly, and as a result Saskatchewan people today are paying \$1,000 per family less than they were in the years in which that government, Mr. Speaker, or that party was in government in this province. Mr. Speaker, we acted quickly.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, on the property tax issue, this government has had many meetings with representatives of the municipal associations, the school board associations, and other representative organizations across the province. Mr. Speaker, members of the representative associations have provided this government with some constructive criticism and constructive activities that we should engage in. The members opposite have not provided one single constructive idea to this debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

SaskEnergy's Investment in Derivatives

Mr. Dearborn: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy. Many people have been under the impression that SaskEnergy has been losing money selling natural gas this year, and it turns out that that's not accurate.

According to SaskEnergy's third quarter financial reports, SaskEnergy actually made money on gas sales through the first three quarters of 2005. SaskEnergy was charging consumers \$6.97 a gigajoule and the cost of that gas for the first nine months was \$6.66.

However SaskEnergy did lose money, a lot of money, gambling on financial derivatives. These losses were built into the cost of gas sold, and consumers will end up paying for the money on these gambling losses.

Mr. Speaker, how much did SaskEnergy lose in the financial derivatives market, and why were these losses never mentioned in SaskEnergy's rate hike application?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member raises an interesting issue that was reported in the media. I don't think question period would allow me the kind of time . . . I think we need at minimum about two hours to go through all of the details of the question that the member raises.

Suffice it to say, suffice it to say that SaskEnergy experienced at a certain point in its fiscal year, at the end of the third quarter, a paper loss not unlike a paper loss that has been experienced by other gas companies in Western Canada. They have also . . . I think EnCana reported also at the same time a significant paper loss. But because gas prices have come down, it's my understanding that paper loss at the end of the third quarter is now not a loss at all.

And so what we're dealing with here is paper loss, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dearborn: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer. I know that the citizens of Saskatchewan are going to wonder how much paper \$46 million actually makes up.

These losses were rolled into the cost of gas sold, taking SaskEnergy from net profit to a net loss on its gas sales. Could the minister please explain how SaskEnergy lost \$46 million gambling on financial derivatives, and what impact did this have on the SaskEnergy rates?

And more importantly, Mr. Speaker, why was this never disclosed during the rate review process?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for SaskEnergy Incorporated.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I think all of SaskEnergy's financial activities are made available at the rate review process. Let me just say that the rate review process will know that SaskEnergy uses financial instruments, like other gas companies, to hedge the purchase price of natural gas as part of its natural gas purchasing program.

For accounting purposes, certain financial instruments used in the hedging program are required to be recorded at their market value. Any change in market value — and depending on where you calculate that, in this case at the end of the third quarter — can show certain results. But if you go another month, and with the reduction in gas prices since that, there will be no loss, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:45]

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

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for his response and outlining that there are instruments used by SaskEnergy.

Mr. Speaker, here's what Warren Buffett had to say about financial derivatives:

We view them as time bombs . . . derivatives are financial weapons of mass destruction, carrying dangers that, while now latent, are potentially lethal.

Here's what Dwain Lingenfelter had to say about financial derivatives at the time of the Channel Lake debacle: Channel Lake was authorized to engage in trading transactions. However the authorization specifically forbade Channel Lake entering into transactions involving “. . . options, derivatives, and similar instruments.”

Mr. Speaker, derivatives are highly volatile financial instruments. Warren Buffett doesn't like them. Dwain Lingenfelter, when he was minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan], had deep concerns about them. Why did the NDP lose \$46 million gambling on financial derivatives, and why did they support this policy?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister responsible for SaskEnergy. Order.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, what was recorded as a \$46 million loss at the end of the third quarter for SaskEnergy is now not a loss given the nature of the accounting rules that SaskEnergy and other companies have to follow. That is the fact of the matter.

Can I say one other thing, Mr. Speaker, and that is that consistently over the years SaskEnergy has been able to deliver

natural gas to the people of Saskatchewan at a rate that is either the lowest in the country or the second lowest in the country. Performance speaks for itself, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for that answer.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister could answer how much we're currently exposed to for the fourth quarter of the 2005. As we went forth in the rate review process, the \$45 million or \$46 million in losses did not come forward. How much are the taxpayers of this province on the hook for at the end of the fiscal year, Mr. Speaker? They got it wrong before. This government has supported that \$46 million in losses which are now magically not losses.

Would the government explain what the liability and how much liquidity is out there in this market so that possible losses in the fourth quarter are made aware for the public? Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for SaskEnergy.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Given the question that we've just had, can I be allowed a couple of hours to deal with this issue here? Or will you cut me off after a minute, Mr. Speaker?

He's asked for me, first of all, Mr. Speaker, he's asking me . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order. Order. Order please. The Minister for SaskEnergy.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, the member is now asking me to speculate as to what the situation will be at the end of the fourth quarter — at the end of the year. Well for his information, we've got a month to go before the end of the fiscal year. We will then be in a position, again given the accounting rules we have, to tell you what the situation is with respect to these financial instruments.

I would also say, Mr. Speaker, that we have a very good record in Saskatchewan of Crown . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order please. Order please.

I invite the minister to complete his statement.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Unlike the practices of the 1980s, this government has a very good record of ensuring that Crown corporations appear before the committees of the Legislative Assembly to answer any and all questions put to it by the members opposite so that the people of Saskatchewan will know, will always know, what the state of affairs is of their corporations, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY**WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and order questions 549 through 553 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Questions 549 to 553 inclusive have been ordered.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Federal Emergency Farm Aid Program

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is somewhat of a positive day I think for farmers in Saskatchewan and really, for that matter, all of rural Saskatchewan. The federal government has finally paid attention to the plight of farmers in Saskatchewan and that's why the motion that we put forward today, I think is very timely and it really deals with what the farmers need in the province of Saskatchewan.

I just want to read the motion so that everyone out there will really realize what the debate is about and what we're talking about, Mr. Speaker. And the motion states:

That the provincial government contribute to the federal emergency farm aid program since Saskatchewan has a larger portion of producers than other provinces with nearly half of the arable land in Canada and will be a major beneficiary of this program.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have been asking for help for farmers this fall for probably the last two to three months seeing that this harvest was probably one of the poorest quality crops we've taken off for a long time. In fact the last two crops have been very low quality. The price of the grain that we're taking off this fall is very low, at a time when input costs have completely skyrocketed, Mr. Speaker.

And I think after much lobbying Mr. Goodale, we wrote to Mr. Goodale, we wrote to Mr. Andy Mitchell, who I believe is in town today, to tell them just the plight of Saskatchewan farmers and the need out there. The stress levels are so high. And after a month or two or three of lobbying the federal government they actually came to the table. And I might add, Mr. Speaker, that without no support from this provincial government to tell the federal government just what the situation was on the family farm.

The federal government has agreed to put about \$750 million into the grain and oilseed side of agriculture across the country. And at first report it was about \$250 million going into Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Now the last report is that probably about 290, \$292 million will be going into the grain and oilseed side of our farmers in Saskatchewan. And this will certainly be appreciated, Mr. Speaker.

