



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

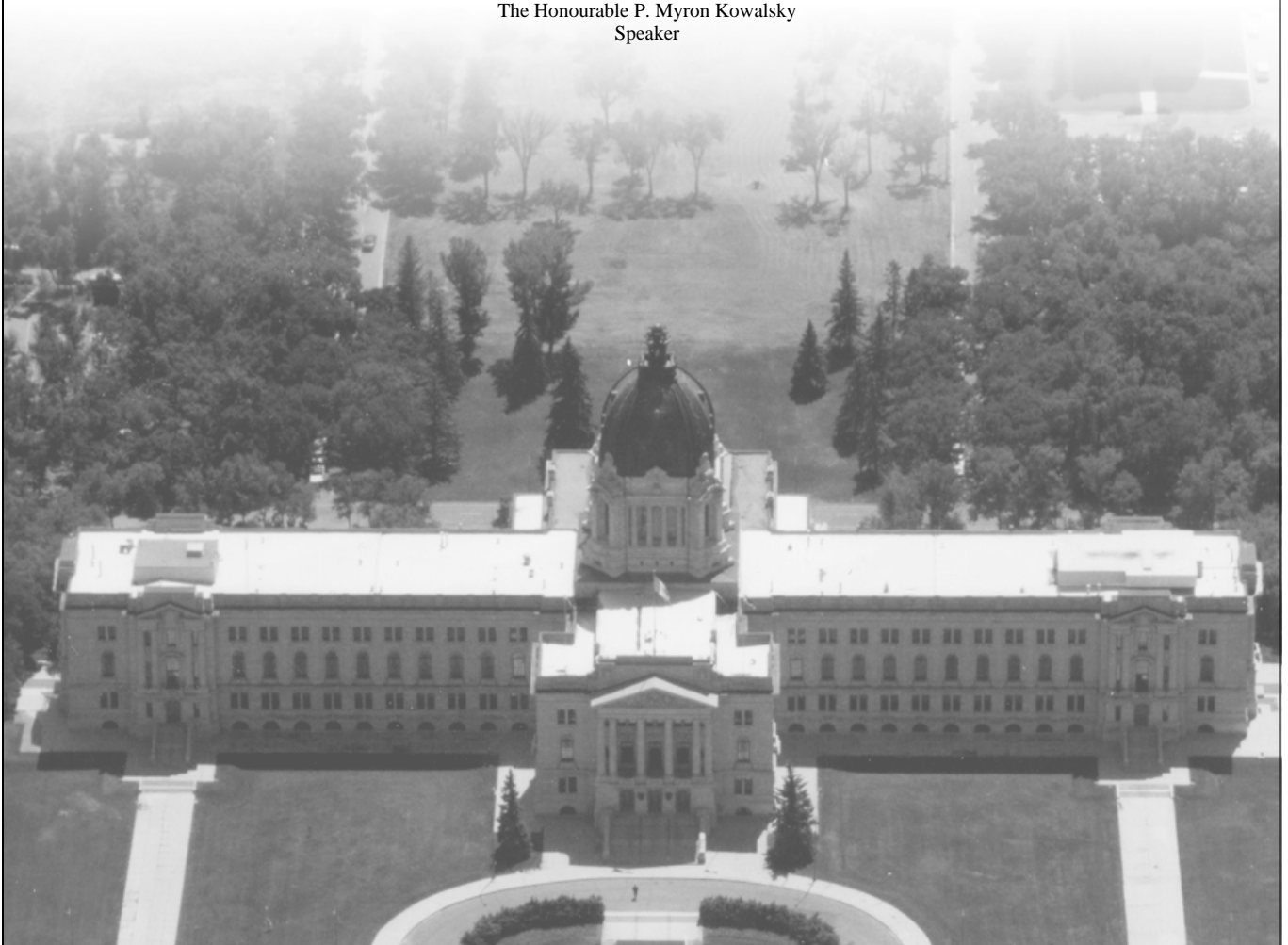
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**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
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornrud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, 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, Hon. 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
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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, Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
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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, Hon. Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Weyburn-Big Muddy

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ANNOUNCEMENT

Introduction of Pages

The Speaker: — Well good afternoon, everyone. And welcome back, members and sessional staff.

Before we go into routine proceedings, it's my pleasure at this time to introduce your Pages for this session. I would ask the Pages to rise as I call their names and stay standing. Our Pages are: Patrick Button, Mosopefoluwa Ogunrinde — Sope for short — Michael Radmacher, Nicolas Stulberg, Kyla Will. A sixth Page, Mandy Selzer, will be joining us later this month. She's currently representing Canada at the junior curling championship in Korea.

Members, your Pages for this session.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last three sessions I've presented petitions on behalf of communities along Highway 32 from the town of Cabri to the town of Leader. I continue that tradition today, Mr. Speaker.

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 32 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these three pages of petitions are from individuals in the communities of Liebenthal, Prelate, Sceptre, Mendham, and Herbert. I so present.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise again today on behalf of people who are concerned about Highway No. 310. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to repair Highway 310 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth and tourism in Foam Lake, Fishing Lake, Kuroki, and surrounding areas.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The people who have signed this petition are from Kelvington, Invermay, Foam Lake, Regina, and Wadena. I so present.

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have a petition, a number of pages actually, of citizens concerned about 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 Annaheim, Macklin, Tisdale, Quill Lake, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Battleford, Kelvington, Kamsack, Viscount, Lake Lenore, Preeceville, Bruno, Meacham, Archerwill, Daulton, and Englefeld. I so present.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to read a petition from constituents who are opposed to possible health care reductions. The prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to present a petition from parents in the constituency of Saskatoon Silver Springs regarding a much needed elementary school in the Arbor Creek area of Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition 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 implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build an elementary school in Arbor Creek.

The petitioners today live on Horlick Crescent, Peters Cove, and Rossmo Road in northeast Saskatoon. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens from the town of Davidson that are 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 remain open at its current level of customer service and available to all SaskPower customers in the Davidson and surrounding service area.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by citizens from the town of Davidson. 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:

Petition concerning a new hospital in Humboldt — that's sessional paper no. 47 — and addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 4, 7, 8, 13, 19, 22, 33, 38, and 42.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 24 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Property Management: how much revenue did the department receive on the sale of the Echo Valley Conference Centre to the town of Fort Qu'Appelle?

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a number of questions to the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety. I give notice that I shall on day no. 24 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety: as of March 14, 2006, how many overdue boiler inspections are there in the Swift Current area? Also as of March 14, 2006, how many overdue boiler inspections are there in Saskatchewan?

And another question: as of March 14, 2006, how many boiler inspector positions are there in Saskatchewan and how many of these positions are vacant? As of March 14, '05, how many boiler inspector positions were there in Saskatchewan and how many of these positions were vacant? And, Mr. Speaker, as of March 14, '05 how many overdue boiler inspections are there in Saskatchewan?

And finally to the minister of public safety and corrections: as of March 14, 2005, how many overdue boiler inspections were there in the Swift Current area?

Thank you.

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several questions to the Minister of Community Resources. I give notice that I shall on day no. 24 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister of Community Resources: has the department received any letters or written verbal reports from individuals or organizations concerned about the welfare of children at the Oyate Safe House, and if so when were these letters or reports received by the department?

To the same minister: as per recommendations of the legislative committee on the prevention of exploitation of children through the sex trade, did the department ensure that the Oyate Safe House could adequately protect children in its care to providing the organization with funding, and if so what steps were taken?

To the same minister: how many children have utilized the services of the Oyate Safe House since it opened two and a half years ago, and how many have ended their participation in the sex trade?

To the same minister: how has the department monitored the success of these programs being delivered through the Oyate Safe House?

To the same minister: is the Department of Community Resources and Employment aware of any instances where children who resided at the Oyate Safe House have returned to work in the sex trade, and if so how many children does the department know of who have returned to work in the sex trade?

To the same minister: what accountability measures were put in place when the Department of Community Resources and Employment first provided money to the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council for the Oyate Safe House?

To the same minister: did the Department of Community Resources and Employment monitor how the money provided to the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council was being spent, and if so indicate what steps were taken to ensure financial oversight of the Oyate Safe House.

To the same minister, final question: how many agreements similar to that of the Oyate Safe House does the Department of Community Resources have with other community organizations that provide services to child victims of the sex trade? And what reporting and monitoring procedures are currently in place to monitor those other organizations?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the privilege today to introduce two friends of one of our new Pages, Kyla Will. In the galleries, Mr. Speaker, are Mercedes Will and Hilda May Hobbs.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me today to introduce to you and through you to all of the members of the Assembly two very special Arlenes that are sitting in your gallery. I'll introduce them separately if I may.

I'd first like to introduce to this Assembly . . . Well both of these women are certainly no strangers to members here. The first Arlene I'll introduce is Arlene Heppner. Maybe Arlene will stand.

And certainly we're happy that Arlene's here because that means she's brought Ben with her. And may I just say at this point in introduction of guests that we want to make sure that Ben understands, and certainly Arlene understands, that our prayers are with him — with Ben — and with the family as they fight this newest battle. And we are so very grateful that he is here right where he belongs in the Legislative Assembly.

We also want to . . . Yes.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — We also want to thank Arlene very publicly for her support for Ben and her leadership in their family. As you all know, Mr. Speaker, Arlene is an entrepreneur, although I understand some changes have recently occurred there and she is obviously a mother and a wife, and she is special to the entire constituency of Martensville, certainly to the Saskatchewan Party. And frankly I would point out that when she accompanies Ben down here, Ben seems a little nicer actually when Arlene's with him.

I'd also like to introduce another woman in the gallery, in your gallery, who's no stranger to this Assembly. She was a very, very effective member, MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Humboldt and, who knows, might one day pursue that career again — I don't know. Arlene Julé. I wonder if Arlene would stand and accept the welcome of members of the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to introduce one of the legislative interns because I think everyone would like to introduce their own. With me during this three months part of the session is Haley Gagnon, and she's sitting up there behind the clock. Haley, if you can stand up and wave.

So I want to give you a couple of things about Haley. She's a proud member of the Red River Métis community in both

Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In 2002 she was selected to represent Saskatchewan as a member of the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] commissioner's national youth advisory committee.

Following in the footsteps of her grandfather, father, and uncles, Haley has been actively associated with the Canadian military. She is currently a member of the 16th Service Battalion of the Canadian Armed Forces based in Saskatoon.

She's in her third year of studies at the University of Saskatchewan and she's pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Aboriginal public administration. I'm very happy to have her assisting me for these three months.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I have one more. Also up in the gallery is Justin Messner. He is the researcher that the Human Services Committee, the standing committee of the legislature, has hired to assist us during our public hearings. So he's the first person that's been doing that, and we'd like to welcome him here to the legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce an intern as well today. Justin Leifso is the intern for myself this time and he gave me a bio for himself which I promptly left on my desk. So I'm going to make this up for him.

Justin is attending the U of R [University of Regina] where he's doing his master's degree in political science and is busy trying to work on a thesis. He's from Moose Jaw and originally from Crane Valley which he was surprised that I even remembered. Mr. Speaker, Justin is working on a research program for me dealing with gaming across Canada and where it's going. It's a very important issue for all of us across Canada, and I'm sure that I will receive an excellent report from Justin in time for his duties here. Thank you very much. I'd like to welcome him here.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a constituent and also mother of one of our Pages, Nicolas Stulberg — Nicolas's mother, Carol, who is up in the gallery. And Carol works for the Department of Highways and Transportation, and we're really glad to have her here with us today and also to be able to welcome Nicolas as a Page. Thank you and join me in welcoming them please.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce a Page as well, Michel Carpentier, who is . . . intern rather, I'm sorry . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Move my desk to the hall. Mr. Speaker, I share this intern with the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Michel was born in Arborfield and raised on a farm near Zenon Park. He was active in high school politics and served as a high school SRC [student representative council] representative. In 2004 he obtained a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree in political studies with a minor in history from the University of Saskatchewan and is currently completing a Master of Arts degree in political studies at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] as well.

Mr. Speaker, he has held several positions with the Arts and Science Students' Union and served as president during the 2003-2004 academic year.

He has been very active in sports as well and includes baseball, volleyball, soccer, football, curling, inter-tube water polo, and inner-tube basketball; and is currently a member of the Gopher men's rugby team.

Earlier this fall, Mr. Speaker, he had a large divot on his head as a result of a rugby experience, and I note that it has not adversely affected his ability to work hard and to provide competent work. I know that in a short while he is going to be going over and working on the dark side. And I want to tell the members opposite that they will be very well received.

We recently did a trip out of town and without prompting he was able to bring doughnuts for everyone who was travelling with us. So he is fulfilling all of his obligations extremely well, and I want to ask all members to welcome Michel to the House and appreciate his humour and good work as he works on both sides.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too am very honoured to have a member of the Saskatchewan legislative internship program working with me. The program is valuable in that it provides them with the experience to work with an MLA and understand how all of the processes work and such. It also provides a valuable tool for MLAs in terms of providing research for us and also helpful advice on occasion as well.

So I have Stewart Low working with me at this time, and perhaps Stewart could rise. He's received his early education in Rouleau, Saskatchewan, and his family subsequently moved to Regina where he graduated from Martin Collegiate. Stewart was a member of Saskatchewan's provincial field hockey team and also served a stint on the junior national team. Stewart and I have a passion for sports in common which is also quite nice. He currently holds levels 1 and 2 tactical and technical coaching certificates and has held several positions as an executive board

member of the Saskatchewan Field Hockey Association.

He was enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan and graduated in 2005 with a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree. He has some very special accomplishments that he can be very proud of. His major was in international studies, and his minor was in political studies. He has been a member of the Golden Key International Honour Society which recognizes students whose academic accomplishments place them in the top 15 per cent of their college. And during his final year, Stewart's research paper titled "Banking on Development: The Role of the International Political Economy as a Tool for Development" was nominated for the Barron-Garcea Essay Prize. So he has, like I said, a lot of things that he can already be proud of at this stage in his life.

Stewart has served as a member-at-large for the International Studies Student Association at the University of Saskatchewan. And clearly, I would have to say, the proudest accomplishment that Stewart would brag about is his marriage to his wife, Miranda, who is a teacher with the Saskatoon Public School Division.

So I'd like the Chamber to currently welcome Stewart Low to the Legislative Assembly and also welcome him to the legislature for this session. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce a constituent of mine, Mr. David Brown, from the community of Kyle. David Brown is vice-president with APAS, the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, an organization formed in the year 2000 to serve agriculture.

It's quite a challenge that you and your organization have taken on, and we have enjoyed working with them. And we know that the producers of Saskatchewan appreciate the fine work that David and his organization does on behalf of their industry. It could never have happened at a more critical time. And I'd like the Assembly to welcome David Brown.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the legislature two guests, one from Regina and one from Kelowna — Stella Bosley who's here from Regina and Molly Wunderlich who's visiting us from Kelowna, BC [British Columbia].

Stella lives in Regina and is recently retired from Sears where she spent many years working on behalf of all of us that attend to Sears once in awhile. And Molly is a former Saskatchewan resident who many years ago moved to Kelowna, but she has a habit of coming back to Saskatchewan in the middle of winter. She likes visiting the province in winter, and we are extremely

pleased to see her here. I know that even though Molly lives in British Columbia, she is still a proud Saskatchewan daughter. So welcome to the legislature this afternoon, and I hope you enjoy question period.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a very good friend of our family and someone who lives in the community of Kenaston which would be in the constituency of Arm River. Her name is Margaret George, and we're happy to have her here in her Legislative Assembly. And I'd ask all members to welcome her. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members, I have two other guests that I would wish to introduce at this time. They are the parents of Michael Radmacher. They are Gordon and Marion Radmacher who are both here today to see their son in action. And they are both retired school teachers. Welcome to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Selection of Lloydminster Constituency Candidate

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Speaker, today with the new start of the legislature there is also other changes sweeping the province and one of which of course is a change in the candidate selected for the Lloydminster constituency. A bright, new, young candidate was selected last night to a sellout crowd of over 400. And I say young because lots of people look young to me at my age.

The candidate selected last night was Tim McMillan. Tim McMillan, a great selection from a field of six excellent people all more than capable of serving our constituency and certainly capable of winning the next election over this tired old NDP [New Democratic Party] government. What we saw last night was youth, excitement, optimism, and hard work by candidates and most importantly, over 700 voters in all turned out for nomination meetings.

Now Tim McMillan is a young professional with a commitment to building his life and his family's life right here in Saskatchewan. He graduated from the University of Victoria and he uses his economic degree working in places like London, England and other places around the world. He has chosen to return to Saskatchewan establishing a business as well as becoming a very successful rancher just east of Lloydminster. Returning to Saskatchewan, Tim is a role model for the young people of our region and indeed for all the province. As was said last night at the nomination meeting — bring it on.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier, the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Celebrating the Life of Saskatchewan's Oldest Citizen

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the memory and celebrate the remarkable life of Mary MacIsaac who passed away Friday in Saskatoon at the age of 112.

Mary was Saskatchewan's oldest resident and at the time of her passing, by all accounts, was Canada's second oldest citizen. I think it should be noted that among her many lifelong interests and activities Mary was still an enthusiastic cross-country skier well into her 11th decade.