I guess what we're asking today that would really top that up properly, is that the provincial government would see fit being that they do have also a surplus in the province of Saskatchewan — a windfall of oil and gas revenues, possibly to the tune of \$1 billion this year, Mr. Speaker — that they could possibly find some money from the provincial coffers to assist with this aid package, to really make a difference out there in rural Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're not only talking farmers this time when we're talking rural Saskatchewan and the economy of Saskatchewan, but we're talking businesses of all kinds across the province. We know for sure that businesses in rural Saskatchewan are starting to hurt, have been hurting for the last while, probably since harvest, Mr. Speaker. Many of the businesses whether it's car dealerships, machinery dealerships, businesses of all kinds that rely on the farm sector to provide them with a cash income have said that things are slowing down dramatically, are really coming to a standstill out there, and that this money would be greatly received by not just the farmers but businesses of all kinds.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about the money that the federal government has seen fit to put in there — although maybe not nearly what we had hoped for — we would hope that this money could be paid in a timely fashion. I believe it was last year they had a program out . . . or the year before they had a program out where within about two weeks they got that money into circulation; got that money into the farmers' hands in Saskatchewan. And we certainly hope that that's what will happen this time, Mr. Speaker.

One of the first reports, we heard that this money may not flow until next spring. And, Mr. Speaker, that's certainly not satisfactory and will not help the farmers this fall. In fact many of the farmers have inputs to pay for right now. Taxes are due right now. Many of the inputs that farmers have had to put in to take this crop off are due right now. And there's just no cash out there.

No grain is moving. Very little grain is moving. And when you can move it, Mr. Speaker, it's very low priced. And, Mr. Speaker, the problem being that if these farmers could wait a while to market some of this grain, the prices may improve and return a few more dollars to the farmer, where if he has to sell it now he's going to take a terrible beating.

Now I find it odd that the provincial Agriculture minister, and for that matter the Premier, are not much more sympathetic to the cause we're talking about today. My colleagues and I, I think, are somewhat shocked, having heard and saw quotes of what the Premier and the Agriculture minister have made in the past. And I'd like to read you some of these quotes. And hopefully the Premier will take heed to what he has said in the past, remember what he has said in the past. And if it was true then, and if he really meant these comments then, I would think that he would maybe think twice and maybe put some money into this program.

I'd like to make the first quote that the Premier has made on April 6, 1988, Mr. Speaker. And the present Premier's quote says:

Mr. Speaker, maybe these members opposite have forgotten, or perhaps they never knew, [or] perhaps they never knew what it's like to farm with old machinery, and just to go from repair to repair to repair. Perhaps they've forgotten, perhaps they've never known what it's like to have to find work off [the] farm, any kind of work, just to hold the farm together.

Well those facts are true today, Mr. Speaker, in many cases. In fact the high majority of cases, both the husband and wife have to work off the farm, turn around and bring those cheques back just to keep the family farm running, and there's something wrong with that picture, Mr. Speaker. And the Premier agreed with this, agreed with the need for help at that time, April 6, 1988. I have no idea why he would change his mind now.

Another quote from the Premier, March 27, 1990, Mr. Speaker:

We to this day do not have a long-term income stability program for the family farms. I mean, it is a shame that here we are, again a month from seeding, and we're still in the process of negotiating . . . short-term ad hoc program.

And I might add, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're dealing with today.

As desperately as that is needed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as desperately as that program is needed in Saskatchewan today, what we need sincerely to address the problems are long-term, stable programs.

Well, Mr. Speaker, according to the Premier that was true March 27, 1990, and it's no more different then than it is today. We are so in need of a long-term, stable program. And having this government saw fit that in 1992 to cancel the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program — the last resemblance of any kind of a stable program — and was supposed to be replaced by that government and has never been replaced, that there's a need for help from both levels of government.

Farmers in this province, Mr. Speaker, are the last ones to want to have to ask for help from government. But in the absence of long-term, stable programs — as the Premier stated in 1990, and he agreed with those comments then — farmers need help to get from point A to point B once again, and that's getting through this fall, getting their bills paid, and finding a way to be able to put a crop in next year.

Mr. Speaker, there's many things happening out in rural Saskatchewan right now. We have many farmers that have rented land and their own land and are anticipating giving up the rented land because they just cannot see how they can make a dollar on any acre of land out there. And to pay cash rent for land out there just doesn't make sense to them.

Now where this is going to hurt down the road, Mr. Speaker, is that as farmers give up acres and acres of rented land, it's going to drive the prices down for land rental. It's going to hurt the whole economy of the agriculture industry out there. Because

once you break the trend of where prices are steadily hanging there, Mr. Speaker, all of a sudden the whole agriculture economy starts to break down. And we're seeing that happen this fall probably more than we ever have before.

One more comment I want to read, Mr. Speaker, before I carry on here, from the Premier, and this comment was on March 27, 1990:

We're going . . . to have a group of men and women with the vision and the commitment to that vision that can provide a long-term mechanism for intergenerational transfer, and a long-term mechanism to provide income stability, [which we're talking today, Mr. Speaker] and a long-term commitment to the health of this land for generations yet unborn. The word in Saskatchewan is that the emperor, the current emperor, [and I believe he was talking about the premier at that time] has no clothes. He's exposed for the lack of long-term, significant agricultural policy.

[11:00]

And something that we're certainly lacking today. If the premier at that time thought we had no policy, we certainly don't have one now, and I would hope that he would pay attention to that.

We've had . . . And he goes on to say:

We've had too much of agricultural politics and too little of substantive agriculture policy. And, Mr. Speaker, [he's talking about the Throne Speech at that time] . . . does nothing . . . to change that.

Well we've just gone through a Throne Speech, and once again it certainly has nothing to change that, Mr. Speaker.

One thing I think is concerning me too is a comment that I want to read into the record that's made by our present Ag minister. And this was a quote from *Hansard*, November 7, 2004, and it's from the current Ag minister, Mr. Speaker:

Mr. Speaker, [the quote goes to say] if we were to put those hundreds of millions of dollars that are drawn up in the CAIS program, and those hundreds of millions of dollars that really are a product of an inequitable system that puts Saskatchewan paying five or six times the provincial per capital average, Mr. Speaker, it would be akin to throwing those dollars away and not investing them in the future of agriculture.

Now that's a quote from this present-day Agriculture minister. What he's saying is if we put money into agriculture, it's like throwing it into a black hole. And I think we've heard that comment from that Agriculture minister over and over and over. And what that Agriculture minister does not seem to get for one minute is when you put money into agriculture, Mr. Speaker, whether it's federal dollars coming in as we see coming in now, it's an investment into the future of Saskatchewan.

The federal government right now is in the process of putting

\$290 million in for Saskatchewan farmers. And, Mr. Speaker, I would have hoped, and I think many would have hoped, that at a time when there's a federal election looming and the federal government seems fit to throw millions of dollars around, in fact billions of dollars around in pre-election goodies, they could have saw fit to put a lot more — maybe even double that — in for our Saskatchewan farmers. But having said that, we are grateful for the \$290 million.