Mr. Speaker, her incredible longevity is only but one part of an extraordinary life. Mary MacIsaac came to this province as an immigrant in 1916 from New Brunswick, gave a remarkable lifetime to education in this province. She taught in one capacity or another from 1919 to 1999 and even to her passing remained a teacher.

I was with Mary last year when the two of us were treated to the performance by an elementary school choir. And Mary MacIsaac said to me during their performance, Premier, you know they're a little bit out of tune but they will learn, they're only young. Throughout her life in this province Mary always cited her greatest accomplishment in her family — her husband Jack and their five children.

She was a colleague of Tommy Douglas. She was a devoted advocate of medicare and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, a lifelong, committed social democrat. Mary had a very simple yet eloquent motto. She used to say, the only thing that counts in life when it's over is what you've done for others. Today we recognize the passing of Saskatchewan's oldest citizen.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

A Woman's Service in Afghanistan

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, Wednesday, March 8, was International Women's Day. International Women's Day is an important day around the world because the collective power of women is celebrated by millions, and the brave achievements of women past, present, and future are respectfully honoured. I would like to do so for one such woman in the North Saskatchewan Regiment who is currently serving in Afghanistan.

Currently there are five members of the North Saskatchewan Regiment serving in Afghanistan. One is Lieutenant Guinevere Bourque, also an employee at SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology], who is serving in Afghanistan as part of a civil and military affairs team. Lieutenant Bourque's mission is to work with local Afghan officials to determine the most effective way of rebuilding the

infrastructure of the country. She works to find out the needs of the Afghan people and recommends solutions through the chain of command as to how to meet those needs. She was recently involved in the provision of services to rebuild a school destroyed by the insurgents.

Lieutenant Bourque is typical of all men and women of the army reserve who are citizens of our province and who also have civilian careers. Many of these people have put their lives at risk and have put themselves into significant danger to serve our country. In recognition of Lieutenant Bourque's excellent service to our country and to the world, I would like to thank her for her valiant service and wish her and her fellow soldiers in Afghanistan all the best in their new mission.

I would like to ask all members to join in recognizing International Women's Day, and specifically the accomplishments of Lieutenant Bourque and her hard work and putting her life at risk. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Welcome to Brier Participants

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to extend a warm Saskatchewan welcome to everyone — players, officials, and spectators — who are in Regina this week to be part of the 2006 Tim Hortons Brier and Parti Gras, which of course includes a cruise down Beerbon Street and into the Brier Patch.

Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan curling is so much a part of our history and our culture that it has been named our provincial sport. That's one reason why I think it's fitting that this is the third time since the year 2000 that the national men's curling championship is being hosted by a Saskatchewan city. Just two years ago Saskatoon hosted the 75th Brier and made it an incredible success.

That's the other thing, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people really know how to host a party like this — not just organize it, but host it with all the skill and enthusiasm and spirit of community and volunteerism that goes into putting on a successful, high-profile national event.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating Bernie McIntyre and all the organizers, thanking the volunteers, the tremendous work they do, and in welcoming the participants of the Brier to Regina and wishing all the competitors every success.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the competitors from other provinces and territories will understand if we show a lot of pride for our Saskatchewan rink — Pat Simmons, Jeff Sharp, Chris Haichert, and Ben Hebert — just a little more than the rest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Historic Anniversary of Women's Suffrage in Saskatchewan

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, it is a pleasure to rise today to commemorate an important day in Saskatchewan history. Ninety years ago today women who were British citizens won the right to vote in Saskatchewan provincial elections and moved forward in our journey towards full equality in the eyes of the law.

The question of women's suffrage was first raised in the legislature in 1912 by Conservative member J.E. Bradshaw from Prince Albert. In the debate that followed, both government and opposition supported the idea in principle. However the official position of the provincial government was that women would only secure the franchise once they had demonstrated it. Saskatchewan women responded by sending hundreds of letters and petitions to the government demanding the right to vote.

Finally in 1916 Saskatchewan became the second province in Canada to extend the franchise to women of British citizenship. It was an important step forward for women and paved the way for the election of this legislature's first woman — Sarah Ramsland — in 1919 from what was then the riding of Pelly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier, the member for Yorkton.

Recognition of Saskatchewan's Olympians

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan loves the Olympics, and we love our Olympians. I'd like to congratulate all of our athletes who made it to Turin, and congratulations to all those who brought medals home.

Shaunavon's Hayley Wickenheiser and Kennedy's Colleen Sostorics were both part of the gold-medal-winning women's hockey team. Regina's Justin Warsylewicz won the silver medal in speed skating, and Regina's Amy Nixon won the bronze medal in curling. And last but not least, I'd like to congratulate Jason Parker, Yorkton's first ever winter Olympic medallist.

Let me tell you briefly about Jason. He started skating before he was five. He was soon active in the Melville Speed Skating Club, and this winter he realized and surpassed his dream of skating in the Olympics by winning a silver medal in speed skating.

Mr. Speaker, Jason's interests are varied, and he has even spent time as a motivational speaker. I understand he once said that, quote, "You can do anything if you do it with your whole heart." And we all know that Saskatchewan is a province with lots of heart.

Well, Jason, the people of Saskatchewan and the people of Yorkton can't help but be motivated by your words, your deeds, and most of all by your heart. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Appreciation and Encouragement for a Legislative Colleague

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, those of us who have chosen a life in politics do so for very deep personal and philosophical reasons. We come to the majestic doors of the legislature from all over this diverse and wonderful province to make a difference in the lives of our fellow citizens. It's hard to explain the life of an MLA, but there's a side benefit that we all reap, and that's never part of any plan when we are elected. It's the friendships that evolve with people whose paths may never have crossed ours were it not for politics. These friendships shape the rest of our lives. These friendships impact the way we think, discuss, and consider matters. They affect our families, and they in some way large or small make a difference in our personal world.

Mr. Speaker, today I want to thank my friend, the member from Rosthern, for coming to the Legislative Assembly to encourage and support us on this first day of the new session. It seems hard to believe that nearly 11 years ago I saw this member as someone I was supposed to disagree with on lots of issues. Nothing is further from the truth today. All of us on this side of the House — and I daresay maybe some on the other side — not only consider him a friend but a genuine man, deeply religious and a dedicated politician. Behind that tough exterior hides a man whose heart is soft, beliefs are strong, and his commitment deep to his family and his constituents. His vision for a future different from today never wavers.

I remember a member's statement that he made a few years ago on an issue that's unimportant today. What is important is my memory of the way he lovingly described his new wife when they visited the legislature shortly after their marriage. I know he sees her today in his heart as the same beautiful woman who stood by his side over the years.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that God has decided to again test the will and strength of our friend in the next few weeks as he undergoes chemotherapy. To our friend and our colleague, you won't be alone in your treatment. We will all be with you in our thoughts and our prayers. We need your knowledge, your experience, your wit, and your supposed toughness to help us deal with issues that affect families in Saskatchewan. You're a big part of our lives. Continue to fight the good fight, my friend, and Godspeed coming back to us.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Swift Current.

Jobs and the Economy

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier is fond of saying recently that in his Saskatchewan no one will be left behind, but it's not quite true as it turns out, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan under the NDP, under their economic policies is . . . we're losing jobs, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan, under the NDP, has lost population — 2,356 over the last year.

And so people are being left behind. Parents are being left behind by their kids as they go pursue opportunities elsewhere. Grandparents are being left behind as families choose to pursue opportunities elsewhere even though this province, with its amazing potential, should be providing those opportunities right here for those families. And when any of those decide to leave, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan loses part of its future.

We know now from Friday's Statistics Canada report that Saskatchewan amazingly lost 4,400 jobs in the middle of the boom. The question to the Premier is very simply this: how in the world, how in the world can this province, under failed NDP economic policies, be losing jobs and people in the middle of a boom?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to bring a report to this legislature today about the state of the Saskatchewan economy. Mr. Speaker, this economy in 2005 had a GDP [gross domestic product] growth of 3.8 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Our oil and gas well drilling was up 3.4 per cent. New capital investment up 4.6 per cent. Our potash production was up 5.1. Our retail sales were up 7.6 per cent. Our manufacturing shipments up 8.2 per cent and our international export of goods up a total of 13.4 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — That's an economy, Mr. Speaker, that is booming. Mr. Speaker, that economy is producing jobs. There are jobs in the Saskatchewan economy.

The challenge for this economy, the challenge for this government, and the challenge for our province is matching the people of our province with these job opportunities which are in this economy, and hence our vision that no one should be left behind on this path of opportunity we are creating.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, there's the amazing answer of the government. The Statistics Canada report is clear that in the middle of a boom that Premier and that NDP government is actually costing the province of Saskatchewan 4,400 jobs. And the government says well those, we haven't lost jobs. We just

have, we just have a labour shortage, Mr. Speaker. That's the answer that the Premier has given.

Well you know what, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that the province of Alberta, it's also experiencing a labour shortage more acutely than even here. The same is true in the province of British Columbia. The same is true in the province of Manitoba with far fewer resources than we have.

What's happening in those provinces, Mr. Speaker? Manitoba created 4,000 new jobs; Alberta, 64,000 new jobs; British Columbia, 72,000 new jobs, Mr. Speaker.

The labour shortage most acute in the province of Saskatchewan is the shortage of any NDP MLA that has a clue about growing an economy, Mr. Speaker. And that's the question for the Premier. Answer it — I hope he will do in this opportunity — why, under his policies, are we shedding jobs and losing population in the middle of a boom?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about growth in the economy. Let me share with the Leader of the Opposition the independent observers of this economy and their predictions for growth in Saskatchewan. It is predicted that GDP growth in Saskatchewan this year, 2006, will be 3 per cent. It is predicted that capital investment in this province in this year will be at a level of 6.7 per cent. And it is predicted, Mr. Speaker, that the level of private-sector investment in Saskatchewan this year will be 9.2 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, there are jobs in this economy. If the Leader of the Opposition would care just to look around, he would see everywhere help-wanted signs in our businesses. If he spoke to the private sector, he would know the reality of needing to find workers for the opportunities in this province. The question, Mr. Speaker, the question is, does that leader, does that party have any plan, any vision at all on how we are going to meet this challenge? They are just not credible with the kinds of plans that they have delivered.

Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. We have a vision to meet this new opportunity in this new economy.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, won't the 2,356 people who had to leave the province find comfort in the Premier's words. They had to leave here last year. Won't their families find comfort in the Premier talking about percentage increases and this stat and this stat that are only predicted, that are only forecast.

We have seen those forecasts in the past, and we on this side of the House understand the amazing potential of this province that would cause those economists to make the forecasts. But

what they can't calculate, Mr. Speaker, is the stunning economic incompetence of this social democratic government, Mr. Speaker, because notwithstanding the predictions, we've lost jobs — 4,400 of them. Notwithstanding the predictions, we have lost 2,356 people.

I think it's a brand problem in part, Mr. Speaker. We've got to get the fundamentals right, but it's a brand problem. This Premier represents a government that, on its website, proclaims the *Regina Manifesto* that calls for the eradication of capitalism. It might be the only promise he's actually keeping. He has an Economic Development minister who said, Mr. Speaker, that when people leave, there's more left for the rest of us, Mr. Speaker.

To the Premier: what does he have in store for the economy? What is he going to do to turn things around so that we're no longer losing people and jobs in the middle of a boom?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this is one Premier and one leader and one government caucus that is very proud of its history in this province . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Very proud of its history, unlike the members opposite. I tell you what they don't put on their website is their history, and that's for sure.

Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about predicted growth. I just reported to this House real GDP growth in this year 2005 — 3.8 per cent. That's in a leadership capacity across Canada, Mr. Speaker. We are creating jobs, and we have the broad vision and the broad plan to equip Saskatchewan people to access those opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about making this a more competitive environment for investment to create those jobs. We talk about the investments in education and skills training for our young people. We are working with Aboriginal people, First Nations and Métis peoples, to equip those young people for this opportunity.

We're talking about immigration, expanding immigration. We're talking about infrastructure, research commitments. And we're talking about building a social fabric where people will want to make their long-term homes.

What do they talk about? Tax cuts and declaring war on working people. That's what they talk about.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier talks about that the fact that he's proud of the history — 60 years of history, Mr. Speaker, over the span of which this province, notwithstanding

its amazing potential, hasn't grown. We have not grown at all when almost every other province in the Dominion has. It's true, Mr. Speaker, there is 60 years of socialist history unimpeded by progress or an idea on how to grow economy, I might add, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the brand problems caused by this government for this province that we all love, the brand problem is evidenced further by another MLA who recently said . . . an NDP MLA who said she believes it's impossible for us to grow even at the national average of 1 per cent. Mr. Speaker, that's part of the bland . . . the brand problem — well frankly, maybe a bit of a bland problem as well, Mr. Speaker.

We also have seen the industry minister currently when faced with these statistics say, well the situation isn't totally bleak. We hear the Premier refer to this province as the wee province. Mr. Speaker, why would he ask the people of Saskatchewan to believe in him when he clearly doesn't believe in the dynamic potential of this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, in partnership with Saskatchewan people we brought this province back from the brink of bankruptcy left behind by that party. We have spent, we have spent — and history repeats itself, Mr. Speaker; other social democratic governments have come along and have had to clear up and clean up after right-wing governments — we've spent a decade in building this economy. We've taken this province, Mr. Speaker, from one of the basket cases in Canada to a have province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — That's what we've done. We've taken our energy resources. We've taken our mining resources. We've taken our manufacturing sector. We've taken our research and development sector, and we've seen them prosper, Mr. Speaker. We've stood by our farm families through some of the toughest years that they've had to battle, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — We're working, we're working today with our northern communities and our northerners in Prince Albert in the challenge we have in forestry. Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has partnered with the people of Saskatchewan, with the potential of this province. And we are bringing it to flower, and we are bringing it to a great future.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — You know what, Mr. Speaker? We're talking about a vision for the economy and a plan to get it going again. It's amazing that the Premier would bring up the fact that we've

obtained have-province status because when that occurred not that long ago in the province of Saskatchewan, what did the Premier do? What did he say when asked about our have-province status? It was reported in the *Leader-Post*.

He tried to lower expectations for this province. What he said, and it was recorded in the *Leader-Post* was, you know, Mr. Speaker, we ought not to be too, too convinced that this could continue. He said, we will always be in and out of equalization. That's what the Premier of Saskatchewan said. He calls us a wee province. He says we're always going to need fiscal welfare from the federal government from time to time.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? The people of the province of Saskatchewan reject that kind of plan for mediocrity, that kind of a weak vision. And they reject the results of that vision, Mr. Speaker, which are — what? — a loss in jobs and a loss in people in the midst of a boom. What is the Premier going to do about that? We're losing jobs and people in a boom. What is his plan for our economy, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is very, very good at issuing criticism but very short on plan and vision for the future. Now since that party was formed and particularly since he took over his leadership, all we get is dumping on Saskatchewan, criticizing Saskatchewan.

At least when the former member over there was leading that party, they at least laid before the people a plan. I may have disagreed with the plan but at least it was a plan.

All we hear from this new Leader of the Opposition are two things. He goes on province-wide radio, and he says he's going to declare war on working people. And that's supposed to make an unbreakable social fabric, I guess. And then, Mr. Speaker, he says there's one solution, there's one solution — and I think he goes to Calgary all the time to get these ideas — he says there's one solution. We just need to cut taxes and that will be the nirvana for it.

Mr. Speaker, we understand about building a competitive investment climate to create jobs for our young people. But we know it's much more. It's education. It's infrastructure. It's research. It's a broad-based vision and a plan from a party and a government who believe in the future of this province and will always put the future of people ahead of politics.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Readiness of Addiction Treatment Beds

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, this Premier claims to be concerned about young people with drug addictions, and he claims that no one's going to be left behind. Yet young people with addictions are being left behind because this government is dragging its feet when it comes to addiction treatments. We

need beds and not promises. Addiction workers in this province are calling his plan project hype or project hopeless.

Can the Premier tell us why there will be no permanent addiction facilities or long-term treatment beds in Saskatchewan until after the next election?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Healthy Living Services.

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've said and the Premier has said that the opposition on this issue has some credibility. So it really makes wonder why in the last number of months that they've continually worked very hard to undermine that very credibility.

In fact just recently, a member from Saskatoon on the opposition side said there'll be no new beds until 2008. That was two weeks after I was touring the new six-beds unit at the Calder Centre, Mr. Speaker. I don't understand why they're taking the little bit of credibility they do have on this issue and undermining that.

We've got a very impressive program that has been award-winning from the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and that we will be implementing some very good programs. We've already implemented very many in the past. We're well on the road of implementing all of the initiatives within Project Hope. Thank you much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, what this government has to realize is we know there's detox beds. What we need is treatment beds — long-term treatment beds. That's what the government has opened is detox beds, and maybe they should recognize there is a difference.

People at Teen Challenge understand there is a difference. Teen Challenge would be expanding their current addiction treatment facility from 12 beds to 35 beds. And they'll open their doors this fall. Then they're going to start on a treatment facility for women.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP government putting politics before people? Why is it that Teen Challenge can put more beds on line in a short period of time and this government is forcing people with addictions to wait until after the next election?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Healthy Living Services.

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member, I can assure the House that the new beds that will be coming on will be here long before the provincial election unless the Premier gets excited and calls one within the next month, Mr.

Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Project Hope has a four-point plan: prevention and education, supply reduction, treatment, and coordination. Mr. Speaker, the opposition can focus on the narrow beds part of it. And that's a very important part of the treatment continuum.

But the member knows, as do other members there, that that is just one small part of that. However, Mr. Speaker, very soon we'll have new beds here in Saskatchewan. We've partnered with P.A. [Prince Albert] Grand Council. I don't want to scoop any announcements that they have in the short order, but we're moving very quickly, Mr. Speaker. And I would be more than happy to involve the member as we get closer to the announcement so that she knows what's going on. Thank you much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, it's not me that needs to know what's going on. It's the people of the province that need to know what's going on. We don't have to listen to another promise about it's going to be opening before the next election. When are the beds going to be open or when's the next election going to be? And when are the kids going to get an addiction centre with the treatment where they can look after their addictions and actually be safe? That's what we're asking this government. When are the beds going to be open?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Healthy Living Services.

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, premier Project Hope has a large number of initiatives. It was announced last August, six months ahead of schedule. Mr. Speaker, our concern are for those that are battling the addiction. We've wanted to make sure that we have a number of initiatives on the prevention side.

I was very happy to see well over 350 people at the conference that we held in Saskatoon. We expected 200, Mr. Speaker. We actually had to turn people away; it was that popular . . . training the addiction workers, Mr. Speaker, and providing the information. Mr. Speaker, we've provided information to the schools. We've got the HealthLine that's available. We've got the support for parents right across the continuum, Mr. Speaker.

It's not only about beds, Mr. Speaker, but we've already got the six youth detox beds in Saskatoon. We'll have some treatment beds in Prince Albert in very short order, well ahead of schedule.

Mr. Speaker, we've established a plan. We're implementing that plan. It will be implemented well ahead of 2008, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member Saskatoon Northwest.

Safety Concerns for Residents of Oyate Safe House

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a result of a freedom of information application, we've received further information on the Oyate Safe House in Regina, information that raises some serious concerns.

Mr. Minister, my question to the Minister of Community Resources: can the minister assure this Assembly that children currently living at the Oyate Safe House in Regina are safe?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Oyate Safe House is a very important part of our joint effort as MLAs and members of the opposition and government in terms of a joint effort to try and reduce the amount of children and youth involved in the sex trade on city streets and other streets.

The Oyate Safe House has been working now for the last three years. And some of the issues raised in the media, these issues were raised back in 2004.

I am pleased to report that that work has continued and will continue in terms of building capacity, so we are able to respond as a government and as a people to this growing problem.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report that many changes have been made at Oyate Safe House. That includes a new executive director. That certainly includes a new facility of which our federal government graciously helped. It also included work to begin strengthening hiring and training of staff, Mr. Speaker. Good progress has been made and we need to continue that kind of work. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister assure this Assembly that all children currently living in the Oyate Safe House in Regina are not participating in the sex trade?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, as we develop capacity to respond to this growing problem, it is important to note that this is a voluntary program. And it's also very important to note, Mr. Speaker, that this is not a secure facility. We are trying to make it very attractive for kids to come off the street, go to the safe house, and get counselling and support as best we can — and make it as easy as possible, Mr. Speaker.

This is not a boot camp. This is not a secure facility, so to speak. We are trying to reach out to the kids and give them what really is a safe house and an opportunity for them to get off the street. So in terms of us saying, look we're going to force you to do certain things, we cannot be in that position of making sure that kids aren't involved in any kind of activities that are illegal after they leave the safe house. We're trying to reach out to them and to point out to them that this kind of activity is not healthy and that you have different options available to you.

So to respond to the question, Mr. Speaker, we'll continue working with this problem, and it is a good opportunity for people to realize the problem exists and that good work is being done. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell this Assembly why his department suspended referrals of children under the age of 16 to the safe house?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I think the important part here is, as we develop what I think is a response to our effort as a government and as a people, as a people to have a 40-bed facility, we knew that the Oyate Safe House would be a big part of that. And it is a big part of it, Mr. Speaker.

And as we develop capacity, we learn many lessons as we go through this process of responding to this crime and this problem. So I point out that it is very important that as we train and retrain staff to respond to this growing crisis that there is some capacity challenges, as we've indicated to many, many people and on many occasions.

So, Mr. Speaker, to respond to the question, the bottom line is we are going to work very closely with as many clients as we can with as many groups as we can, and that certainly dictates a myriad of approaches in terms of different groups and age groups. Oyate Safe House will work with the young kids and the children who are at risk and will continue doing so.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll rephrase the question. Can the minister tell us when he suspended referrals of children under the age of 16 to the safe house or have those referrals resumed or when will they be resumed?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I'll take notice of this specific question, and I'll certainly get back to the member in

terms of a more detailed response.

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

Mr. Merriman: — Can the minister inform the Assembly of the results of a police and internal investigation into allegations of assault on a resident by an employee of the safe house?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, as these allegations come forward we take the allegations very seriously. I think it's also very important . . . As a new minister for this portfolio, I've asked my staff for a detailed update on the progress and some of the challenges associated with Oyate Safe House.

The important note to point out here, Mr. Speaker, is that this is a high-risk group of kids that we're dealing with. It is an incredible challenge to try and respond to children and youth involved in the sex trade. It is very, very challenging. So as we go down this path, there are going to be different approaches. There's going to be lessons learned. And as we build this capacity to respond to it, there are going to be, as I mentioned before, certain challenges that we have to meet. There's no question that as we build this capacity we're going to learn more and more.

Mr. Speaker, we owe it to our children and our youth to make every effort to learn from our current experiences and build a bigger and better model to respond to this growing problem. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Written Questions

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last November during the fall session we asked a number of questions of the NDP government: written questions related to fraud, questions about cheques and balances and what frauds have been discovered in government. Now we've had two more cases of fraud coming forward. That's a total of five — in the Department of Environment, Department of Community and Resources, two in Liquor and Gaming, and now in Corrections and Public Safety.

Mr. Premier, when will you answer these written . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order please. I ask the member to direct his questions to the Chair. The member will continue.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When will the Premier answer these written questions? Will he do so today and will he be telling us why his government is hiding?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House

Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, you know, the world has changed substantially since the Leader of the Opposition worked in one of the offices of the Devine government. In those days, Mr. Speaker, it was the practice when written questions were submitted that they were not answered. That's quite contrary, Mr. Speaker, to the practice of this government.

It has been the practice, it is the strong history of this government, to answer written questions. And, Mr. Speaker, I point out that in the fall session there were 564 questions submitted — 564 — substantially more than would normally be the case in an entire year. And, Mr. Speaker, those questions, many of them had many parts.

They are complex questions. We want to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that the answers provided will be appropriate to the questions. We take them very seriously to ensure that they will be properly done and they will be provided to this House long before they're required by the rules of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:30]

MESSAGE FROM HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

The Speaker: — Members, before orders of the day I would like to read into the record a message from Her Majesty The Queen, and I would ask all to rise for the message.

A message from Her Majesty The Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, titled "Health and Vitality, The Commonwealth Challenge."

There are few feelings more satisfying than waking to a new day with a sense of wellbeing. Good health is a precious gift.

Yet many do not share in this. Some forty million people today are living with HIV/AIDS, well over half of whom are Commonwealth citizens. Half a million women die each year in pregnancy and childbirth — and the death of any mother has huge consequences for the rest of the family. Yet very many of these deaths are preventable with adequate healthcare. Ignorance and lack of understanding about these issues sometimes breed uncertainty, even fear and the inclination to turn from those who are unwell. But we know, for example, that someone who is HIV positive can, with proper support, lead a full and rewarding life.

I am pleased that Commonwealth governments are playing their part in tackling disease and improving health for all. Polio, for example, used to cast its shadow across many countries. Today, thanks to concerted international action, just a handful still need to eliminate polio. The same approach and commitment to other global scourges, such as malaria and tuberculosis, can achieve equally impressive results.

There is also much we can do through non-governmental

organisations and especially as individuals. Poor health is sometimes linked to the way we choose to live. But many of us can often take steps to eat better food or to take more exercise. We can also as communities work to improve our surroundings to make them cleaner, safer places in which to live.

The importance of good health is so wonderfully exemplified on the sports field. Sporting events can be the spur to extraordinary human achievement. Sport also demonstrates the value of co-operation and team-work, and the importance of mental and physical control. In Melbourne, in just a few days' time, I will be opening what are known as 'The Friendly Games'. Commonwealth athletes will gather once more in a spirit of goodwill and fellowship, and will strive to achieve new heights of excellence. As we watch our finest sportsmen and women compete, we will see clearly what exercise at the very highest level can contribute to both body and spirit.

There is a traditional proverb which says, 'He who hath health has hope, and he who has hope has everything.' This year, as governments search for new ways to tackle these important challenges, we as individuals can also play our part so that, in pursuing health and vitality for all, we bring hope to the world.

[Signed] Elizabeth R.
13 March 2006

I thank you.

Why is the member for Regina Qu'Appelle on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to move a motion under rule 49.

The Speaker: — The member's requested leave to move a motion under rule 49. Could the member state the nature of the motion.

MOTION UNDER RULE 49

Crisis in Agriculture

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the motion will be seeking full support of this Assembly around the issue of agriculture, the negative net incomes, and the challenges facing our farm families today. And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to read the text of that motion so the people will understand where we are heading with it:

That this Assembly recognize the response of the federal government to the present cash flow crisis for producers in the agriculture sector, but in doing so this Assembly also urge the federal government to provide a fair and equitable formula for the 2006 Canadian agricultural income stabilization program with a disaster component, and to provide a minimum one-time cash payment of at least \$200 million to Saskatchewan producers in response to the fact that the agricultural crisis is a global problem beyond the control of producers and the provincial government;

And further that this Assembly urge the federal government to allow the current democratic mechanisms in the Canadian Wheat Board Act to be the mechanisms by which the future of the Canadian Wheat Board as a single-desk seller is determined.

That would be the nature of the motion. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Qu'Appelle, the Minister of Ag and Food, has requested leave of this Assembly to put the motion that requires unanimous consent. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The member may proceed. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you also to members opposite. I know this is a concern which certainly reaches far beyond partisan politics, and we know that there are many people in Saskatchewan today who are hurting as a result of many conditions in the agriculture industry.

Mr. Speaker, over these past few years there have been problems created by nature, problems created by a rising Canadian dollar, problems created simply by the low commodity prices that farmers are being paid for their product, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I really welcome this opportunity to join with colleagues to speak about the Saskatchewan agriculture industry.

In my comments I want to focus particularly on the difficult situation that is facing our farmers today. Mr. Speaker, in 2005 there was a \$77.1 million negative net income. This year it is projected, even after funds that will be coming in, to be in the neighbourhood of \$200 million, and that is compared to the previous average of 336 million positive dollars. Mr. Speaker, this is of grave concern to the province of Saskatchewan.

When I was in church on Sunday morning, the scripture that was read was from First Corinthians, chapter 12. And it is a piece of scripture that I think is certainly known by most people of Christian background, but it is where Paul talks to the church in Corinth about the nature of the body. And he talks about how important each part of the body is to the health and well-being of the whole, that even though the hand might think it's great, the hand can't pluck out the eye and say, I don't need you. No part should be excluded.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have heard people, as I've travelled the province, I've heard people say, well you know, we should just let the farmers be. You know, let the laissez-faire process take place and if they can't make it, they can't make it. Mr. Speaker, these are our neighbours, our friends, and they need the support of the rest of the body, the rest of the community.

The scripture goes on to talk about how important it is that each part of the body care for the whole. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it is our responsibility as people in community, whether we are Christian or not Christian, to remember that there is an element

of our society that is hurting deeply today and needs the great help that we can provide in this country.

Mr. Speaker, as a province we have provided some significant support over this last few years. We have looked at the whole life of agriculture in Saskatchewan. We have seen, Mr. Speaker, over these past years the impacts of BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy]. We have seen the beef industry and the people who are involved in the cattle industry suffer significant losses, Mr. Speaker, but we invested in that industry and we worked to keep prices at least up close to a normal level so that they would be able to sustain their operations.

Mr. Speaker, we have programs in place that we have funded fully to try and make sure that there is always enough money to keep going in agriculture. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, there isn't enough. Some people have not been able to continue on. And we have in my office, Mr. Speaker, received many phone calls from farmers, farm families who are just breaking. There is little hope in their hearts, Mr. Speaker. They are in significant trouble. Sometimes it's a third, fourth generation farm and a young person is calling to say, we need some help because, Mr. Speaker, because they just simply can't see a way to make it through until the next year.

And sometimes there are tears, Mr. Speaker. Lots of times there's anger. But the biggest thing for us to keep in mind is, Mr. Speaker, that there are real structural problems that keep these people — who produce product which is very, very important for the well-being not only of this province but this nation — to keep them in a situation where they can continue to operate viable farms.

Mr. Speaker, as a province we have provided significant dollars through the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program and through other programs in past years. We are providing an additional \$84.2 million to the original \$99 million — \$183 million, Mr. Speaker, for the CAIS program for 2005. In combination with the federal government's share, that means approximately 420 million is expected to flow through CAIS. Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, in '04 we funded about \$400 million and in '03 about \$485 million.

Along with that there is over \$100 million that goes in through the crop insurance program annually to help farmers who face some disaster. The crop insurance paid in 2002 over \$1 billion to Saskatchewan producers. In fact the program paid out over \$2 billion in the last five years, Mr. Speaker.

Still this industry is struggling, and it's not because it's not a viable industry. Mr. Speaker, the producers in this province are efficient. They provide a product that is very vital to our economy.

There are very, very few wealth-creating areas in any economy. There are natural resources, Mr. Speaker, and we're doing well in that area with our oil production and with our mineral production in this province. And the other area, Mr. Speaker, that is really capable of producing wealth is primary agriculture production.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that that wealth doesn't stay with the primary producer. The wealth goes out through the rest of

the system, and various elements that touch the primary product are doing extremely well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the issues today around agriculture, we know that there is significantly more need. Our government heard the appeal of the farmers to try and provide some relief for them. And in trying to provide relief that we could within our budget, Mr. Speaker, and relief that would be sustainable, we were able to add another \$52.8 million to the farm land property tax to reduce the pressures on them, Mr. Speaker.

Now I was talking with agricultural economists at the University of Saskatchewan yesterday. And they said to me, you know, it's good that you were able as a government to provide that relief on property tax. But you know, that's not the real problem for farmers. If you figure it out, it's about \$1.45 an acre that goes into property tax.

Guess what it is for transportation per acre: 146 bucks an acre. That's a problem, Mr. Speaker, a real problem for farmers. Transportation has been a huge issue for many years in this province.

We used to have a subsidy that helped with those transportation issues, Mr. Speaker. It was removed a number of years ago. And what happened? The actual problem there, Mr. Speaker, that was created by that removal was farmers still had to pay for shipping their goods, and 500 million was taken out of the Saskatchewan economy and kept by the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

They continue to keep that amount annually that would have flown into the province to help with transportation issues. Today, Mr. Speaker, that money is coming out of the pockets of the primary producers. And they can't afford it any longer, Mr. Speaker; they can't afford to lift up the rest of the economy on their backs. And that, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what they have been doing.

Mr. Speaker, as a province we have within the limits of our fiscal ability been providing substantial support for the farmers of this province. Mr. Speaker, just for comparison I would like to note what our per capita expenditures are relative to those of some of the other provinces.

[14:45]

If we look alone, Mr. Speaker, at the business risk management sector we find that in Saskatchewan we are paying . . . in 2004 we were paying \$391 per capita for business risk management alone compared with Ontario's \$28 per capita — \$28 per capita. This province is right there, Mr. Speaker, as our Premier said earlier today, is right there providing substantial support for the farmers of this province.

And it doesn't end with business risk management. Mr. Speaker, the investments that this province is making in research and development to help move the industry forward, to help build success is clear. Just last week we put \$4.6 million into programs at the University of Saskatchewan that will help us to develop frost-tolerant wheat. What a difference that would have made in 2004 had we the degree or two or three of frost

tolerance, Mr. Speaker. The millions of dollars that that would have meant in producers pockets. So we're investing in the future by trying to encourage the research and development.

Mr. Speaker, we are also investing through PST [provincial sales tax] rebates on the inputs into farming to try and cushion those costs. Would that the corporations, the corporations who are making many of them record profits, would that they had some similar consideration for those people who have been buying their products faithfully for many years. Would that those companies pay attention to what's happening to those upon whom they build their wealth. It's time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we look at the numbers and we can see what needs to be done. Those people, those farmers who brought in own-use glyphosate last year at about four and a quarter a litre were getting good results on their farms as a result of that product. If they were buying one of the brand names, Mr. Speaker, out there from this province they'd be paying 6, 7, \$8 for that same litre.

Mr. Speaker, the companies are making huge profits that agriculture is generating for them and the primary producer is being skinned. We need our federal government to take some action that will help change this situation.

Not only, Mr. Speaker, is it those chemical companies that are reaping huge profits but, Mr. Speaker, the transportation system is doing the same. Record profits for the Canadian National Railway last year. And you look at the amount of money that they're charging for moving the grain. Look at the penalties because they don't move it fast enough.