And for the Agriculture minister in Saskatchewan to say that if they put money to assist a program like this it's akin to throwing it in a black hole, I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, we have that.

The Agriculture minister is chirping . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please, members. The Chair recognizes the member for Melville-Saltcoats. Order please. Order. Member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister hollers from his chair that I have no integrity. Well I think that that minister should maybe take a look and take a drive out in rural Saskatchewan and find out what actual farmers think of that government and that minister when you get out there.

That minister can go down to Agribition, Mr. Speaker, put a cowboy hat on and get a little dung on his boots, but it doesn't make him a friend of farmers. You ask any farmer down at Agribition and they don't have time for that minister because that minister has made comments like, if you put money into agriculture, put money in for the farmers of Saskatchewan, it's like throwing it away and throwing it in a black hole. And that's about the farthest thing from the truth.

That minister would do good to walk down to Agribition, forget the cowboy hat, and listen to what farmers really have to say, to listen to just how bad it is on the family farm.

Don't go down for a photo op to make himself feel real good; go down and find out what's actually happening in agriculture.

Find out now that the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] is over and cattle prices have improved, Mr. Speaker, find out how much better that the cattle producers in this province actually feel.

And then he can go over to the grain side, Mr. Speaker, and he can talk to the grain producers. And the grain producers are feeling exactly like the cattle producers were about two years ago or a year ago when the BSE had the borders closed. Grain and oilseed producers in this province are hurting and hurting badly. And they need an investment from both levels of government.

And that includes this NDP government, the same NDP government that cancelled that last program that might have handled the problem that we have out here, Ms. Deputy Speaker. So, Ms. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Agriculture minister should pay attention. And I'll be looking forward to his comments later on for the reasons why him and his government don't see fit that they should put anything into this.

We're looking at a \$290 million injection into our farm families. If that government saw fit to put their 40 per cent share up front, or even a 20 per cent share, but if they put the 40 per cent share up, it could be another \$100 million. Can you imagine, Mr. Deputy Chair, just how much difference that would make to farm families out there trying to pay bills, trying to find a way to farm for another year?

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the minister knows exactly what we're saying on this side is accurate, but wants to run with the NDP banner that says, we're not going to help agriculture; we're only going to spend money where we feel it will get us votes.

And that's a shame and that should be an embarrassment to this government when agriculture and farmers helped build this province. We're celebrating our 100th birthday this year. And farmers, agriculture producers, rural Saskatchewan played a very large part in where we are today with this province and that we're able to celebrate 100 years. And we have a provincial government that has totally wrote off rural Saskatchewan.

So the motion we're moving today:

That the provincial government contribute to the federal emergency farm aid program since Saskatchewan has a larger portion of producers than other provinces with nearly half the arable land in Canada, and will be a major beneficiary of this program.

I so move, Ms. Deputy Speaker, and seconded by the member for Thunder Creek.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Thunder Creek. Well first, first we'll do the motion. Sorry.

The motion before the Assembly is moved by the member from Melville-Saltcoats and seconded by the member from Thunder Creek:

That the provincial government contribute to the federal emergency farm aid program since Saskatchewan has the larger portion of producers than other provinces with nearly half the arable land in Canada and will be a major beneficiary of this program.

I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's my honour to second the motion presented by the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the agriculture industry is in a sad state indeed. Costs have increased lately at a record pace at the same time as the livestock industry is just recovering from the BSE disaster and crop prices are at an all-time low in terms of inflation, adjusted dollars, or real purchasing power.

Costs in agriculture have always increased faster than the rate of inflation but recently the escalation of costs has eclipsed anything ever seen in the past. Meanwhile, Madam Deputy

Speaker, grain and oilseeds prices have fallen 27 and 26 per cent respectively from this time last year. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is from already depressed levels.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the real price of wheat has been in decline from about \$400 a tonne in 1992-93 dollars in the early 1950s, to under \$200 a tonne or half of that amount in 2003.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in 2003 and 2004 Saskatchewan led the nation in farm bankruptcies. Although very few of those forced out of the industry actually declare bankruptcy, these statistics do serve to show that this province is in worse shape than any other part of Canada when it comes to hardship on our farms.

In real terms, Madam Deputy Speaker, farm liabilities have increased over 40 per cent since 1981, while farm capital values have remained almost static since the late 1980s. This, Madam Deputy Speaker, tends to erode producers' equity in their operations by that combined amount.

Energy prices meanwhile have skyrocketed, with the price of diesel being at record levels. As a result producers have seen their operating fuel bills increase by thousands of dollars. At the same time, Madam Deputy Speaker, and as a result of high natural gas prices, the price of fertilizer has spiked to over \$500 a tonne.

At minimum application rates, Madam Deputy Speaker — to put that in perspective — of about 60 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre for wheat, barley, oats, and about 80 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre for canola, Saskatchewan producers are now paying \$13.80 per acre for actual nitrogen on wheat, oats, and barley, and \$18.40 an acre on canola. Madam Deputy Speaker, I remind you that this covers only nitrogen with no regard to the costs of phosphate, potassium, and sulphur, the other three nutrients that producers routinely add to their cropping practices. And the cost of those elements have also increased dramatically although at lower rates lately than nitrogen.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with the increased costs of fuel and fertilizer alone, farm input costs have increased by \$12,400 for a small farm, 1000-acre farm, Madam Deputy Speaker. And you can extrapolate those numbers into larger farms.

The recent dramatic increase in the price of steel translates into further costs for farm hardware and equipment, and the cost of herbicides and pesticides just continues to rise.

Saskatchewan producers are facing their third straight year of negative farm income — minus \$53,850, Madam Speaker, in realized net income in 2004, and minus \$85,652 in 2003.

Mr. Wartman, our Agriculture minister . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I ask all members to refer to other members of the Assembly by their constituency.

Mr. Stewart: — Madam Deputy Speaker, that was a slip of the tongue and I apologize.

The Agriculture minister:

. . . this week . . . ruled out any immediate . . . bailout and says existing farm support programs will meet the “basic needs” of producers hit by recent rains.

This is from the *Leader-Post*, September 15, 2005.

“If producers are in this much financial difficulty with these programs in effect already, what’s going to change?” That is a direct quote from the Minister of Agriculture, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it outlines his negative attitude towards helping agriculture.

Saskatchewan producers, Madam Deputy Speaker, are receiving average CAIS payments lower than the CAIS payments producers in Manitoba are receiving. Saskatchewan also has the highest number of CAIS claims in federally administered provinces which don’t include Alberta or Ontario.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the federal Department of Agriculture is requesting another \$273 million to cover CAIS payments for Canadian producers, and Alberta has just announced that it is investing an additional \$224 million into CAIS as they have found the program to be inadequate.

The federal government has just paid out 755 million in ad hoc farm assistance payments program; 292 million of this will go toward Saskatchewan grain and oilseeds producers. Madam Deputy Speaker, they clearly recognize the emergent situation in this province.

The federal government — even though the Liberals are spending for an election, and there’s no question about that — at least realizes that there is a farm income crisis in Canada and particularly in this province. With commodity prices hitting their lowest values in decades, producers have slim to negative reference margins and crop insurance is only covering a percentage of these already low prices.

Madam Deputy Speaker, producers who phone the Minister of Agriculture’s office are being told that they have to put their concerns in writing to get a call back or they don’t receive any attention at all to their concerns.

When this government can’t stop talking about a green and prosperous economy, producers currently receive absolutely no financial benefit for the variety of ecological goods that they produce for Saskatchewan people. Saskatchewan producers supply society with clean water through filtration by potholes on their land, provide clean air by sequestering CO₂ and nitrous oxide and other air pollutants.

[11:15]

Madam Deputy Speaker, the statistics show that if 50 per cent of Saskatchewan producers indulged in no-till practices, 12.9 million tonnes of CO₂ would be removed from the atmosphere. And I don’t have the numbers in front of me, Madam Deputy Speaker, but from my experience around Saskatchewan, I suggest that more than 50 per cent of Saskatchewan land is already farmed in that manner.

Agricultural land provides habitat for deer, waterfowl, coyotes, and numerous other prairie animals. Prairie potholes are

responsible for the production of 70 per cent of North America's waterfowl and still Saskatchewan producers see no benefit from this so-called green and prosperous economy. Out of this government, we have seen no meaningful proactive policy. Apparently agriculture will not be receiving any benefit from our green and prosperous economy.

The state of Minnesota, for instance, has enabled producers to own ethanol plants, thus giving producers money through selling their grain to the ethanol plant they own and then also making money after selling the ethanol. This has taken 8,000 producers in that state off production assistance. However in this province, the government tries to hold this part of the value chain instead of allowing producers to take part in it. They do that, Madam Deputy Speaker, through imaginary projects like the ethanol plant at Belle Plaine which never will come to fruition, Madam Deputy Speaker, because there never was a deal with this government although they said there was.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the greatest injustices that farmers in this province face is the high property taxes on agricultural land. We pay the highest property taxes in this country, Madam Deputy Speaker, on farm land by a long shot and therefore probably the highest property taxes in the continent.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this government's inattention to agriculture and the lack of any policy direction or vision is the main reason that Saskatchewan producers are hit even harder than producers in other parts of this country. They have refused to take part in the formation of the AIDA [agricultural income disaster assistance], CFIP [Canadian farm income program], and CAIS programs even though they were invited to by the federal government. And this government is responsible for scrapping the GRIP program.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in view of the fact that there are no meaningful attention to agriculture, I'm pleased to second the motion.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to make some remarks and following these remarks, I will move the following amendment to the motion. The amendment will read, will say:

That all the words after the word "government" be deleted and the following be substituted thereto:

continue to contribute to farm aid programs through sound strategic investments in agriculture; and

that this Assembly thank the federal government for the emergency trade injury funding of November 23, 2005 for grains and oilseeds; and further

that this Assembly call upon the federal government to recognize the special needs of Saskatchewan because it has a larger proportion of producers than other provinces

with nearly half the arable land in Canada; and further

that the 60/40 formula is unfair to Saskatchewan producers and taxpayers; and further

that this government and the official opposition work to ensure that the federal government continues to provide trade injury support which is solely the responsibility of the federal government.

I will move that following my remarks.

Madam Speaker, we have had this year, as has been referred to, unprecedented difficulties in agriculture. This is not the first year. There have been a series of years that are very difficult. And most of the reasons for the problems are far beyond the control of the producers.

Madam Speaker, as we look at agriculture in Saskatchewan, we see tremendous possibility. And there are sectors and there are areas that do well, and we want to make sure that all of agriculture is adequately supported.

Now in this House this morning, I want to say that there were partial quotes, made by members opposite, taken out of context, Madam Speaker. And I just think that this ongoing personal attack must indicate that we are having some positive affect with farmers in agricultures or they would not be going into the personal attack, cutting and pasting, and putting very distorted attacks out to the public.

Because, Madam Speaker, in regard to the statement that was referred to, it was very clearly . . . that we were saying it was federal government responsibility. And if the federal government is to going to fund their responsibility, for us to pay for it would be akin to throwing money away.

But, Madam Speaker, we believe fully that the farmers of this province, the producers of this province, need adequate support in the face of some of those issues. Some of those issues, Madam Speaker, are the huge subsidies that are being paid by the Americans which distort the market terribly; some of them are with regard to the EU [European Union] subsidies. And they leave our producers here at an incredible disadvantage. And according to the constitution of this land, the federal government is responsible for trade injury.

Madam Speaker, all of the Agriculture ministers across this province, who are meeting today, have indicated very, very clearly that we believe the federal government must take a larger portion of the support for agriculture. We have said very clearly, unanimously, that the federal government must put a trade injury component into CAIS and revise CAIS so that affordability issues are dealt with.

We're dealing, in this province, with a federal treasury of the US. We're trying to enable our producers to compete with that, and we need the support of our federal government.

One of the problems that has happened, Madam Speaker, is that the federal government of Canada has continued with ad hoc payments and not really made the kind of investments that will help us build a strong and stable agricultural economy. We can

say clearly that because of the pain that many farmers are feeling, that we do appreciate the monies which have come forward. We see this as trade injury. We appreciate it, but it is a federal responsibility.

With our responsibility we are investing money. We've invested new money in the meat strategy. We are investing in the programs that will provide long-term support for agriculture. And at the same time we are working with groups across the province and across the nation to try and build an agriculture policy framework that actually will provide the strength and the support for our agriculture industry. Short-term fixes really don't make a substantial difference.

As I travelled the province this summer and spoke to farmers, listened to what they had to say, they too were thankful for the funding that came in the spring, as they will be thankful for the funding that has come now. But they said consistently it made little difference. It helped me pay bills; it helped fill my fuel tanks. But, you know, it didn't change anything.

And what the Agriculture ministers from across this country, and myself included in this, what we are working for is to build a system in agriculture, a system of supports and a development plan that will provide long-term strength. And we have unanimously called on the federal government to provide more support to enable us to do that.

Madam Speaker, I don't think there's a provincial minister who hasn't indicated that this kind of support won't make a difference. I want to quote from GX Radio, where Alberta's Agriculture minister says:

There's better ways to help farmers than the \$755 million in aid announced by the federal government yesterday.

Doug Horner says it appears to be a hasty political move by the Liberals before the election call.

Their consultation was negligible here. And as again a unanimous group of provincial ministers, we had agreement from the federal government that they would not be doing these kind of ad hoc payments without consultation, and that they would never again invite, encourage, intimate in any way that the provincial government should be contributing to their ad hoc payments.

And you know what? I thank the federal minister for having the integrity and the strength and the courage to stand up against many of his colleagues and to not include those things in his announcement. Madam Speaker, he recognizes, as I'm afraid the conservative Sask Party across the way does not, that this government has been working to try and provide a solid foundation for agriculture in Saskatchewan, that we have been making significant strategic investments that will help build that foundation. Madam Speaker, this federal government must come to work with us to build a better agriculture policy framework that will provide long-term stability.