And we've tried to make changes, Mr. Speaker; they resist at every level. We've tried to get in alternatives around the tracking to try and get in joint use of track, joint running rights. Mr. Speaker, they fight tooth and nail to reduce competition, to keep competition out of the rail system so that we can try and make sure that at least with competition the farmers may get a bit better deal as they move their product out, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are many ways that this province has been working hard to provide support for farmers to help them get through these years of crisis. We have put in in the last couple of years . . . Add in all the support payments, the investments that we make, the support that is provided through the department, Mr. Speaker, and we have put in way over \$1.3 billion since April of 2004.

Mr. Speaker, we don't resent doing that. We know that if we could do more, we would do more, Mr. Speaker, but it has to be effective. And that's one of the crucial issues that we call upon our federal government to help fund effective support.

And how many times we have said that we cannot, Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan cannot compete with the treasuries of the United States of America or the treasuries of the European Union. We simply as a province cannot compete, especially when the federal government over the past decade has taken billions of dollars out of our annual revenues that we used to get, Mr. Speaker. We now turn to them and say they must help us. They must help the farmers of Saskatchewan and they must enable them, not only through funding because

farmers don't want subsidies. They want to be paid for the product that they're growing that creates so much wealth within our community.

Mr. Speaker, we need our federal government to come to the table. It is a shame that they would allow us to even say publicly that there is going to be a realized negative net income of over \$200 million. How can they allow that to happen, Mr. Speaker, with the billions that they have pulled out of this province over the last couple of decades?

With a new government there, Mr. Speaker, we are hoping and we are praying that this government will respond to the needs of the people of this province; that they will respond to the needs of our farmers and that they will make substantial payment to at least bring us up to even. A minimum payment, Mr. Speaker, added to what the former government was putting in — the 290 million that was rolling in this year — a minimum increase of \$200 million on top of that would at least get us to zero. And then on top of that, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the supports that we can provide as a province will really help the farmers to be able to move ahead and to survive through these difficult years, Mr. Speaker.

And add to that, if they would make some substantial legislative changes that would deal with the transportation issues, that would deal with the corporate profits that the chemical companies and some of the grain companies and the transportation companies are making. Mr. Speaker, they are making huge fortunes off the backs of Saskatchewan farmers. And our federal government can act and needs to act to make sure that our producers get an adequate return for the work that they are doing, the hard work and the vitally important work that they are doing in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, over the years there have been many changes in agriculture and the costs in agriculture have continued to increase as farmers try to be good stewards. We have seen movements to zero till, Mr. Speaker. And the cost of inputs to enable that zero till have been high, Mr. Speaker. We need a federal government that will allow our farmers to be good stewards, to use the best agricultural practices, not to skimp and cut and not be able to produce the way that they should be producing, Mr. Speaker.

The federal government has promised that they will. And I met with Chuck Strahl, the federal minister just last week and he has made clear that they are already rolling out the \$755 million that the former Liberal federal government promised. And I was pleased that they were rolling it out as quickly as they could.

The other thing that was promised in the federal election by our current federal government was that they would add another \$500 million to the agriculture budget. This is absolutely essential, Mr. Speaker, a minimum of \$500 million added. And I would like to see that added in ways that will have maximum effect.

It is our hope that — since we already know that we are going to be dealing with the CAIS program in 2006 — it is our hope that they will make adjustments in that program, that they will add the disaster component that we as provincial ministers are unanimous in asking for. The disaster component that would

say that whenever margins dropped more than 50 per cent then the federal government would fund 100 per cent of that drop. Mr. Speaker, that would make a substantial difference to the province's and our ability to respond.

All the provinces are asking for this change. Mr. Speaker, it is our hope that the federal government will make those changes immediately so that it will lower the burden on the provincial governments and respond to the deep need that farmers are facing.

Mr. Speaker, we see more need for change within that CAIS program. There's a review going on and we want to see it be more effective. We want to see a program that will make sure that farmers get the payments in a timely manner. We want to make sure that those who through some error — whether theirs or accountant's error or a processing error — are called to make a repayment, Mr. Speaker, we want to see something done so that they are not penalized while forms are being processed, that they are not compelled to pay interest while they are waiting.

Mr. Speaker, there are many changes that we want to see in that program as well as the business risk management programs, Mr. Speaker, that we know need to be changed to be effective, as well as the legislation that we want to see changed around transportation and how corporations can seem to make so much money off the backs of primary producers, Mr. Speaker.

And let me be fair, Mr. Speaker, if I were on a corporate board it would be my fiscal responsibility to make sure that the shareholder got the maximum return. Those people who are running those operations are doing exactly what their job is but, Mr. Speaker, they do it within the limits of legislation. Today we would like to see legislation change so that the primary producer gets a larger portion of the agriculture pie.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, there is another issue that has been brought forward. It came out of the campaign promises of the federal Conservative government, and that is around the Canadian Wheat Board. In their campaign they were saying that they were going to change it, and there's all kinds of estimates as to what they meant by changing it — whether they were going to get rid of it, whether they were going to simply get rid of single-desk selling. Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of discussion about what is in line for the Canadian Wheat Board.

It is our contention and our belief, Mr. Speaker, that within the Canadian Wheat Board Act there are mechanisms, there is a democratic process that can be used to make changes, Mr. Speaker, to determine whether or not there should be single-desk selling.

The current Wheat Board electoral process is now being reviewed. It is effective today but it is being reviewed to try and make it even more effective. It enables farmers who grow Board grains to determine the direction of their marketing agency. Mr. Speaker, it's like a co-op marketing pool in a sense in that all those who are part of that pool, the members of the co-op, have a legal right to determine its future, Mr. Speaker. And we urge the federal government to let western Canadian farmers who use the . . . to use the process described in the

Canadian Wheat Board Act to decide what mechanisms they want to market their grain. There's a process in place. That's the process we want to see used.

Now the reason why I'm emphasizing this, Mr. Speaker, is because I think there are a lot of risks that people are not really thinking about when they say, yes we've got to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board because then you know we're going to get value-added processing in the province. It's going to fix a lot of the woes that we've been having.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I remember that that was exactly the kind of language that was used about getting rid of the Crow rate. If we could just get rid of the Crow rate, you know, it would stop all this grain moving out of the country; we'd see a lot more value-added development. Mr. Speaker, it was to be the panacea, the solution to the income problem of farmers.

Well it wasn't the case, Mr. Speaker. In fact, as I said earlier, it was \$500 million a year scooped out of the provincial economy, scooped out of the farmers' pockets by the federal government, and that has been going on since the change was made. Today we're hearing the same arguments about why we should get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board. Are there risks in getting rid of the wheat board? You bet there are.

I want to highlight a few of those risks. Mr. Speaker, as the wheat board has evolved — and it is continuing to evolve — it has been working to try and make sure that there are processes by which they can support the development of value-added production in the province. That's important. We want to see that evolution continue. But, Mr. Speaker, there have also been other developments in this province that, if the Canadian Wheat Board was to be taken out of the picture, there is serious question as to whether these other institutions would survive.

First of all we are told, and there have been many studies done, but we are told that somewhere . . . there is a premium of somewhere between 10 and \$14 a tonne that farmers get through the marketing of the Canadian Wheat Board. Mr. Speaker, for those producers who have been using the CGC [Canadian Grain Commission] process and using the wheat board for producer car loading, they talk about another \$10 or more a tonne that they save through their producer car loading.

Mr. Speaker, without a Canadian Wheat Board, producer car loading is at risk. Now I'm not just talking about producer car loading, because it doesn't happen in isolation, Mr. Speaker. Most of our short-line railways, in which communities and farmers have made significant investment, are dependent also on producer car loading. They don't have big main-line terminals out on those short lines, Mr. Speaker. They are dependent on producer car loading of some kind in order to operate.

Now I'm not saying that there wouldn't be action in some non-board grains; there are today, grains and oilseeds. But, Mr. Speaker, to not have the support of the wheat board for producer car loading would put those operations at risk because they operate on a pretty fine margin. And it would put at risk all the investment that many producers have made in those operations.

Secondly it would put at risk the investment that many, many farmers and communities have made in the independent inland terminals.

Mr. Speaker, they're starting to think about it. They're starting to talk about it. I've had several of them address their concerns to my office, Mr. Speaker. And we are concerned because huge investments have been made in these independent inland terminals. And they've been quite successful, and they've been providing a return for their shareholders. With the board gone, Mr. Speaker, they would be at risk.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, there are other parts of our agriculture economy that would be facing a very, very difficult time if we did not have that Canadian Wheat Board process in place. The one concern that I have around this is that people be aware of what the issues are, that we don't see another debacle like we saw with the Crow rate. Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — Debacle.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — You can say it however you want it. It depends what part of the country you're from. So debacle, debacle — anyway, big problem for people.

A big problem was created when people did not have full information about the impact of the removal of the Crow, and hindsight has given lots of people that information. I don't want to see that same kind of thinking happen around the Canadian Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker. It has provided too much value for too long to be easily put away.

And I am thankful, I am thankful, Mr. Speaker, that the federal minister — when I met with the federal minister, Chuck Strahl — that he says he wants to listen very, very carefully to what the issues are, that he doesn't want to just go in and knock it down without understanding what those impacts would be.

And it is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that as he looks at what those impacts are, as he listens to producers, and as he listens to those people who would be hugely impacted, that he will think very carefully. And, Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that he will be convinced that it would be destructive for many of the farmers of this province and many of the communities to pull the wheat board out of the system, to get rid of the single-desk selling which has provided a premium to so many.

Mr. Speaker, there are many reasons why we should retain the wheat board in this country. It is my hope that our federal government . . . And I ask for the support of this legislature as we ask the federal government to consider all aspects very carefully before they make any decisions. And ultimately we ask them to allow those producers to follow the Act and allow those producers who use the wheat board, who sell board grains, who are part of the system, to use their electoral mechanisms to make the decisions. That would be our hope, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, ultimately what we are asking for today is for our federal government to really realize how this part of the nation, this part of the body is hurting. And this is a valuable part of the

body of this nation, Mr. Speaker. The agriculture sector not only in Saskatchewan but across this country is a wealth producer far beyond any subsidies that are put in, Mr. Speaker. When you look at its impact throughout the economy, when you look at its impact on rural communities, it is absolutely essential to the well-being of this nation, to the health of this nation. And we need our federal government to come to the table in a substantial way to provide support for the farmers of this province and for the farmers of our nation.

Mr. Speaker, we ask for a minimum payment of \$200 million cash payment to farmers in this province to help offset that realized negative net income. Mr. Speaker, we ask for the CAIS program to be adjusted so that there is a disaster component in line with what the provincial ministers are asking for. We ask, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government will work on legislation that will enable some of those profits from this agriculture industry to be retained by the primary producers. It is vital to their well-being.

And we ask, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government be very, very cautious, very thoughtful, very attentive to the voices of producers and follow the mechanisms that are available to deal with the Canadian Wheat Board and to allow those producers who are part of that system to make the decision.

This we ask, Mr. Speaker. And so with those words, I would like to move the following motion, seconded by the member from Yorkton, Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly:

That this Assembly recognize the response of the federal government to the present cash flow crisis for producers in the agricultural sector, but in doing so, this Assembly also urge the federal government to provide a fair and equitable formula for the 2006 Canadian agriculture income stabilization program with a disaster component and to provide a minimum, one-time cash payment of at least \$200 million to Saskatchewan producers in response to the fact that the agriculture crisis is a global problem beyond the control of producers and the provincial government.

And further [Mr. Speaker], that this Assembly urge the federal government to allow the current democratic mechanisms in the Canadian Wheat Board Act to be the mechanisms by which the future of the Canadian Wheat Board as a single-desk seller is determined.

I so move.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food, seconded by the member for Yorkton and Deputy Premier:

That this Assembly recognize the response of the federal government to the present cash flow crisis for producers in the agriculture sector, but in doing so, this Assembly also urge the federal government to provide a fair and equitable formula for the 2006 Canadian agricultural income stabilization program with a disaster component and to provide a minimum, one-time cash payment of at least \$200 million to Saskatchewan producers in response to the

fact that the agricultural crisis is a global problem beyond the control of producers and the provincial government.

And further, that this Assembly urge the federal government to allow the current democratic mechanisms in the Canadian Wheat Board Act be the mechanisms by which the future of the Canadian Wheat Board as a single-desk seller is determined.

The Chair recognizes the member for Yorkton, the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased this afternoon to enter into the debate as it relates to the importance of agriculture and the motion of which the minister just moments ago and you, Mr. Speaker, have read.

I want to begin my comments, Mr. Speaker, by recognizing in this province the good work that not only the Minister of Agriculture does, Mr. Speaker, as he makes his way around the province meeting with producer groups, organizations, and farm leaders in order to make a difference on the agricultural file; by the same token, Mr. Speaker, I want to also say that . . . the good work that also goes on by members on the opposite side of the House, Mr. Speaker. Because from time to time I see them, as does the Minister of Agriculture, in events across Saskatchewan sitting and speaking with farm leaders, farm organizations. From time to time even in the constituency that I'm in, Mr. Speaker, members will come to my constituency and suggest that they had been speaking to the member from Saltcoats, for example, or the member from Canora-Pelly advising that they have had some discussions about some of the farm pressures that are in their regions.

So I want to say, Mr. Speaker, on the onset that the ownership of the issues of how we deal with agriculture in the province today isn't all attempting to be accomplished and succeeded by members on this side of the House, or by the Minister of Agriculture, or the work that I do in rural development, but that there is a tremendous amount of activity that's also happening by the members opposite who represent the majority of rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say as well, Mr. Speaker, about how important the industry is to the Saskatchewan economy. When you take a look at the six sectors that drive the Saskatchewan economy, Mr. Speaker, agriculture is very much one of those engines. I really compare the strength of the province today to that of a six-cylinder engine. And that when you take a look at a six-cylinder engine, Mr. Speaker, and those sectors that are driving the economy today, the six sectors that are driving the economy in oil and gas and manufacturing and mining and tourism and agriculture, what we find, Mr. Speaker, is that one cylinder is on fairly low compression these days. And one cylinder has been on fairly low compression now for a number of years.

And it's not uncommon for this legislature to be doing what we're doing again today which is standing in our places and having a lengthy debate about how it is that we can make a difference in this province for producers who we so largely depend on, and not only in producing food in our province but adding value, providing jobs, and in many instances, or in most

instances, Mr. Speaker, feeding the world. And so the importance of this kind of a debate today, as it has been in other years, Mr. Speaker, is so critical to the strength and the economy of our province.

I want to also say, Mr. Speaker, that I know that members opposite will be speaking in this debate, will be sharing a good deal of their thinking and their wisdom about how agriculture can be advanced. And I expect that I might hear from time to time members of the opposite say that in fact there hasn't been much done by the provincial administration, this provincial administration in its work.

And I think what's important to say, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Agriculture has highlighted in his comments, that there have been a number of undertakings that have occurred in this province over the last number of years. Some have occurred through the joint efforts of both this minister — that's currently the Minister of Agriculture — when I held the file for a period of time, those who preceded me, and members opposite in terms of trying to find a better deal for Saskatchewan farmers and producers through some very difficult times. And we've used some very significant language as well about how we should be making a difference in Saskatchewan.

The issues today, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Agriculture has identified, is not that we're not diversified enough. The reality is, is that in our agricultural community today, we're more diversified than ever in the history of this province. I know that I and members opposite and the Minister of Agriculture today could make our way into rural Saskatchewan and see a crop that might be growing, and I bet you that there are some identifications that we wouldn't be able to determine what that crop is, Mr. Speaker, because the varieties there are so distinct and are so many.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we have something over 60 different crops that we grow in the province today. We have diversified our livestock in a significant way of where we were say 10 or 15 years ago. So the diversification of our farm economy, Mr. Speaker, is not the issue. We've done a tremendous job of changing the practices, enhancing what we grow in this province today, value-adding in many fronts today where we've changed the livestock . . . or changed from just growing grain, to a large degree in this province, to a very healthy livestock industry.

And by the same token, Mr. Speaker, there have been significant investments that have been made in this industry today in terms of value-added. Some of it has been developed alone by the private sector where they have gone forward and built the industry on value-added. Some have been done through partnerships with the provincial government and the federal government and programs that are funded by provincial and federal governments as well as the private sector. And there's a whole co-op sector, Mr. Speaker, that have been very busy and making a difference in diversifying the economy in our province in agriculture. So there has been a tremendous amount of investment as well along with the diversification.

I have on my desk today a list of projects that are happening across the province from the rural economic development perspective. There are something like 170 projects today that

people are working on in rural Saskatchewan primarily in terms of value-added. And the majority of those projects, Mr. Speaker, are related to what's happening with the agricultural industry or they're farm added-value issue . . . or products.

So the issue is not, Mr. Speaker, the problem that we find on the farm today to do with the fact that we are not diversifying or investing more in it. The reality is, is what we get for our product in terms of what we grow today, the tremendous, tremendous pressures that the international community places on the commodities of which we sell and the marketplace in which we trade to, and for sure — as the Minister of Agriculture indicated — the significant input costs that are growing in our province today.