When we met yesterday with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, one of the things that becomes clear is that there is consistency across the nation that this needs to happen. We are in full agreement. We are working to try and provide that

stability. We know the pain that there is in the grains and oilseeds sector.

Madam Speaker, any intimation that the Conservatives opposite here might make — that we don't care, that we're not willing to invest — is absolutely wrong. And if they really want to help Saskatchewan farmers, instead of just taking cheap political shots, instead of distorting quotes by taking small pieces of them, publishing them in papers across the province, if they would get their act together and work with us to try and get support from the federal government, we might actually be able to make a difference for those farmers who they claim to care for. But all they try and do, Madam Speaker, is drive a small "p" political wedge between us and them. And that's wrong-headed, and it will not provide any help for Saskatchewan's farmers. If they care, they will work with us to build a long-term strategy and cut their cheap political theatrics.

Madam Speaker, we want to build a solid agriculture industry in Canada, in Saskatchewan. We are engaged in the WTO talks, Madam Speaker. We have worked with producers from across this province, with producer groups, to put together a strong, strong Saskatchewan and Canadian position to take to the WTO. Why? Because it is at that level we can deal with the subsidies that are causing so much pain to farmers in this land.

It's not about a quick payout. It's about long-term, thoughtful planning. It's about changing the world situation, changing those markets so that the prices that farmers get for their product are good, solid prices that will cover the costs of their inputs. That's the changes that we're working for. We are committed to making those changes and are wrestling with the other nations, standing with our federal government, standing with our other provincial partners, and standing with industry to make those changes. It's not about cheap, short-term payout.

Madam Speaker, I want to move the amendment, the amendment which reads again:

continue to contribute to farm aid programs through sound, strategic investments in agriculture: and

that this Assembly thank the federal government for the emergency trade injury funding of November 23, 2005 for grains and oilseeds; and further

that this Assembly call upon the federal government to recognize the special needs of Saskatchewan because it has a larger portion of producers than other provinces with nearly half the arable land in Canada; and further

that the 60/40 formula is unfair to Saskatchewan producers and taxpayers; and further

that this government and the official opposition work to ensure that the federal government continues to provide trade injury support which is solely the responsibility of the federal government.

I move, seconded by the member from Yorkton.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Thank you. It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, and seconded by the Deputy Premier, the member for Yorkton. The amendment before the Assembly — could we take the amendment as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[11:30]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton, the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm very pleased this morning to enter into the debate. On the conclusion of my comments I will be not supporting the motion of the member opposite from Saltcoats but will, Madam Deputy Speaker, be supporting the amendment as put forward by the Minister of Agriculture.

I want to say first to the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, that for those on the opposite benches, our newest conservative Saskatchewan Party, are talking about how it is, Madam Deputy Speaker, that somehow we have now an agricultural policy in Canada that's sort of sprung out of nothing.

And I want to say to the members opposite, Madam Deputy Speaker, that our national agricultural policy that we have today was developed by a team of Canadian agricultural ministers, both federal and provincial. They've been working on this policy, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the better part of five years.

And I hear the member from Saltcoats saying, what do we have? Well we can agree collectively in Canada today that the kinds of programs that we have in place today are not satisfying or meeting the kinds of needs that are necessary to address the kinds of crisis that exist in agriculture. Nobody, nobody debates that.

But for the members opposite from our newest conservative Saskatchewan Party who say to us that somehow the Saskatchewan administration or the Saskatchewan taxpayer or that the Saskatchewan government should be picking up the lion's share — which is the 40 per cent — in a policy, Madam Deputy Speaker, which should be changed in Canada, is unfair to Saskatchewan producers. And it's unfair to Saskatchewan taxpayers.

I hear on a regular basis, as does the Minister of Agriculture on this side of the House and our members, about how the members opposite stand in their place and are critical of the existing programs. And I don't suggest for a minute that there doesn't need to be changes. But why don't they stand in their places for at least on one occasion and suggest what the new agricultural Canadian farm policy should look like, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Not on one occasion have we heard, have we heard the member from Saltcoats who's the critic, who's the critic of Agriculture, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the province, stand up and say . . . other than his old affinity to GRIP, his old affinity to GRIP. The GRIP program disappeared in Canada, Madam Deputy Speaker, by all provinces years ago.

And there have been additional public programs for farmers and agriculture producers that have come along since then in the form of NISA [Net Income Stabilization Account] and in the form of AIDA, of which the members opposite also participated in having a debate about, and which Canadian producers said didn't work. Canadian producers said it didn't work and wanted yet another agricultural policy of which is why we have today, Madam Deputy Speaker, the CAIS program and the crop insurance program which is universally accepted by all provinces, not just Saskatchewan, which is universally accepted by all provinces.

But the biggest issue, Madam Deputy Speaker, is not what the member from Thunder Creek said. The highest injustice today to agricultural producers, and being a farmer myself, is that the fact that the property tax is an issue, which it is in rural Saskatchewan — that's not the highest injustice that we have as producers in Canada. The highest injustice we have in Canada, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that we're getting an unfair return for what we produce in this province and in this country. That's the highest injustice that we have today as agriculture producers.

That's what we need to be tying our attention to, Madam Deputy Speaker. And on this side of the House we have continued to argue that the formula of 60/40 is not appropriate. It's not appropriate for Saskatchewan producers or for Canadian producers.

Well the member from Saltcoats says he agrees with me. And then why — if he agrees with me, if the member from Saltcoats and the Agriculture critic agrees with me — why wouldn't he have in his motion today anywhere the language of 60/40? Why wouldn't he have in his language the motion of 60/40? Instead his motion reads that Saskatchewan taxpayers should be picking up the larger share or their lion's share and putting more money into subsidizing a agricultural farm policy and program of which should be paid for by Canadians.

Why would he say that in his motion where he calls on Saskatchewan taxpayers to pick up yet another 40 per cent of responsibility that should be sitting with the national government and the people of Canada? Why would you put that kind of a resolution in front of us? And I'll tell you why he put that kind of a resolution in front of us. Because the Saskatchewan Conservative policy has not changed from the late '90s and onwards.

Because when we had the member from Rosetown who was the leader of the opposition, who was the leader of the opposition, he said that what we should be doing is we should be changing the formula from 60/40. And as I said on other debates and on other occasions, he wasn't home for 10 minutes and he said we should be putting our money in, our 40 per cent of money in.

And they haven't changed their position since then because that's a national Conservative position, Madam Deputy Speaker. That's a national Conservative position that there not be any subsidies to Canadian farmers. They don't believe it, Madam Deputy Speaker. And why don't they believe it? Because they're married to the same agricultural policy that the federal government is married to. And they're married to the same agriculture farm policy, Madam Deputy Speaker, because

they are all of the same ilk.

We're talking today, Madam Deputy Speaker, of men and women today who support the Conservative agenda. They support the Conservative policy, Madam Deputy Speaker, and they don't support the subsidies. They don't support providing Canadian farmers with subsidy.