I want to just indicate further, Mr. Speaker, that there have been a number of attempts in the last number of years to try to make a difference in providing support to the farm to ensure that farm lives can continue to be enriched and that there is some safety nets that are available today for producers in order to make a difference. And we know — and I know that I'll hear members opposite talking from this vein as well or this perspective — that there has been over the last 15 years a number of programs that have come and gone. Some have been very expensive in terms of their management. Some of have been less than efficient in terms of the administration. And on all fronts, farmers would say that none of them were really beneficial, very beneficial to, at the end of the day, to sustain the family or to sustain the farms.

The reality is, is that there has been huge, huge investment that has been made by both the federal and the provincial government over the last number of years. And at the end of that time we still find ourselves in the same circumstances, Mr. Speaker, and that is where farm families are continuing to feel the pressures of the cost of doing business. We continue to see exodus from the farm. Farms are getting far larger, communities are getting smaller in rural Saskatchewan. And at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, the value-added industry is growing alongside it.

[15:15]

I want to also say, Mr. Speaker, that at this point in time it's important I think for us to realize that there is a whole new industry today that's arriving at the farm gate, and that is to do with the work of the biofuels. We know today that there is a tremendous amount of effort and energy that's being placed on taking the commodities that we grow on the farm and turning them into ethanol or turning them into biodiesel.

And what was really encouraging, Mr. Speaker, is that during the last federal campaign there was a tremendous amount of commitment made to the whole industry of the biofuels. When you take a look at the work that's been done in this province by three or four different companies, you will see that we've done an excellent job of having those companies meet the commitments on the ethanol file where today we have, or will have within the next short while, Saskatchewan's needs for ethanol production to the mandate likely matched within several months.

This is a tremendous achievement by agricultural producers and

by investors, to take the value of our grain crop and turn it into something that will be far more value added. And I hear that from the federal administration, the new administration today, which is exactly what the previous administrations of the Liberals said. Why don't we in Canada today have a mandated fuel policy? Our mandated fuel policy should reflect somewhere in the neighbourhood of 5 per cent. And in Canada, Mr. Speaker, that would result in something like four to four and a half, to five billion litres of fuel — either biodiesel or ethanol — that would make itself available to the country.

In Saskatchewan we would be absolutely well positioned to be able to meet a large part of that need because we have the feedstock right here and certainly we could then be very aggressive in terms of our build to ensure that we can supply not only parts of Canada but all of Canada with some of the biofuels.

And it's encouraging to see that the federal government has decided that it would also, the current federal government would match the 5 per cent commitment that were made by the Liberals. Our question I think is to the federal government, and I'm sure that the members opposite will be concurring, that why isn't that matched somewhere in the neighbourhood of 10 per cent which is exactly what the province of Saskatchewan has committed itself to?

The province I believe of Manitoba is at the same place and I believe the province of Ontario is also suggesting that we should have a national mandate of 10 per cent as opposed to 5, and this would be a tremendous accomplishment if we could get the federal government to go there. And it would provide a tremendous opportunity for a number of value-added businesses in our province which we could build on because the feedstock is here, the intelligence is here to do that, the models of how you would do that are already in place in this province. And I think it would be a tremendous benefit, Mr. Speaker, if we could collectively be able to say to the new federal administration that the new mandate that they're proposing should not be 5 per cent but in fact should be 10 per cent.

I think, Mr. Speaker, further is that when we examine the kinds of commitments today that have been made to the farm just in the last couple of weeks, you see a number of initiatives that have been advanced. There has been a tremendous amount of discussion over the last number of years about the importance of doing something with the education property tax.

Of course the education property tax piece, Mr. Speaker, is not a new issue. It's been around this Assembly for a number of years and nobody has been able to rectify it to the degree of which it's been rectified in the last couple of weeks. And there have been other administrations that have preceded us, Mr. Speaker. Through the '80s where we had a Conservative government in Saskatchewan, they had an opportunity to change that policy. They had an opportunity to shift it back to 60/40. But they didn't tackle it either, Mr. Speaker, because it has had a lot to do with having the resources, Mr. Speaker.

And I know that the member from Indian Head will be concerned when I make any comment as it relates to the Conservatives of the '80s because it would be a painful thought here that there might be some reference to that. But the reality is

is that the Conservative administration did not, Mr. Speaker, adjust that formula to make a difference for Saskatchewan farmers. And as a result of it, Mr. Speaker, this has been left for a number of years.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that \$53.8 million will make a difference on Saskatchewan farms today from a couple of perspectives. And the changes are made for these reasons. One is that it is good public policy that we make the shift. But secondly, there is a tremendous amount of hardship on the farm today and this small, little commitment that we have been able to make in the bigger piece of issues that farmers have today will go some way to making a difference on the farms. And we have been able to do that, Mr. Speaker.

I think the other piece that members opposite and certainly members on this side of the House have forgotten — and I'm sure that we'll hear it in a few minutes again when members of the opposition get up to speak — there was dollars that were set aside during . . . [inaudible] . . . and 1999 where the provincial government, this administration, went to Ottawa, were able to bring back for Saskatchewan farmers two opportunities, two opportunities of 600 million, of \$300 million each. And those were significant, significant contributions, Mr. Speaker, in 1998 and 1999 to Saskatchewan producers.

And most of us in this Assembly have forgotten, Mr. Speaker, that we went to Ottawa and were able to achieve that kind of an undertaking. And so we hear the rhetoric from time to time that nothing's been done, which couldn't be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. Because somebody's delivered, the federal and provincial governments have delivered that money, Saskatchewan farmers have used it, and very little credit's been paid by anybody to the fact that it did occur, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, also on the education property tax piece, we heard on a number of occasions over the last number of months as I paid attention — particularly in my area of the province because that's where the tax revolt started, Mr. Speaker — that nothing had been done on the education property tax reform. And that can't be farther from the truth either, Mr. Speaker. Because in the year 1999 and the year 2000, there were two investments in education property tax — \$25 million each year. And it was only targeted to Saskatchewan farmers. And we never hear around the province, Mr. Speaker, and particularly from the opposition, that education property tax was enriched over that period of time.

But what we do hear is the opposition talking about the fact that there was nothing done on education property tax. And, Mr. Speaker, that's just not a credible statement, just not a credible statement. Also during the period from the year 2000 to the year 2005, we also made a number of mill rate factor adjustments, Mr. Speaker, that were applied only to farm land, agricultural farm land, that didn't apply to industrial or commercial, Mr. Speaker.

And why did we do that? Because we were looking for ways to try and mitigate the issues that farm families were experiencing today, and accordingly made some of those adjustments, Mr. Speaker. And we hear from the opposition then that there was nothing done on education property tax for a period of five years. Just not a credible statement, Mr. Speaker. It just is not

accurate because over that period of time there were a number of pieces of work that were done.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm really, really excited about the notion that there still may be an opportunity in Saskatchewan that the Farm Rail Car Coalition might get their cars into the province and that the Farm Rail Car Coalition might actually become the owners of the fleet. And I listened, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture speak about this piece because he's been very close to this file, Mr. Speaker, and has been front and centre in trying to ensure that the Saskatchewan farmers get the best benefit. And he talked at length about the importance of getting the freight rate costs reduced and the kinds of pressures today that we're experiencing as farmers through the freight rate.

And here is a wonderful opportunity, Mr. Speaker, for us to have the grain cars in our own province to be owned by the railcar coalition and I'm learning now that there is a bit of difficulty here and that this process is not moving along as quickly as it should be.

And so I say to the members opposite to join with the Minister of Agriculture to work diligently with the federal government, to see if we can get the transfer of that fleet into the province. Because that fleet, Mr. Speaker, will not only help reduce the cost of grain transportation in this province, it will also provide a ton of jobs for our province, not only in the manufacturing and the building of some of the railcars but some of the maintenance that is experienced in fixing and maintaining and looking after those railcars. This is a tremendous opportunity for Saskatchewan producers and our economy, and so I'll be interested in seeing and hearing and watching the engagement of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, in terms of helping us get the Farm Rail Car Coalition in their efforts to get that fleet part of the railcar fleet here in Saskatchewan.

And I know that some of the work that's being done in the province today is impacted by individuals who are right in some of the rural members' back yards and I expect that they're already having conversations like we are with Mr. Harper and his transportation minister to make sure that the railcar coalition fleet makes its way and available to our province here.

Mr. Speaker, I am very, very interested in the fact that the Prime Minister of course today has a very close working relationship with the members opposite and has had that relationship for some years. We know, Mr. Speaker, and I know and they talk about it openly, that there is a number of occasions across the province where they attend each other's nominations, where they're involved, Mr. Speaker, in their conventions. I know, Mr. Speaker, as they do, and they make little bone about it, that they share common memberships. And so there is a close affiliation and association between the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, and the Prime Minister.

So it would be my view that as we pursue the work collectively on what we do with the Farm Rail Car Coalition piece, what we do with the farm support programs in the province, Mr. Speaker, or in Canada to strengthen them, that there will be a significant amount of opportunity that members opposite will have to put forward not only the federal position but also to articulate their own farm policy and seeing whether or not they

can in fact influence some of the work that's happening at the national level.

I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I know that the members opposite are not happy with the CAIS program. I know that the members opposite have said for some time that it isn't rapid enough in terms of its response to farmers today and that there should be a separation between the disaster program and there should be a separation from the income support program.

In fact I know that the member from Melville, Saltcoats-Melville, will be on his feet. And I expect he'll be reiterating again as he did in the last debate that I heard him that he will be pressuring the federal government, like he was last November, to change the formula, not from a 60/40 split, but he'll be lobbying the new federal government for an 80/20 split because that's the position that he took last November. And I expect that his position hasn't changed much today, that he will want to lobby the federal government with a great deal of fervour to make sure that we get a better deal for Saskatchewan producers, Mr. Speaker.

And I expect that the member opposite and those who will be speaking later today will also be saying that they want to see the replacement of the CAIS program by two programs, Mr. Speaker, that they'll want to see the CAIS program, and they will also want to see a disaster relief program.

And I'm all for that, Mr. Speaker. I'm for separating out the CAIS program, having a disaster relief program. I was one of the ministers with Minister Wowchuk when we were in negotiations of the new CAIS program who held out because we said there wasn't enough money in the pool. We said that the program should be separated, and today the new federal Conservative administration is saying that that's exactly what should happen.

And so I'm going to be interested in seeing and hearing the members opposite articulate that vision and view as they have in the past because it is so important for Saskatchewan and Canadian farmers that that separation be made.

I think, Mr. Speaker, what else will be important in that discussion is to recognize that only a portion of those dollars have now flown. I think something like \$750 million that was committed during the federal election campaign is now on its way to Saskatchewan and Canadian producers, Mr. Speaker.

Now that's a commitment that was first made by the old Liberal administration. They said they would provide those dollars. Mr. Harper and his Conservative administration said they would match that, but they would do one actually better. What they would do, Mr. Speaker, is that they would top it up by another \$500 million for Canadian farmers.

Now that works out to about 200 million, I believe, maybe a little bit more — 200 million of the 500 for Saskatchewan producers. And I expect that the members opposite will be joining the Minister of Agriculture and this administration to lobby the federal government to make sure that that additional \$500 million makes itself available for Saskatchewan producers, or for Canadian producers. And that the additional \$200 million would make its way for Saskatchewan farmers

because as I recall, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what the members opposite were lobbying for as well under the old administration. I expect that they're going to be extremely encouraged or supportive in getting that done for us, as well in helping Saskatchewan farmers get that accomplished as well, Mr. Speaker.

[15:30]

I think, Mr. Speaker, I want to also recognize the importance of the new federal Minister of Agriculture because I remember very keenly, Mr. Speaker, when the new . . . when we were talking about who we thought maybe will be the new Minister of Agriculture for Canada under the new administration. And of course, Mr. Speaker, what we were hoping for, and of course the members opposite have been very pronounced on it, suggesting that we should have had somebody from Saskatchewan that would have been our new federal Minister of Agriculture.

And it makes sense to me that we should have had somebody from Saskatchewan who should have been our federal Minister of Agriculture given that our support today per capita to the agricultural industry exceeds any other province by several fold, Mr. Speaker. And so it would have been important. And the issues of our Saskatchewan producers are far graver in many occasions and our contributions as it relates to the trade world are far larger. And so we would have expected, Mr. Speaker, that that would have been the case.

But what we have instead is we have Mr. Strahl, Mr. Speaker, or Minister Strahl who is the new Minister of Agriculture, comes from British Columbia, Mr. Speaker, who has some exposure only to the agricultural file, in fact very little exposure to the agricultural file. And I was very interested in the statement that was made by the member from Saltcoats-Melville when he in fact was speaking to the notion that we did not get a Saskatchewan member to look after the agricultural file. And he thought that that wasn't such a bad idea, Mr. Speaker, that we had somebody who was managing an agricultural industry in Canada, providing direction on an industry of that magnitude, someone who in fact, Mr. Speaker, who would be on an international stage promoting agriculture from a Canadian perspective, that he had a very small understanding and appreciation of what the industry was all about.

And I was keen to hear the member from Saltcoats-Melville say that because I remember what some of his comments were, Mr. Speaker, when our current member of the legislature, our Minister of Agriculture today become named the Minister of Agriculture. And I would say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the words that were pronounced by the members opposite when the Minister of Agriculture today in Saskatchewan was named to the portfolio was that he didn't have a very good appreciation of the industry, Mr. Speaker, is what I heard them say on a number of occasions.

And from time to time on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, I continued to hear them say that. And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, today, that one of the most accomplished ministers of Agriculture today in this province is led by the member today, our member today who is the Minister of Agriculture, Mr.

Speaker, who not only knows the industry, Mr. Speaker, but spends hours and hours and hours of his time not only growing it and promoting it and developing but meeting every day with the members opposite, with the industry today, and making a difference in Canada today, Mr. Speaker, in a way in which hasn't been done for a long time in this province and parallel to that of others, Mr. Speaker.

And I appreciate the work of our minister today, Mr. Speaker. And I am very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite have recognized today fully that agricultural policy today can be delivered in a substantive way today by men and women who have a good appreciation for it, and that Mr. Strahl and our member of agriculture are exactly on the same team, Mr. Speaker, are exactly on the same team in building a Canadian industry, Mr. Speaker. And I'm proud of our member who's doing a tremendous job along with Mr. Strahl, Mr. Speaker.

I want to also say, Mr. Speaker, that I am most interested in the work that the new federal government is going to be undertaking, Mr. Speaker, because I have a quote here from the previous critic of Agriculture of the new Conservative government, Diane Finley, who is now a cabinet minister. And she says this and I quote, "The Conservative Party believes this agricultural crisis is a result of trade relations, and it should be the full responsibility of the federal government," Mr. Speaker.

So what's happened, Mr. Speaker, is that we have now a new federal government who has been very clear, particularly articulated by the previous member who was the critic, saying that agricultural issues today in Canada really are the responsibility of the federal government, and they in fact should be funding agriculture in its fullest, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the trade wars and the subsidies that are in place today.

And, Mr. Speaker, that quote came from *The Western Producer* on October 20, '05. So it's relatively fresh, Mr. Speaker, in all of our minds where the federal government has said, you know what? Agriculture is our responsibility, and we should be making sure that we actually cover it off fully. And it really is the result of the kinds of trade relations that we have today with our international players, particularly those in the United States. And we should be levelling the playing field, and the federal government should be the folks who should be covering it off.

Now it will be interesting to hear, Mr. Speaker, what the members opposite, how they speak to this because we remember that the . . . we remember, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Rosetown, when he gave an articulate speech a few years back, said that he didn't believe. And he was part of the same party, Mr. Speaker, as this member, Ms. Finley, is — exactly from the same party. And at that time he said that there shouldn't be, Mr. Speaker, any support. There shouldn't be any support to the subsidies, Mr. Speaker. Those were his words. And today he sits in the opposition benches and has the full access to the member in Ottawa who today believes in fact they should be covering off the entire cost to agriculture producers. So I'll be interested in hearing the position that the party opposite, Mr. Speaker, speaks to this, Mr. Speaker.

Now I think, Mr. Speaker, the other is that I have a quote here from Mr. Gerry Ritz who is now the . . . continues to be a Member of Parliament from Saskatchewan who said the

Conservative government should introduce, and I quote:

A separate stand-alone disaster type program . . . 100 per cent funded by the federal government. No more 60/40 fights with you folks especially in Saskatchewan, [he says Saskatchewan people should] . . . not pay the 40 per cent. We will fund it 100 per cent.

That's the quote from Mr. Gerry Ritz.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — And so I say to the members opposite today, we are on Gerry Ritz's page. We support Mr. Gerry Ritz.

And so I think it will be interesting to see, Mr. Speaker, how the members opposite support that kind of a notion given that in the past we had an eloquent speech delivered here by the member from Saltcoats Melville, the member from Rosetown Kindersley — Elrose, sorry, my apologies to the member — Rosetown-Elrose who said that Saskatchewan should pay at least 20 per cent towards a disaster type program where our Member of Parliament today who sits in the federal benches, who anticipated at one point that he might even be the agricultural minister and some were purporting that he should be, from Saskatchewan.