That's not the position on this side of the House. That's not the position, Madam Deputy Speaker, of Saskatchewan Canadian farmers. And now we got, now we got chirping from the back row, the member from Kindersley, who's going to be taking a vacation in the next little while, Madam Deputy Speaker, who'll be taking a vacation. Why? Because the guy who has their farm policy, Madam Deputy Speaker, will be returning to the House. And I bet you that when the member from Kindersley returns to this legislature, he will also be promoting so that we don't subsidize Saskatchewan farmers as the member from Kindersley is chirping today.

And I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, we should have in this motion . . . And I'll be looking forward, I'll be looking . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I remind all hon. members . . . Order. I remind all hon. members they will have an opportunity to enter into the debate, and I will recognize the Deputy Premier, the member from Yorkton.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm going to be watching carefully when we do the vote on this issue today, when we do the vote, to see whether or not the members opposite will be standing up and voting for the amendment — which in fact provides a different adjustment to the formula — which provides that the federal government provide the larger amount of its funding to Saskatchewan Canadian farmers. And I bet you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there won't be one member on that side of the House that will stand on the amendment.

And I know why they won't stand on the amendment. Because they don't believe that Saskatchewan Canadian farmers should be paying anything less than 60/40. I bet you that they will vote in opposition to that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, today Saskatchewan taxpayers should not be picking up, Saskatchewan taxpayers should not be picking up the 40 per cent share.

Are we pleased on this side of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we like to see, that we like to see the federal government putting additional money in? Absolutely we like to see the federal government putting additional money in. Do we want to see, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there is additional dollars today put in from the federal government to support at a higher level our Saskatchewan Canadian producers? Absolutely we support that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And our Minister of Agriculture has been at the federal table on an ongoing basis lobbying for that exact position. Our Minister of Agriculture, Madam Deputy Speaker, has today on record, in Saskatchewan and in Canada, with the agricultural ministers . . . our position where we should be changing the formula that we have today of which the federal government hasn't moved I

inch on.

And to have a debate in this legislature today for 75 minutes and have debates across the province where the members opposite are not, are not focusing on the kind of support that Saskatchewan Canadian farmers should have is shameful, Madam Deputy Speaker, shameful. And to have in a motion today that is led by the opposition, our newest Saskatchewan Conservative Party today, where they say that the Saskatchewan taxpayer should be putting a larger share of funding into this, into the farm agricultural package at the expense of Saskatchewan taxpayers, is unfathomable, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And so I say to the members opposite and I say to this House today, the biggest injustice today to Saskatchewan producers and Saskatchewan farmers is the injustice of which we get in the formula. And we should be working collectively together on that side of the House, on this side of the House, and not pointing fingers, and not pointing fingers, Madam Deputy Speaker, at the work that's been done by members on this side of the House to make a difference for Saskatchewan producers. Should not be trying to divide the producers in Canada today about the urban and the rural in the way in which Conservative politics takes its place in this province. Should not be dividing it, Madam Deputy Speaker, but should be working collectively today to achieve a policy that provides for greater financial support for Saskatchewan Canadian farmers based on a formula change.

And that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is what I'll be looking for when we're bringing this discussion to conclusion and seeing where the members opposite stand on that debate, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I'd like to begin by thanking the Deputy Premier for his remarks, specifically his prophecy of when the member from Kindersley returns to his seat as I'm not seeking re-election this time. I would like to thank him for that prophecy that I will be back at some point. And I'm gracious to you for the member from Yorkton.

Madam Speaker, one of the points not being mentioned by this Minister of Agriculture with regards to this money coming in is how much it is going to save the Saskatchewan treasury because of this simple fact, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the federal government announced assistance of \$292 million to Sask grain and oilseeds producers. This is anticipated to reduce the draw on the federal CAIS program by Saskatchewan producers by approximately \$42 million over the coming years. This being the case, the federal assistance of \$292 million will reduce the Saskatchewan CAIS commitment by approximately \$28 million, Madam Speaker.

He is making money callously, Madam Speaker, on the backs of Saskatchewan farmers. Has he mentioned this? No. Has he mentioned this?

This is simple math, Madam Speaker. He doesn't understand his own program. He wasn't at the table when they put the program together. And it's Saskatchewan farmers that continue to suffer because of his gross incompetence, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this government does not care about rural Saskatchewan. This government does not care about Saskatchewan farmers. And the statements coming out of that minister were absolutely ridiculous, that the only thing we need is a long-term agreement.

Madam Speaker, we have seen the results of 20 years of bargaining through the WTO process. It has netted nothing, Madam Speaker. Where has this, where has this government been over the last 14 years of putting together leadership on Canadian farm agricultural policy? It has been nowhere. Rather they would like to see crisis after crisis after crisis, and that's what that minister's record in particular has demonstrated, Madam Speaker.

They said, Madam Speaker, we're doing a good job, we're getting forward. And then at the other side of the coin, they ask for our participation. So which is it? Are you getting the results? Or do you need our help to get the results and we're the reason you're not getting the results? Madam Speaker, what this minister put forth was ridiculous.

And if you walk around Agribition, Madam Speaker, you'll find that that's what the producers think. That's what the producers think, Madam Speaker, when they cannot pay their bills. They are thankful for the money coming from the federal Liberal government right now. They need that by seeding. And I think they're going to be very surprised to hear that this is actually going to reduce the commitment of this provincial government by \$28 million. And where has the minister been on that fact?

The federal government has asked them to put more money in. If you ask any farmer in this province, would they like the provincial government to put their share in, they're going to say yes. And the reason for that is, is that there is a financial crisis out there that's been ongoing.

Madam Speaker, one of the reasons for the financial crisis is the support given by this government for the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board, which has seen in the last five years durum sales held at 70 per cent of production. That's a farm crisis in and of itself, Madam Speaker.

How, in an industry where good returns return between 10 and 15 per cent, are you supposed to even be able to pay your bills when 30 per cent of your product cannot be marketed due to the fact that there is a monopoly by the federal government strongly supported by that NDP Party?

Madam Speaker, this is just one of the areas of incompetence demonstrated by that minister and that party. They do not understand agriculture. They do not understand the plight of farm families. And the little that they do understand, Madam minister, they are callous, would destroy farm communities, and they'll go forth for what they believe at the end of the day can be their own political gain.

They know that farmers will not be fooled. They know that

since 1991 their support in rural Saskatchewan has gone one way — down, down, down. And their answer to that, Madam Speaker, is well if we're not going to get support there, let's kill it as quickly as we can. And that has been the direct, the direct, direct actions of this government.

That Deputy Premier said it's shameful. It's shameful that we would call on the province of Saskatchewan to put in its 40 per cent. Madam Speaker, it's shameful that the best negotiating that the minds on that side of this Assembly were able to come up with was 60/40. But that's their bed. They made it. They lie in it and now they're going to punish producers for their complete lack of leadership federally in designing the programs the Canadian agriculture requires.

[11:45]

I don't believe, Madam Speaker, the CAIS disaster. And they think that they sign on to the program, and then at the end of the day say oh yes, and we're actually, we're going to keep our commitment and put our money into it. And this is somehow some sort of, this is some sort of victory.