The reality is that they believe they should own it 100 per cent. And on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we agree. They should own it 100 per cent, and we'll be interested to see what the members opposite say as it relates to that particular issue, Mr. Speaker.

I'm also very much interested in, Mr. Speaker, in the quote that says . . . from Mr. Anderson who is the outspoken critic of course on the wheat board. Mr. Anderson said, in fact, that the wheat board was so upset with him that he started devoting his entire section of their website to debunking his claim, is what the Canadian Wheat Board were doing.

And why were the Canadian Wheat Board folks doing that? Well because the Canadian Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker, believe that farmers should have the opportunity to continue to vote democratically on the selection of the kinds of grain-marketing system that they should have in the province or in Canada. And so they have begun a long and hard lobby which is not unlike what we believe on this side of the House, that the Canadian Wheat Board has a very significant role to play and has played a significant role in the past and that in fact the Canadian Wheat Board should be left to decide of Canadian or Saskatchewan farmers in terms of how they will be structured, how they will be run, how they will be managed, and how they will be market.

It should be a democratic process as decided by the farmers. And I'll be interested in hearing how the Saskatchewan Party members opposite relates to this issue and whether or not, Mr. Speaker, they continue to endorse the Canadian Wheat Board in this province or whether they have joined their friend Mr. Anderson in the approach to try and rid the wheat board of their work today for us in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

And I was most interested in learning, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition from Swift Current is on record, Mr.

Speaker, supporting Mr. Anderson. As I said in my earlier comments that this family is very much related. Members opposite and that of the new federal Conservative government — they're very much related, Mr. Speaker.

In fact I have the member from Swift Current in quote saying this. He said, "I'm supporting Conservative candidate David Anderson", quote finished, where he says, Mr. Speaker, and that says to me that he is a strong proponent of Mr. Anderson, that he helped Mr. Anderson with his election campaign. And it also says, Mr. Speaker, that he in fact supports the position of Mr. Anderson, which is the demise of the Canadian Wheat Board. But more important than that, Mr. Speaker, not only the demise of the Canadian Wheat Board, is the democratic process of which we elect our members today to the Canadian Wheat Board. So if you do not support the Canadian Wheat Board, then you don't support the process, Mr. Speaker.

And we've seen some of the democratic process at work on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We witnessed it in the . . . yes, Mr. Speaker, we witnessed it when we had the opportunity to see what happened in the by-election in Melville, in how democracy didn't work, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing it witnessed, I think, in what we hear from the member who was in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, who is no longer the member of Weyburn, where she said, it's not about the politics; it's about the principles, which says something, Mr. Speaker, about the democratic process in the members' opposite caucus. And today I think what we're going to see, Mr. Speaker, is we're going to see members opposite supporting Mr. David Anderson because that's their belief in the demise of the Canadian Wheat Board.

And why, Mr. Speaker, do I think that that's the case? Because I have a quote that I'll find along the way here that speaks to where in fact the current Prime Minister in fact had a conversation or a . . . or here it is here, Mr. Speaker, where the Prime Minister applauds the Saskatchewan Party and their opposition to the Canadian Wheat Board. And here's his quote from Prime Minister Stephen Harper where he says this:

We hope [that] the Saskatchewan Party continues to hammer this issue home in the legislature. Someone has to point out how the Wheat Board monopoly is killing opportunities.

Now that's the quote, Mr. Speaker, from Mr. Harper in his correspondence with the current members opposite as it relates to the relationship, but also in working together collectively — as conservative governments, Mr. Speaker — as a Conservative government and a Saskatchewan opposition party, both conservative, talking about how we dismantle in this province and in Canada this very, very significant institution to the betterment of Canadian producers, Mr. Speaker.

I want to conclude my comments, Mr. Speaker, on these points. There is little or no doubt that, in Saskatchewan today and in Canada, we have a serious issue on the farm — a very serious issue on the farm, Mr. Speaker, and that we need to have all of our engines firing in order to try and find resolve or solution to the way in which we make a better life or try to find a better life for Saskatchewan producers.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, that it will require even those members

like those from Wood River who may not understand the agricultural economy very well, Mr. Speaker, but can learn from their colleagues on their side of the House, Mr. Speaker, about the importance of the industry. Or they may learn from time to time by paying attention to the dialogue that goes on in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, because I think that there is that kind of an education that needs to take place — not only in this Assembly but across the province, Mr. Speaker — about the importance of agriculture.

And so, it will require in the next few days, Mr. Speaker, and in the weeks ahead the kind of dialogue that we're having today. It's about making sure, Mr. Speaker, that we look for solutions within the commitments that have been made. We recognize the commitments that have been made today because, in order to grow a Saskatchewan economy, we need to have the agricultural engine firing at a far higher degree than it is today.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm very much appreciative of the opportunity to join in the debate today in support of this very significant issue that's on our plate and that collectively in this Assembly we can work with the new federal administration in terms of finding solution.

We have today a situation probably better than we've had in some time where we have 12 members of the federal cabinet. They're from this province. They are all primarily from rural Saskatchewan today. They understand the dynamics of our rural communities. They understand the issues on the farm. They have a very close association with the members opposite.

So I expect that what we'll see, Mr. Speaker, in the days and weeks ahead, a public policy for Canada and particularly for Saskatchewan that will be reflective of the kinds of issues that we want to see supported — a stronger safety net program, some work on the Farm Rail Car Coalition so we can see those cars in our province.

[15:45]

We want to see the investment in value-added in both the biodiesel and in ethanol by increasing the level from the 5 per cent to the 10 per cent. And we'll want to see, Mr. Speaker, some investment by the federal government in some of those industries, like they have in the past, the past administration has. And to say, Mr. Speaker, that our province will be depending and our rural communities will be depending a great deal on the collective work that we can participate in this Assembly to make it different for Saskatchewan producers.

And so in closing, I want to thank this House for the opportunity to speak. And to conclude my comments by saying that I will very much be supporting the position and the recommendation and the motion that has been placed by the Minister of Agriculture in this very important debate, Mr. Speaker Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the opposition critic for Agriculture, the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr.

Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the previous member's comments to a degree. He talked about the present Agriculture minister, and if I heard him right, saying he's the most accomplished Minister of Agriculture they had. I think the member for Yorkton has a very short memory because if I remember right he was the Agriculture minister at one time in this province. But I guess if you're comparing apples to oranges to pears or whatever direction you want to go, I guess it's an easy comparison.

I would go on to say though, if that's the most accomplished Minister of Agriculture we've had in the last 14 years, it's no wonder our farmers are in so much trouble in this province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are asking for a \$200 million payout and we agree with them on that, although I'm not even sure that that's enough this spring to help farmers get a crop in. And the members opposite have also talked about the hurt that's out in rural Saskatchewan, the problems with agriculture industry in Saskatchewan.

They've talked about the 60/40 split right now. The Deputy Premier talked about a new deal with the new federal government. He talked about 80/20. We agree with that too. We feel that that would be much fairer for the province of Saskatchewan and we would support him. In fact we've already talked to the federal Minister of Agriculture about just that thing, that 80/20 would be far more fair for the province of Saskatchewan.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I might add too that APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan] has come out with a news release asking for a \$75-an-acre payment for farmers. That's what they feel it would take to get this crop in, Mr. Speaker, and APAS is farmers. They're farmers from all across the province and have a very good handle on the situation and the demand that farmers have put on them right now just to try and stay above board.

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the money that the federal government has just paid out. In fact they're in the process of just paying out, I think there was \$755 million, but that was all across Canada, Mr. Speaker. I think when it came to Saskatchewan, and I could stand to be corrected, but I believe about 240 to 270 of that is supposed to find its way into Saskatchewan farmers' hands. But there's a catch, Mr. Speaker, as there always is.

The CAIS program as we know, and I think the members opposite mentioned what a poor program this is, the inability of that program to address the needs of Saskatchewan farmers. What we are finding now and every member . . . The member from Kelvington and a number of other members are getting calls from farmers where they may have received a payment from CAIS in the last couple of years, last year especially. It doesn't matter to what degree — it might have been a small payment; it may have been a half decent payment — but now they're getting letters. And the CAIS program, the people at CAIS, they're saying, we want that money back. We made a mistake. We calculated wrong and we want that money back.

These same farmers took that payment in good faith because CAIS had made that payment on the information that they provided the CAIS administration people with. Paid bills, were up against it, needed that money. And now, lo and behold, the CAIS program is asking to return that money, knowing full well that these farmers are up against it and don't have that money.

Now we come to the grain and oilseed payment this spring that the federal government, the new federal government has honoured and are paying out — and doing it very quickly I might add. They're not getting no payment because what CAIS is doing is clawing back this grain and oilseed payment. So not only do they owe the CAIS payment back that was previously made, they're not receiving any payment this spring. Can you imagine what that does to a farm family out there that's having a hard time buying groceries, paying their power bills or utility bills, and something like that comes in the mail, Mr. Speaker? It's enough to drive these people around the bend.

I talked to a farmer last Monday. And it's just an example of what's going out there, and he said, I've really totally had it. I don't know where to turn. On Monday, Farm Credit sent him a registered letter and said, we are taking proceedings, starting proceedings, and we're foreclosing on your land. And he said that was just devastating. And it is, Mr. Speaker, for any farmer out there to get a letter like that. It's terrible. But that wasn't the end of it.

On Tuesday he got a letter from CAIS saying, we made a payment last fall on your behalf to you. I can't remember the exact amount; the amount really doesn't matter. We overpaid you the full amount of what we paid you last fall. We would like that back.

Mr. Speaker, we hear of suicides happening in rural Saskatchewan. And they aren't advertised because we're very proud people out there, and it's not something you want to advertise. Why I bring it to the floor today is because it's so devastating to families out there, but it's reality. It's reality of what's going on.

And the gentleman that I talked to that day, I didn't know how to help him, Mr. Speaker, but he was at wits' end. And I really worried about this person and his family out there, of what the past couple of days had done to him. That's one case, Mr. Speaker. This is happening all over Saskatchewan.

We have a program — AIDA [agricultural income disaster assistance], CFIP [Canadian farm income program], and now CAIS — and not one of those programs has been adequate for our Saskatchewan farmers.

And I can't begin to put it across to the public of Saskatchewan, for anyone that's listening today, the hurt that's going on out there to farm families. We talked about the suicides. And we don't advertise them so in most cases we never hear about them unless it's in our own communities. And it's something we all mourn together as a community — don't have to be related. It's our good friends when it happens, and it's a very sad thing.

But we're also having family breakups out there. Some are people that have been married 30, 40 years, and that's another sad situation. In some cases with the few young farmers we've

got it's even happening to them, Mr. Speaker. It's driving families apart. It's driving families off the farm and moving out of province to find work so that they can feed their families and giving up on the family farm.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you how serious enough and get it across enough to the rest of Saskatchewan what rural Saskatchewan is up against. We've been through the '30s. And I think it was our parents and in some cases our grandparents went through the '30s, and from what I understand things were really bad at that time. We're in a situation that I would believe is comparable, in fact maybe worse because we're in a different era right now, Mr. Speaker, where the debt load . . . the debt load at that time wasn't as great but there was just no money. Well now there's just no money but the debt load is fantastic and going up. And we're in a situation where I don't know many farmers if they know where to turn, Mr. Speaker.

So when the provincial government says to the federal government . . . we're right behind them when they ask for a \$200 million payment. And we've talked to the federal Agriculture minister already and I'm very positive in meeting him. As the Deputy Premier was talking about before, when he was first named Minister of Agriculture, I did have some hesitation. I felt at that point we might be far better served by one of our Saskatchewan MPs [Member of Parliament], being that we have 12 MPs in Saskatchewan out of the 14 on the government benches. And I know that's going to help us down the road. In fact the present Agriculture minister said that they've already been lobbying him about the hurt in Saskatchewan. And we also need that support from them and are getting that. But the Agriculture minister said he's not just sure just putting more money in is going to help.

So I think what we have to do is keep lobbying from this side of the House and that side of the House and keep passing that on to him. I think it wouldn't hurt for every one of us on both sides of the House to talk to our 12 Saskatchewan MPs and just reconfirm. They've been out there campaigning. They know, as well as I do or members on that side, just how bad it is. In fact, they've just finished campaigning so they know things are bad out there. But it doesn't hurt to lobby them again, to call each one and say, this is what's happening in my constituency; I'm sure you're well aware but will you once again pass that on to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Agriculture.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker — I'm very positive about this — I think they're going to get a very good reception from the new government because finally we have a Prime Minister from Western Canada which has been long awaited. We have an Agriculture minister from the West. It may be BC, but he seemed when we met with him, very receptive to a number of the ideas. I know he's talked to the members opposite already. So I think there's possibility of some good changes in the works. But the first and immediate need we need to do is address the cash shortfall to get this crop in.

Now I could stand here today, and I believe as the members opposite have by including the wheat board in this motion, Mr. Speaker; and I think maybe all we're doing at that point is playing politics. This is far too serious to just play politics. My constituents are relying on me to bring their message forward, and every one of us in this House, to help them address the

issue and the state that they're in and find some assistance for them to put a crop in, but not just that — to help feed their family.

And, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on. But I think at this point I will put forth an amendment and then I'll take my place because I know there's a number of other members on this side have examples and situations that they want to pass on this afternoon too about the situation of agriculture.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move this motion, seconded by the member for Thunder Creek:

That all the words after "this Assembly" be removed and the following words be substituted:

recognize the response of the federal government to the present cash flow crisis for producers in the agriculture sector and urge the federal government to provide a fair and equitable formula for the 2006 Canadian agricultural income stabilization program with a disaster component, and to provide a minimum one-time cash payment of at least \$200 million to Saskatchewan producers in response to the fact that agriculture crisis is a global problem beyond the control of producers;

and further, that this Assembly urge the provincial government to take a leadership role in the future design of federal and provincial agriculture programs by attending the national negotiations as well as properly funding the province's share of these programs.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Melville-Saltcoats, seconded by the member for Thunder Creek:

That all of the words after "this Assembly" be removed and the following words be substituted:

recognize the response of the federal government to the present cash flow crisis for producers in the agriculture sector and urge the federal government to provide a fair and equitable formula for the 2006 Canadian agricultural income stabilization program with the disaster component and to provide a minimum one-time cash payment of at least 200 million to Saskatchewan producers in response to the fact that the agriculture crisis is a global problem beyond the control of producers;

and further, that this Assembly urge the provincial government to take a leadership role in the future design of federal and provincial agriculture programs by attending the national negotiations as well as properly funding the province's share of the programs.

The Chair recognizes the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night in Lloydminster a Sask Party candidate for nomination,

Leo Paré, said these words. He said many farmers are scared that they won't be able to pass their farm on to their children and many farm children are scared that they won't be able to succeed on the family farm no matter how hard they work. Prophetic words, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, grain and oilseed prices have fallen in the last year from between 25 and 30 per cent. Pulse crop prices have fallen considerably more than that. 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 in 2003. Half that price, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while our . . . Madam Deputy Speaker, while our neighbouring provinces have been looking at ways to ensure the viability of the family farm, the NDP maintains the status quo and merely oversees the slow death of Saskatchewan farms. In real terms, Madam Deputy Speaker — and this is over and above inflation — farm liabilities have increased by over 40 per cent since 1981 while farm capital values have remained almost constant since the late 1980s.

Energy prices have skyrocketed, affecting major inputs on Saskatchewan farms. Fuel, nearly \$1 a litre for farm diesel fuel, Madam Deputy Speaker. Recently the price of fertilizer over the last couple of years has increased from about \$300 a tonne to in the neighbourhood of \$500 a tonne and that's related as well to fossil fuels, i.e., the increased price of natural gas.

[16:00]

With the increased costs of fuel and fertilizer, farm inputs have increased on a very small farm, Madam Deputy Speaker, of 1,000 acres. Farm input costs on fuel and fertilizer alone on that small farm have increased \$12,400 in the last year. A 1,000-acre farm is very small by today's standards, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the increase of 12,400 for that farm would be extremely exacerbated and much larger on more viable and substantial farms.

The Ag minister recently said in the September *Leader-Post*, and I quote:

. . . existing farm support programs will meet the "basic needs" of producers . . .

Madam Deputy Speaker, they clearly won't. Farmers are leaving the business in unprecedented numbers, so fast that auction companies are turning down more auction sales this coming spring than they're able to take on.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan also has the highest number of CAIS claims in federally administered provinces, which does not include Alberta or Ontario. The provinces that administer the CAIS program for their own producers say that they can administer the program more economically than the federal CAIS administration and that leaves more money on the table for producers in those provinces. But this NDP government, Madam Deputy Speaker, in Saskatchewan allows the federal government to administer the program and provide employment to Winnipeg.

Madam Deputy Speaker, many Saskatchewan producers are

being phoned by CAIS requesting that they pay back money, money now that they can least afford it. The provinces that administer their own CAIS programs also have far fewer of these requests. As well, in both Alberta and Ontario applications are processed much faster where they process their own applications, Madam Deputy Speaker. Producers in Saskatchewan face a daunting task in completing the paperwork associated with the CAIS program, this program that is unnecessarily complicated and unfair, Madam Deputy Speaker. This has led to claims being rejected, producers having to appeal their claims, and producers being asked to return many payments after money is spent in an effort to pay their bills.