Madam Speaker, it would be wonderful if the federal government would pick up a much larger share. It would be wonderful, Madam Speaker, if having 48 per cent of the arable acres in this dominion, we had more than 3.9 per cent of the quota in supply management. But do we? No we don't. Is it even raised by this minister? It's questionable, Madam Speaker, what kind of relationship exists at all with Ottawa. The NDP are the central Canadian governments' whipping boy when it comes to agriculture.

And you know, Madam Speaker, having had the opportunity to work in downtown Toronto, live in Victoria, British Columbia, when people think of Saskatchewan and farming, it's kind of our thing. There's a reason for it. You know when fish subsidies have to come, they're not expecting Saskatchewan to be leading the charge. They kind of leave that to the people and the government of Newfoundland. When it comes to agriculture, they ignore Saskatchewan altogether because this is a government that likes to ignore the farmers, it likes to ignore the heritage, and it likes to ignore the potential.

This is a government . . . What have they done on the property tax issue? For 60 years they have not moved on this issue. What is the reason for this? It's because at the end of the day, Madam Speaker, they fear farmers being independent. They fear independent thought. They fear the lack of control. They fear, they fear people building their own communities, not having communities built for them. At the end of the day they fear private property and ownership, Mr. Speaker. They fear these things. They fear initiative. They fear success, Madam Speaker.

The lowest common denominator is the bread and butter of this NDP government. And they're able to demonstrate that through the longest waiting lists for health care in the country.

For out-migration, Madam Speaker, they're able to show, as the member from Prince Albert once said, the more people that leave, the more that's left for the rest of us. I wonder how his constituents are feeling at this point, Madam Speaker, when he drove an investor for the plant, Weyerhaeuser plant that's

closing, right out of this province.

And what did they come up with in their Speech from the Throne? We're going to convert 10 per cent of the agricultural land in Saskatchewan to trees. This is their answer, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we are long overdue for a good federal policy on agriculture, but that should be led by Saskatchewan. And sadly, it will not be. Instead what we're going to see is this \$292 million put in by the federal government is going to actually reduce the payments to CAIS from the Saskatchewan treasury by approximately \$28 million.

And this government will be happy about that, taking money formerly committed to Saskatchewan farmers out of their pocket. They won't replace it. And the reason is, Madam Speaker, the statements made by that minister were of a mendacious, mendacious, mendacious . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I do know that the use of the word has been used in the Assembly before. We'll look at that carefully. But I ask the member to refrain at present from that in his debate.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we have the problem that what has been presented by this minister in this debate is not representative of the truth and will hurt farm families. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations, the member for Meadow Lake.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to join into this debate as well. Representing a rural riding, it's obviously of particular interest to me. I will speak against the main motion but speak in favour of the amended motion that says that our provincial government:

continue to contribute to farm aid programs through some strategic investments in agriculture; and

that this Assembly thank the federal government for the emergency trade injury funding of November 23, 2005 for grains and oilseeds; and further

that this Assembly call upon the federal government to recognize the special needs of Saskatchewan because it has a larger portion of producers than other provinces, with nearly half the arable land in Canada; and further, Madam Speaker,

that the 60/40 formula is unfair to Saskatchewan producers and taxpayers; and further

that this government and the official opposition work to ensure that the federal government continues to provide trade injury support which, is solely the responsibility of the federal Saskatchewan.

Madam Speaker, I want to, as I said, speak in favour of that amended motion and tell you that I have desperately tried to understand the rationale of the original motion. And I want to

say this. Just think about this if you will. It says generally, Madam Speaker, that producers don't have enough money, that they are in income crisis. I agree, With the exception of, largely of cattle producers, I agree with that notion.

But here's where the logic starts to falter, Madam Speaker. It says this as well. It says that those same producers who are short of money should be the same people who should contribute in a significant way, Madam Speaker, to provide that additional funding.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand when people are critical of taking money from one pocket and moving it to the other, taking money from Peter to pay Paul. Madam Speaker, what I don't understand at all is to suggest a motion that suggests that you should take no money from one pocket and move that no money into another pocket and somehow those same people are better off, Madam Speaker. It makes no sense whatsoever.

Madam Speaker, I want to go on by saying the following. I say this. In light of the continuing difficulties plaguing the grain and oilseed sectors, we certainly as a government and as a province, I think it's fair to say, we welcome the federal government's recent announcement of \$775 million aid package to Canada. The funding announcement certainly represents much-needed support to the agricultural sector and we are obviously particularly encouraged that the money will be distributed, I think, as I understand it, fairly quickly.

Saskatchewan believes strongly of course that it is the responsibility of the national government to fund the recently announced aid package, as the income stresses that farmers are experiencing is severe. But I do say, Madam Speaker, that those income stresses and pressures are a direct result of natural causes and largely of trade injury, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, you know I want to — seeing that my time is fairly limited — I want to jump ahead. The member from Rosetown, I know when he was a federal MP [Member of Parliament], used to speak frequently, Madam Speaker, frequently used to speak about the need to eliminate subsidies, period. That it should be a free market. And I know he voted in favour of the elimination of the Crow benefit, which it'll vary a bit but it's somewhere between 4 and \$500 million on an annual basis here in Saskatchewan.

Well I'm wondering where that member stands now. Madam Speaker, he's not in the Assembly today. But I know, Madam Speaker, that it would put him in an interesting predicament, Madam Speaker. Interesting predicament, Madam Speaker, because you can't, I think, in one life speak about the need for no subsidies and then be part of Saskatchewan's Conservative Party that now makes a motion that there should be subsidies. So it's an interesting predicament.

Madam Speaker, as well I think it's clear with the lack of agricultural policy from those Saskatchewan Conservatives over there, Madam Speaker, that the reason that you see so much contradiction is probably the same reason they sit on the fence, Madam Speaker, and really have no agricultural policy at all. And I listened with interest as well to the member from Kindersley who said . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. At the time I didn't hear, but I am reminded and remind all hon. members that you are not to refer to members present or absent within the Assembly. And I ask the member to give his speech accordingly.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Madam Speaker, I apologize for that error. The member from Kindersley as well in his remarks, Madam Speaker, referred to the lack of progress at WTO. Well I agree with that, Madam Speaker.

But what is that member suggesting? Is that member suggesting as the motion suggests that what should be put in place is simply short-term solutions? I think not, Madam Speaker. I think we need to continue to work at the WTO and with the federal government. And the federal government should be taking a lead on these issues that are largely trade.

Madam Speaker, in addition to that, the member also says, the hon. member from Kindersley says that when there was issues — as there still are by the way — related to the fishing industry in Atlantic Canada, who paid for that, Madam Speaker? He says that it was paid for by Atlantic Canada. Madam Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. That's ridiculous.

That's where the argument started here in Saskatchewan where we said, look if the federal government is going to contribute to funds for farmers across Canada, including fishermen, Madam Speaker, they should also help Saskatchewan producers. They shouldn't only look after people in Eastern and Atlantic Canada where I would argue lots of their votes are.

Madam Speaker, again I say that this subsidy, this aid package that the federal government has put in place is hugely appreciated. But again, Madam Speaker, our provincial government contributes in a significant way.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The debate portion of the motion and amendment has expired. I'll now move to question and answer and remind members that those who participate in the debate will also participate in the question and answer portion.

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Hart: — Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe that the rules of the 75-minute debate allow all members of the legislature to ask questions. And therefore I would like to ask a question to what . . . put a question to the Minister of Agriculture who spoke during the debates.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member is correct. And you would be then asking questions of those members participating in the debate. I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, in today's *Leader-Post* there's an article that reported on a meeting that I believe the Minister of Agriculture attended along with industry representatives and other government officials, perhaps from other provinces, and reports that there are gaps in the current agricultural policy framework. And to quote what the president of the Canadian Federation of

Agriculture, Bob Friesen, had to say, and I'm quoting, it says Friesen says everybody agrees that:

. . . there has to be a dramatic change in long-term agricultural policies to ensure the sustainability of Canada's agricultural industry.

Madam Deputy Speaker, last spring, Madam Deputy Speaker, when I asked the Minister of Agriculture where they were on such things as sequestering carbon and helping the Saskatchewan producers zero in on that policy, Madam Deputy Speaker, he said he was too early. They talk about long-term policies, Madam Deputy Speaker, but they don't put anything forward.

My question is to the minister of Agriculture: what is this government doing and what is he putting forward in terms of long-term agricultural policy that will fix this problem once and for all?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In direct terms regarding the carbon sequestration, we have made a significant advance towards the federal government around making sure that those who are practising good agricultural practices with regard to zero till will receive credit.

But to this point, Madam Speaker, we have had a continued reaction from the federal government saying that, oh well, for those people it's just business as usual so they wouldn't receive credits. But we have continued to push on this front. And we think that in . . . as we pressure this we can look at Quebec and we can see the kind of supports that hydro and other industries there are getting for their business as usual, and they'll be able to account for credits.

And again we call for equity across this country and we will continue to push so that our folks get credit for their carbon sequestration.

[12:00]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Both sides of the House are on record numerous times that they agree that the federal government is responsible for trade injury. But where they differ is that the province has responsibilities as well. And this province doesn't seem to want to recognize any of their responsibilities. It's amazing to me that a number of the speakers in this particular debate have said again, and it's a silly-bugger game that they continuously play, is every time . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I'd ask the member to use words in the Assembly to befit the decorum of the Assembly.

Ms. Harpauer: — Sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a silly game that they play all the time where they stand up and say that any federal government is a trade injury. So my question

for the minister is this: was there anything in the announcement from Ottawa or have the officials phoned him directly and told him that this payment is earmarked for trade injury?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. Absolutely not. There was nothing in any federal communication that indicated this was for trade injury. It is one of the ongoing fights that we have had, and we will continue to have with the federal government, that they are responsible for trade injury. It is an issue of trade injury that farmers are suffering. It is through no fault of their own that they are suffering, Madam Speaker, it is because of trade injury.

And the federal government payment accounts for some of those losses — and we're thankful for them. But you know it only comes — what they put in, in the spring and now — only comes to about half of what the trade injury is. So I appreciate the question. And the reality is that they have not done the full amount that they should to support our farmers for trade injury. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Meadow Lake, the Minister for First Nations and Métis Relations.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. My question is for the hon. member from Kindersley. You know as long as we've been in government I remember these debates going on about the 60/40 split and the unfairness of it. And I have one question and I'm looking for a very simple yes or no answer.

Is my recollection correct? Was the federal government in power at the time that this was negotiated, the federal Conservative government? And was the provincial government in power at the time when the 60/40 was negotiated, the Devine Conservative government, Madam Speaker? And I'm simply looking for a yes or a no to that question, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to answer the minister's question and I thank him for it. The 60/40 split has been something that all members in this Assembly have been concerned with. It is sadly a situation that continually the Government of Saskatchewan hasn't been able to produce a better deal for the taxpayers of this province. But that sadly, Madam Speaker, isn't surprising when we see the overall lack of leadership and direction that's come forth over the past 14 years from this NDP government.

With that being said, Madam Speaker, the farmers of this province would like, would like their government provincially to keep their word — when they say they're going to put 40 per cent in or when they make that commitment, that they do that, Madam Speaker. And further, when they recognize that the federal government realizes the crisis — they put their money in — and from that point they expect this government to do the same. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton, the Minister of Ag and . . . sorry.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. In our agriculture vision and plan, we often talk about how it is that we are going to invest publicly using public tax dollars to help build the agriculture economy by investing in value-added, by investing in primary production, where we actually take provincial tax dollars and we invest it in those projects.

And I've heard, Madam Deputy Speaker, on a number of occasions, the member from Thunder Creek stand up and definitively say that he would not — in their government if they were — would never ever invest in public enterprise in the province.

I want to ask the member from Saltcoats: what is the position of the Saskatchewan Conservative opposition in making investments, public investments in rural Saskatchewan communities, where you actually take tax dollars and invest it in projects across the province as we've done in many of your constituencies? What is your party's position on that issue?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well I thank the member for his question. And I find in one of the previous questions, Madam Speaker, that the Minister of Agriculture said that this is not trade injury money. Something he said that when it's trade injury, that government is not responsible.

If this is not trade injury money, then that government does have a responsibility to put some money into the program. And if they don't like 60/40, which we agree is an unfair formula, put 20 per cent in. But put something in because, as my colleague from Kindersley mentioned before, is that this government is actually going to make money because there's a reduced payout from the CAIS program because of this money that the federal government's putting in.

I find it shameful that that government would actually make money off a payout that should go to the farmers of Saskatchewan and would not even put any money in, especially the money that they're going to make down the road that they don't have to put their share of into the CAIS program because the CAIS program will call for less of a payout.

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member from Regina Dewdney on his feet?

Mr. Yates: — Request leave to ask a question — to ask a question.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney with leave to introduce guests.

Mr. Yates: — No, I'm not . . . I was going to ask a question.

The Deputy Speaker: — Oh, all right. You're entering the debate. Well it is . . . I recognize the member from Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. My question is to the member from Yorkton. He talked about the 60/40 split which he thought was unfair. Well I'll ask him, farmers out there right now on their land are paying a 60/40 split right now with education tax. And they're paying 60 per cent of that right now. So I will ask him if he feels that that is unfair. And if he does, will he rectify that right now?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Madam Deputy Speaker, on this side of the House we have already made adjustments and made additional investments in education property tax. We're on record not only saying what we're going to do. We actually made the investments at 8 per cent — \$55 million a year over the next two years — and continue to meet with SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and say that we're going to do more, Madam Deputy Speaker.

But you see I want to know what the Saskatchewan Conservative opposition's policy is on agriculture because I have here, I have here on record Mr. Boyd, who said in 2002 that we should just be waiting for a couple of more weeks that we're going to get his report. And then we have the member from Rosetown, Madam Deputy Speaker, saying that . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. The debate and questions and answers were very lively and I commend all members but the time has expired for the 75-minute debate. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would move this House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has moved that the House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Motion carried. This House does now stand adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:09.]

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