The federal government at least realizes that there is a farm income crisis in Canada. In Manitoba and Alberta we've seen provincial governments move to adapt their crop insurance programs to the prices that have affected their producers. Alberta's introduced floor-insured prices and spent 20 million to lower premiums, while Manitoba's introduced excessive moisture insurance to deal with the heavy rains from the last couple of years. Meanwhile over the last now four years, this government has increased premiums and lowered coverage.

Saskatchewan producers, Madam Deputy Speaker, currently receive no financial benefit for the variety of ecological goods that we produce on our farms, even though Manitoba has announced a pilot project where producers will receive money for those reasons.

Producers in this province supply society with clean water through filtration by potholes on their land, provide clean air by sequestering CO₂ and N₂O and other air pollutants. Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, approximately 50 per cent of Saskatchewan farm land is farmed with no-till practices, and at 50 per cent, Madam Deputy Speaker, 12.9 million tonnes of CO₂ are removed from the atmosphere. Saskatchewan producers receive no credit or no payment for that service, Madam Deputy Speaker, although it will help us to comply with Kyoto.

Agricultural land provides habitat for deer, waterfowl, coyotes, numerous other prairie animals, gophers, you name it, rabbits. Prairie potholes are responsible for the production of 70 per cent of North America's waterfowl. Yet Saskatchewan producers receive no funding for these services that they provide to society in general. Yet out of this NDP government we've seen no meaningful, proactive policy that would recognize our producers for that contribution.

The state of Minnesota has enabled producers to own ethanol plants, and that's also been aided by the federal US [United States] government, Madam Deputy Speaker. This provides producers with an opportunity to have their loans underwritten, to buy into ethanol plants in their state wherever it may be — Minnesota was the first, but now it's spread across the country— and to reap profits on not only the sale of the grain to their plants but also on the sale of the ethanol down the road.

But in Saskatchewan this NDP government, Madam Deputy Speaker, would like to own the ethanol industry. They've tried to build ethanol plants, Madam Deputy Speaker, one in my constituency at Belle Plaine, this imaginary ethanol plant that didn't ever happen, Madam Deputy Speaker, but was

announced previous to the last election and in so doing has set ethanol production in this province back several years.

Ethanol drives the price of corn in the US where the corn crop is about 10.5 billion bushels a year. Compare that to our less than 1 billion bushel wheat crop in Western Canada and it's not too hard to see, Madam Deputy Speaker, that ethanol could as well drive the price of wheat in Western Canada if our government was more co-operative with the private sector and proactive in introducing the policies that would encourage it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this NDP government pays lip service to the crisis in Saskatchewan agriculture but their record is dismal on the file. They don't ante up the province's portion of CAIS until payments should be coming out to producers every year. Each year they reduce the level of coverage and increase the premium for crop insurance. They reduced the farm fuel rebate by 3 cents a litre two years ago, pleading poverty at the time. Now when they're sitting on a pile of resource revenue there's no move to reinstate that 3 cents a litre.

Madam Deputy Speaker, today they dare to say in this motion that the farm crisis is beyond the control of the provincial government. They have a responsibility and the province can have an important impact on the problem. And it's time for this NDP government to live up to their responsibilities to our farm families and to stop abdicating their responsibilities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they dare to play politics with the lives of our producers and their families by including a paragraph on the wheat board at the end of their motion — a paragraph that they know we cannot and will not in all conscience support.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in spite of the value-added killing effect of the wheat board in Western Canada — the fact they will only call for about half of last year's durum crop in the current crop year — and the hardship of farmers going broke with their bins full and those producers' inability to generate cash flow on their farms even though they have been very successful producers and the fact that under the board system producers are responsible for demurrage, insurance, and other charges where under the open market the grain companies that own the grain take those responsibilities, Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister says that producer car loading will be at risk under the dual marketing system.

That right, Madam Deputy Speaker, can be safeguarded by the stroke of the federal minister's pen and this provincial Ag minister ought to be making that case to the federal minister instead of fearmongering among our beleaguered producers in rural Saskatchewan on this issue.

He talks about, and I quote, "pulling the wheat board out of the system" and of, I quote again, "eliminating single-desk selling" — things we in the opposition, things nobody else is even suggesting. And it's my understanding that this is also the position of the federal government where — as we do in the provincial opposition: we advocate marketing freedom, we do not advocate the abolition of the wheat board — this is the point that seems to be missed by the members opposite, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The minister talks about the democratic mechanisms of the

wheat board. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, what is democratic about compulsion? Surely democracy and compulsion are not compatible in marketing.

It is inexcusable that this cynical, tired, old government that hasn't had a new idea since they decided back in the 1930s to eliminate capitalism is sabotaging their own motion here by adding the wheat board clause to the end of it and by abdicating all provincial responsibility for the ag crisis. This is simply not acceptable, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is immoral and irresponsible.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when the federal NDP Party held the balance of power during the recent Martin Liberal administration — was bragging about all of the influence that he and his party were exerting on that Liberal federal government — we didn't hear one word about a better farm program to replace CAIS or more funding for CAIS. Nothing about an emergency program to help out Western Canadian agriculture, Madam Deputy Speaker, or to improve the crop insurance program — nothing of that nature.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this emergency motion is nothing more than a show that every producer in this province will see through. And I will not support their phony motion, Madam Deputy Speaker, and will be supporting the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and soon to be Mr. Speaker, I think. I first want to say a couple comments regarding standing in this position in the House. It's the first opportunity that I've had to rise on my feet and speak from this position in the House. And it is a humbling experience because a fellow that has spoke here many, many times — for as long as I have been elected, for six years — he stood here and spoke on many, many different issues. And every time that he stands to speak, I can honestly say I'm quite interested in what he has to say.

I have this irresistible urge to have kind of half glasses and pulled down to the bridge of my nose and start pointing a finger from this position. And I don't know what it is, but I guess it's a precedent that has been set by the member that was here and I'm sure, I'm 100 per cent positive, will be back here in the very near future. And I'll be very glad to yield this position and take whichever position I am allotted. In the back corner will be great as long as the member from now Martensville but formerly of Rosthern will be in this position, and we look forward to that day.

It's an honour to stand today again and speak on behalf of the constituents of Indian Head-Milestone regarding agriculture. It was not long ago that we had our fall session and I remember in that fall session a debate that went on regarding agriculture — a debate that went on into the evening regarding agriculture and government members and opposition members talked about the different situations that were taking place in agriculture.

But I remember a few of the statements that were made by the

government members regarding agriculture and regarding programs that were in place in the '80s. And I remember a certain member on the government side saying that every farmer in this province abused that program and they were intent on falsifying records so they could get payments from that program.

And I said at that point, I said, you know it's amazing that they would expect to go out into rural Saskatchewan and ever get a seat, ever win a vote, ever win a seat federally or provincially. And I told, I said — I think I spoke right after that member — and I said I will thank you personally, and I have yet to do that, because I think you've ensured a seat for every Conservative MP in the next federal election. Well I was off a little bit. Not all 14 ridings federally were won by the Conservatives but I think what is even more significant — 12 were — but even more significant than that not one NDP member was elected in the last federal election, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — And there is a reason why there wasn't one federal MP elected in the last federal election. It's because of statements made by this government. It was because of statements made by the member from Yorkton, statements made by members from the government benches that continue to look at rural Saskatchewan as something else, you know. And I've had many people in the last number of months and a year or two, when the farm crisis has been escalating, and I've had so many of them say to me — and it's, you know, it's tough to answer back — but they'll say you know, really I don't think the government really cares what happens in rural Saskatchewan.

Look at where they get their votes. Look at where this government gets its votes. So what are they going to cater to? Who are they going to cater to? They are not going to cater to rural Saskatchewan. They are not going to cater to the community of Riceton or Gray or Francis or Indian Head or any other of the great communities in Indian Head-Milestone. They won't cater to those communities. They tend to throw their support more behind the urban centres.

[16:15]

Now this isn't me. This isn't what I was saying. These are the statements that I hear continually when I attend a hockey game in Milestone or when I attend a . . . This summer with all the centennial events, people were in a good mood. But what they kept saying about agriculture is that the commodity prices are so depressed that we're in trouble, and quite frankly we don't think the provincial government cares.

And I think that was very reflective in the last federal election. I believe it was reflective in the 2003 provincial election and even the 1999 general election provincially when the NDP party itself was virtually wiped out in every rural riding, Mr. Speaker — virtually wiped out. And I think it carried on in 2003, and it will carry on in the next general election. The scary part is that even urban Saskatchewan now is feeling like the NDP has lost touch. And I know there is much fertile ground in the urban areas for our party to make further inroads than what we already have had.

But the whole issue around agriculture and where we are today, the member from Thunder Creek talked about some of the different prices that we are experiencing. And really I think, you know, we can look at many different aspects of agriculture.

But to me it's simply . . . we have extremely low commodity prices with quite high input costs. And because you have rising input costs and you have falling commodity prices, there isn't a business or a company that can withstand that type of pressure. And that's what we're seeing all over the province. It doesn't seem to matter.

And I will say that in the constituency that I represent we have been very, very fortunate over the last couple years to have some extremely good crops. We have been insulated a little bit from some of the poor quality of crops that people experienced last year. Even the year prior when there was a devastating frost, some of our producers made out not too bad.

So we have been insulated, but I have never, in six years that I have been elected, been to the different communities and talked to farmers in my constituency that have been so negative with the prospects of this coming year. Because they don't see one commodity that is kind of the Cinderella story or that people can look at and say, this is something that we can grow and make money.

Just quickly, I'll just quickly talk about some of the commodity prices. When you're looking at canary seed at 8 cents a pound . . . for the people that don't understand agriculture, canary seed at 8 cents a pound is a record low. Not very long ago, three to four years ago, we were looking at 20 to 25 cents a pound. So it's been cut by 300 per cent. Your income, if you had been growing canary, this past year has been cut by 300 per cent. Devastating.

You can look at wheat prices at \$2. You can look at lentils. And the wheat price we're going to talk a little bit about because that is the one commodity that I'm going to list here that is under the wheat board jurisdiction. But you can look at no. 1 lentils that are at 11 cents. And for years, you wouldn't sell any lentil . . . an extra three would be 14 cents. This is a no. 1 lentil that has been dropped down to 11, if you can get rid of it.

Flax prices are at 5.50 a bushel, canola at less than \$5. These prices are unheard of, absolutely unheard of. So when you've got falling prices and rising inputs, it puts everybody in a squeeze.

As I said, the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood talked about chemical prices. He talked about fertilizer prices. Fuel costs are going up, equipment and parts, taxes, crop insurance. I was very interested to hear the Minister of Agriculture talk a little bit about the Crow rate and the issue around transportation of grain. And that's another cost, another cost to producers.

But it's also interesting when he talked about the Crow rate and how all that money was taken out of the hands of agriculture producers. At that time the NDP government was in power — the NDP government was in power. And also at that time, strangely enough, agriculture was going through a bit of a high at that point. Commodity prices were pretty good. The input costs weren't too terribly high. People were making a little bit

of money on the farm through those years.

And I remember people in my area — because I was farming at that time — people that I talked to said, yes, you know, this Crow rate, it's going to hurt into the future. We're getting a bit of a payout. We're making a little bit of money now. It didn't seem to have the impact as what it's having now because now we're in the squeeze. We're not making any money, but we're seeing those costs escalate. And it's just another cost on the input side.

It's been interesting. So what are the solutions? I've talked about the real base cause of the problem is lower commodity prices and increased inputs. What are the solutions?

And I was just thinking back in the time that I farmed all the different programs that have been put into place. And I really believe it's probably taken one person a full-time job to think of an acronym for all the different farm programs that we've had. I remember there was WGSP, the western grain stabilization program. And then there was NISA, the net income stabilization account. And there was AIDA and there was GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] and there was CFIP. And now there's CAIS. I mean, that's been in about the last 15 years about 10 different programs and an acronym that have been put into place.

And none of them really have met the need. Certainly GRIP I would say was about as close as it could come, but unfortunately that was ripped up by this government. So when he talks about the Crow rate and he talks about the issues around the Crow rate, I think he also leaves out . . . He's also got kind of a selective memory when he didn't mention, yes the Crow rate is hurting now; it wasn't as much of an impact right at that time. But right around that time as well we were losing programs like the GRIP program that farmers were able to take to the bank that was bankable.

So you know, he says that yes there is some issues around the federal government. But every time I've heard the minister speak, whether it was last fall or now this spring, he fails to ever look within his own government and say, well there are some issues within this government that we need to take care of and we haven't. Because those are the issues that we hear about on an ongoing basis, that there are issues that this provincial government has failed to address.

I heard the member from Yorkton talk about the ethanol industry and the biodiesel industry. And you know when you look at input costs and commodities, the member from Regina Qu'Appelle, the Minister of Agriculture, talked about the input costs and he talked about the big corporations taking the money and getting rich. That's one side of it. That's only one side of it. The other side is the input costs and what do we do to try and . . . is the commodity prices. And what do we try to do in our province to use more of our commodities and so we can kind of control the price. The value-add I guess is what we're talking about.

The minister or the member from Yorkton talked about the ethanol industry which is something we need to move towards. I know our side of the House supported the legislation that came forward mandating ethanol use. But the unfortunate part

is that they can come up with a good idea, and I think that was a great idea, and biodiesel is a great idea. But what they did at that same time is they said, but we think value adding and ethanol is a good idea but really the only people that know how good of an idea it is and that can make this work in the province is we, the government.

And I remember at that time they decided that they were going to start an ethanol plant at Belle Plaine, and they spent \$100,000 on levelling the ground and they had a big contractor come in and level the ground and put a bunch of gravel down. Then they went over to Bazaar & Novelty and rented a huge tent, and I don't think that was quite big enough. They went over to another, A-1 Rent-Alls, and they rented a great big circus tent, and they put it up on this chunk of land that's been flattened with graders and they put gravel down. A couple of hundred thousand dollars has been put into just the site so that this tent could be set up on. So then that's not quite enough. Now we need to get some people in to fill the tent because we're going to make the huge announcement that we, as a government, are going to start the ethanol industry.

Ethanol is a good idea. And it must be a good idea; they got the opposition to support. We're going to support the government in the fact that ethanol is what needs to happen so let's get this big dog and pony show . . . So they've got the base. They've got the land flattened out. They've got all of the gravel down. They've been to all the tent rental places in Saskatchewan, got the biggest tent they could find.

So now we need some people. So obviously they went to some of the community schools around the area and into Moose Jaw, and they got busload after busload of kids, and they brought them all out to this big revival meeting or I shouldn't say . . . ethanol meeting and they're going to tell the people how we as a government are going to create the ethanol business.

So all these busloads came out and busloads came out. And they had bands playing and they had balloons and they had everything going on. It was a big happening. But you know what happened was, it was a big announcement. They got to stand out there in front and the Premier was out there talking about how wonderful it is and how they're going to partner with a company and we the government are going to make this happen.

How many years ago was that? It was about five years ago and not one thing has happened from that side because — you know what happens in this and has happened time and time again — as soon as the government gets involved, as soon as the government gets involved, people start backing away and saying ho, ho this doesn't look so good. And that's exactly what happened with Broe industries, they backed away.

And you put this industry, you put this industry back five to six years, which quite frankly the industry couldn't afford because, when you look at what's happened across the line in the states, in some of the states and the advancements of the ethanol industry there through private industry, we should be absolutely ashamed of what's happened in this province.

You've taken a good idea and you've absolutely smothered it because ethanol would have been a great help in the agriculture

sector. It would have been an economic generator, but unfortunately the government had to get in the middle of it with their big revival meeting in the tent. And you know when you go out to that site right now, I think the only thing left is maybe one tent peg. And that's the exact sum amount that we have got out of this government's ethanol announcement. For probably 3 to \$400,000, \$800,000 of investment, we have got maybe one tent peg left there and that's all there is.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of troubles in farm land, in the agriculture sector across the province. The solutions aren't easy and it's not one solution. It's many, many, many solutions. But one thing I know will not solve the problem is when the government tries to directly inject itself into the economy.

People out in rural Saskatchewan are saying yes we need help. We need support for low commodity prices. We need support on high input costs. But what we don't need is this government directly injecting itself into the economy.

The other thing that people are saying out there — and I just want to touch on it because it was part of the motion — is the whole issue around the Canadian Wheat Board, and we've talked about dual marketing. But when I look at the crops grown in southern Saskatchewan, such a small portion are wheat board grown crops anymore. Farmers have voted — they talk about a democratic process — farmers have voted by what they produce. And what they produce now compared to 20 years ago has changed significantly for one reason: they want the option to market it on their own.

They grow canary seed. They grow flax. They grow canola because . . . Pulse crops, they grow all sorts of crops because they have the ability then to market it when they see fit. And there has been one reason for that because under the Canadian Wheat Board there is no option. You take what they give you and that's it. Farmers wanted to no longer have their destiny controlled by somebody else but try and control part of their own destiny.

As far as the Canadian Wheat Board is concerned on my farm, we still grow some board grain, it hasn't been . . . it's been a couple of years since we have. And I would probably still market it through the Canadian Wheat Board but the option of controlling your own destiny is where people want to be, I truly believe.

So Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment. I won't be supporting the motion and thank you for the opportunity.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this emergency debate on agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, we've had far too many of these emergency debates on agriculture. And it's frustrating for those in the industry and for families dependent upon a strong agriculture sector in rural Saskatchewan to continually see a lack of action and a lack of solutions coming forward for their industry.

I could talk — as have members on both sides of the House and they've spoken very accurately — about the plight of agriculture at the current time the province of Saskatchewan. I'm not going to go through a litany of statistics although I could. I don't disagree with a lot of the numbers and figures used by the government members and certainly agree with my colleagues on this side of the House. But I will mention a couple of facts and figures before I get on to discuss some of the issues that have been brought forward today.

First of all, this is the third year of negative farm income in Saskatchewan. You simply cannot sustain an industry when you have year after year of negative farm income. And I spoke to one of my constituents who said that the local credit union is telling farmers, when they are trying to make their financial arrangements for the coming year, that it pretty much doesn't matter what they grow, pretty much doesn't matter which crop they grow — whether it's grains, oilseeds, board, non-board, special crops, non-special crops — they can expect to lose about \$40 an acre in this current crop year, this upcoming season.

[16:30]

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't take a mathematician or an economist or a bookkeeper to figure out that there's a real dilemma facing agriculture in this province if you are faced with the prospect of going out and losing money on the industry that you are involved in. And, Mr. Speaker, that demands attention. It demands attention from all levels of government and, Mr. Speaker, there certainly isn't a lot of time to sort this out.

I was talking to my colleague from Kelvington-Wadena and she talked about last fall, 17 inches of rain in harvest time. They had to put dual wheels on the combine. They still made such ruts in the field that they can't get through the fields this spring. Mr. Speaker, there's no disaster program in place to deal with this kind of an issue and that could happen whether you're in Wadena, Saskatchewan or whether you're in Summerside, Prince Edward Island. Mr. Speaker, there are some national requirements in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, as you drive throughout Saskatchewan you realize that last year there was a bountiful harvest. There are piles of grain still out on the ground and the quality of those piles of grain are deteriorating rapidly. And again these crops are board crops, non-board crops. They are thousands and thousands and thousands of tonnes of product that producers were expecting to be sold into the marketplace over the winter, or even before the winter began, to maintain their business and to support their family.

What do we hear from the Minister of Agriculture today? Instead of bringing forward solutions that we could all get excited about in this emergency debate, he's complaining about per capita expenses. He's never really explained it very well. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has high per capita expenses because agriculture is a significant part of Saskatchewan's economy. I haven't noticed very high per capita expenses when it comes to the auto industry in Saskatchewan, or the fishing industry. We have some per capita expenses with the forestry industry.

Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that Saskatchewan and our provincial government has more of a responsibility to agriculture than the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador or even the Government of Ontario where agriculture is a much smaller portion of their economy. So rather than just throwing out these numbers and saying it's too big, we can't do anything, it's time that the Minister of Agriculture began to say, this industry is important to Saskatchewan. The people in this industry are important to Saskatchewan and doggone it, we're going to do something about this industry. And we're going to be positive, constructive players in solving the problems facing agriculture, rather than complaining about some per capita formula that doesn't even make sense here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I also listened to the Agriculture minister talk about the loss of the Crow rate. Well, Mr. Speaker, I happened to be in the Parliament of Canada when Mr. Goodale and the Liberal government decided to discontinue the Crow rate. And I voted against it because, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, producers were not getting value for giving up the Crow benefit at the time. The member for North Battleford was also in the House of Commons. He knows I stood up and voted against that proposal.

But, Mr. Speaker, earlier there was a multi-billion dollar offer on the table for producers in lieu of the Crow rate, but the NDP stood against that. And, Mr. Speaker, that fund would have gone on in perpetuity to provide the benefits of the Crow rate without the problems of preventing processing industries from developing here in the province of Saskatchewan and in all of Western Canada.

So, Mr. Speaker, the problem with the Crow rate are the members and the party on the other side of this House, the NDP, who couldn't see the solution when it was right in front of their noses and had to settle for not even second best, not third best, but an inadequate solution to the transportation needs of the agriculture sector here in Saskatchewan.

And now, Mr. Speaker, I hear the minister chirping over there so I must be touching on the truth because he's getting pretty upset, Mr. Speaker.

I want you to know that I listened to the minister very carefully. And he talked about somebody somewhere — I don't know if he was talking about us or if he was talking about the new federal government — but he said somebody was trying to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board. I don't know who he was talking about, Mr. Speaker. He certainly wasn't talking about me. He wasn't talking about the Saskatchewan Party. And I listened pretty closely in the federal election and I don't think he was talking about the federal Conservative Party.

Mr. Speaker, we've never talked about getting rid of the Canadian Wheat Board. There are many producers that appreciate the board and the board can provide some services and some benefits to the agriculture sector that I support and my colleagues support. What we are saying on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is that the Canadian Wheat Board needs to be a player in the marketing of grains in the province of Saskatchewan. And I quite frankly think they could do it right across the country and truly be a Canadian Wheat Board, but they must do it in a competitive environment.

Mr. Speaker, if you have a hockey team and that hockey team never gets to play another hockey team, are they going to be a good hockey team? Not at all. They're going to become pretty slack. They're going to be there for the party between periods, Mr. Speaker. I'm not saying that the wheat board is slack and without some ability and expertise. But, Mr. Speaker, the wheat board needs to be sharpened by competition in a voluntary marketing environment. Mr. Speaker, they have had that environment in the past and they have been successful in that environment. Mr. Speaker, they have thrived in that environment.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that the members on the other side would think it was very good if we said, let's have single-desk political party in Saskatchewan and let's call it the Saskatchewan Party. We don't want any competition politically; let's just let the Saskatchewan Party do it and let's let them be the single-desk political party in Saskatchewan. They'd say no; they'd say the Saskatchewan Party needs somebody to challenge them, someone to question their ideas, someone to provide an alternative.

Well the marketing of products requires the same challenges — competition, someone to offer another way, someone to say perhaps we can do it better, someone to make the Canadian Wheat Board better. Now, Mr. Speaker, it's common sense but the members over there are playing this silly game saying people want to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board when nothing could be further from the truth.

Now I want to talk a little bit about the plight of special crops in Saskatchewan. As my colleague from Indian Head-Milestone mentioned, the price of, say, lentils has never been lower in the province of Saskatchewan. It's at all-time lows. We say, well why is that? Well there's a couple of reasons. One reason is that the Americans are now subsidizing these specialty crops and that has been an influence to lower the price. The other reason was that there was a transportation tie-up on the West Coast. Just when we really needed to move lentils, there was a strike out on the West Coast.

And you know I'm sure that there were NDPers out there, locked arms with those workers destroying Saskatchewan agriculture and destroying the Saskatchewan marketplace. I've seen NDP members on the picket lines picketing and supporting strikes that debilitate Saskatchewan agriculture. And they think not twice of it because their party is supported by these unions and these actions. They don't care about the wellbeing of agriculture in Saskatchewan. They're more concerned about their narrow political objectives. And, Mr. Speaker, that's part of the reason why the price of lentils are at a historic low in the province of Saskatchewan.

I want to talk a little bit about the comments by the member from Yorkton, the minister responsible for rural development. And this is a small issue but it bugs me because Saskatchewan is so far behind the other provinces. You know we do have Crown lands in Saskatchewan for agriculture purposes. And you know if there is oil and gas found on those Crown lands, that government pulls in all the surface right revenues and the poor producer, the farm family out there trying to make a living, receives almost nothing. It doesn't happen in other provinces but this greedy NDP government is not prepared to give up one

little red cent to agriculture once they get their paws on this money.

Mr. Speaker, the minister for rural development could fix that really easy in cabinet one of these days if he really cared about rural Saskatchewan. But quite frankly, while he can get up and say nice things here in the Assembly, when he goes to his office and when he goes to cabinet and when he's in his NDP caucus he forgets all about rural Saskatchewan and its needs, and he does absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Yorkton also talked about the railcar coalition, and that's fine. If there's a group of farmers that want to buy these railway cars, let them go ahead. If Sinclair Harrison wants to buy them, we've said, you know, blessings to you; we hope you enjoy having them. But I want to tell the provincial government, I don't want them to spend my tax dollars buying railway cars, quite simply.

I've got a tractor and I've got a cultivator, an air seeder on my farm. The air seeder isn't worth a whole lot without the tractor. If I've got a nice air seeder there I can spend \$100,000 on that air seeder, but if I don't have a tractor to pull it, it isn't very valuable to me until I find that tractor. And if somebody else has control of the tractor, I don't have a whole lot of control over the air seeder.

So maybe there are some benefits to farmers buying these railcars. And if they want to do that and they can make the financial arrangements to do that, that's fine. I support that. I say let them do that. But I say to the minister, don't invest my dollars, because as a farmer I don't want to buy any railcars. My neighbour might but I don't want to, and I don't want my tax dollars going into that investment.

Now my time is slipping away here but I have a couple of other issues that I want to talk about. I want to talk about subsidies. I think it was the minister from Yorkton, or the member from Yorkton again that was quoting some little thing out of context saying that I was opposed to subsidies. Well I can tell the minister — because I've been consistent on this throughout my entire political career — yes I have a position on subsidies. I think that generally they're a bad thing because they . . . As I mentioned, when the Americans began to subsidize special crops our price went down.

But I have never ever said that when the rest of the world is subsidizing products that Canada should walk away from its support for farmers. I have never said that. And if the minister . . . I'm sure the minister wasn't aware of that. And I'm sure he wouldn't have stated that in this legislature had he been aware of the truth. So I want to make him aware of the fact that I've been consistent in that position.

In fact when I was involved in designing agriculture policy, we proposed what should be in place is a trade distortion adjustment program which actually looked, Mr. Speaker . . . And it still has some legitimacy today, should have been implemented a long time ago. It would have been easier to implement with the trade rules of those days than the trade rules that we deal with today. But basically it said, look at a commodity. I don't care, let it be spring wheat or let it be hogs — any agriculture product — and if there are international

subsidies that determine what the amount of hurt is to the price received by Canadian producers for that product. And then look at what you have in your treasury and say to farmers — be honest with them — and say you know, the hurt caused by this trade distortion, this international subsidization of your product is costing your industry, let's say, \$1 billion. Throw out a nice round number.

And so the Finance minister says, well you know we can cover 50 per cent of that. We can cover 500 million and that's what our trade distortion will be. Maybe they can do better. Maybe they have a stronger purse and they've been more prudent than the NDP are with tax dollars and they say we can cover 75 per cent of the shortfall. That's the kind of subsidies that I think should be in place here in Canada to counteract international subsidies.

Quite frankly the grains and oilseed program is kind of along that line. Not as good as we'd like to see, I admit, but pretty easy to implement. Basically they said there's a real problem in grains and oilseeds and instead of going through all of the intricacies of CAIS and crop insurance and that, they basically said, what's your farm income from grains and oilseeds? We'll pay seven-point-some per cent of that.

And so if you have a \$100,000 income on your farm from these commodities, expect a cheque for between 7 and \$8,000. It should be a lot more, should be a lot more, but pretty simple, doesn't take a huge bureaucracy like CAIS to figure out a program like this. Farmers understand it. Far less expensive to administer. Pretty clean cut.

Mr. Speaker, why hasn't the NDP been leading the charge on this kind of a national agriculture program? Why has the Minister of Agriculture been sitting at home complaining about the 40/60 split or the per capita cost of funding support for agriculture? Why hasn't he been out there doing something useful, like putting together a long-term program that actually works?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not here to be a defender of the federal government. I don't know how they'll do. I know . . . Yes it's true, I know some of the people involved. Lots of them I don't know. I don't how they're going to deal with the issues. But I was impressed when that new federal cabinet, when they came out of their very first cabinet meeting, the very first announcement after the Prime Minister had said we had a cabinet meeting, was the Minister of Agriculture came out and he said, there's a problem on the farm; we have to do something about it.

We're going to implement as speedily as we can the grains and oilseed program. And not only are we going to implement it the way it was designed prior to the election, but we're going to put more money in upfront in the initial payment because farmers need that assistance, they need that help now.

It was the very first thing on their agenda. And as a farmer, that made me feel good. That made me feel like somebody thought my industry was important. Somebody thought feeding people not only in Canada but around the world is a noble vocation and something that we as farmers should be proud of here in the province of Saskatchewan.

So at least, Mr. Speaker, they got off to a good start. And I applaud the new Agriculture minister and the new federal administration for that fast action.

[16:45]

What do we see from the NDP? Well, Mr. Speaker, when there's a crisis, first of all they won't admit there is a crisis until it becomes so obvious as, you know, the nose on their face. And then they say, well yeah, there is a problem, but we're going to wait and see what the federal government does. Or we're going to wait and see if it goes away. Or we're going to wait until the opposition tells us what to do. They've got a hundred reasons. Or we'll wait and see what the new American farm program is. Or we'll wait until we see who wins the World Series. Who knows, Mr. Speaker, what reason they will come up with as to why they should wait before they act?

To deal with agriculture is always on the bottom of the NDP's cabinet list. It's always the lowest. It's the lowest priority, Mr. Speaker. Agriculture is just one of those nuisances for the NDP that they don't want to have to deal with until it becomes so bad they can't help it, and then they call an emergency debate. Then they call an emergency debate and say, hey, look what we've done. We've had an emergency debate about the farm crisis.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the farmer families of Saskatchewan much more appreciate an NDP government that would roll up its sleeves and get to work and do the job, do the job that they were elected to do, whether it be to deal with the agriculture problems or the crystal meth problems or the hospital waiting list problems. There's a whole bunch of them, enough for all 30 of those members over there to be busy with.

But instead, Mr. Speaker, they find excuses. They try to point the finger at anybody but themselves. That will not do. And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to support the amendment put forward by the member for Melville-Saltcoats. And I'm pleased to have been able to participate in the debate on agriculture today. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to be able to enter into this emergency debate on agriculture. It seems, Mr. Speaker, that we have done this in the past on an annual basis, and now we're doing it on a semi-annual basis, Mr. Speaker.

And the reason we are doing it, as many of the speakers in this debate have said earlier, is that there is a very, very serious crisis out there, Mr. Speaker. It has been building over the last few years, and we have producers and a segment of the agriculture industry that are hitting the wall, Mr. Speaker. And the grain and oilseed producers and the pulse producers are those people, the people that initiate production, Mr. Speaker.

Without them we would not have a livestock industry. We would not have a feeding industry. We would have no value added to agriculture products because it is those primary

producers that put the seeds into the ground, that nurture their crops and harvest the crops and deliver them into the handling and transportation system, Mr. Speaker. And those are the very people who are not participating in the income stream and have seen their incomes decline year after year after year while their costs have risen to the point now where they are in a cost price squeeze that they cannot handle it any longer.

But I won't dwell on those issues because many of the speakers on both sides of the House have recognized the hurt and the crisis out there. But particularly on that side of the House, we have heard very few if any solutions to the problems, Mr. Speaker. And as per usual, and I was listening both to the Minister of Agriculture and to the Deputy Premier; they laid the blame at the feet of the federal government. It's always the federal government's fault, Mr. Speaker. A poor provincial government can do nothing. That is the position they have taken.

Yet when you look around at other provincial governments in Western Canada, Mr. Speaker, they realize what their limitations are. Certainly provincial governments don't have the financial resources that a federal government has, but provincial governments, including this provincial government, have significant resources. We have over \$1 billion in surplus, Mr. Speaker, coming to the coffers of Saskatchewan this year, so they cannot claim poverty, Mr. Speaker. But what is lacking on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is the vision and leadership.

I was at the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier spoke and he talked about all the tools and all the resources and all the skills and all the people that we have in this great province. And he was right. We have everything we need in this province except the plan. It's like having the recipe. And we have all the ingredients, but with every recipe, Mr. Speaker, there is a how-to, in other words the instructions . . . is how to put them all together to bake the cake. And what these folks on that side of the House lack is that how-to plan. They have no vision. They have no idea how to solve and address this problem, Mr. Speaker.

There are groups and organizations within our province and particularly in the farm community that have ideas, that have plans. And what does this government, what has this government done in the past? They would hold the token meetings with the groups, listen politely, do the lip service but really nothing became of them. Then finally on March 2 there was a news release from the Minister of Agriculture. He's going to meet with farm leaders. At the 11th hour, the 59th minute, and the 45th second before we hit the wall, the Minister of Agriculture, our provincial Minister of Agriculture is finally going to bring the farm leaders of our province together to see if they have some idea as to how to solve this situation. And there are ideas out there, Mr. Speaker.

It seems, in my opinion and I think in the opinion of a number of our farm leaders across Western Canada, that the grain and oilseed sector of agriculture is at a crossroad. For the first hundred years, farmers and particularly the people that grew field crops did that for food production.

Wheat — Saskatchewan was opened and settled because we are a great area of the world to produce wheat. And for many years, it provided a good living for many farm families. It's the reason why Saskatchewan and the Western provinces were settled, Mr. Speaker. But that is no longer the case.

There are other areas of the world that are growing foodstuffs and frankly they are beating us at our own game in some cases and in other cases with the help of their government. And primarily our major competitors — those farmers in the European Union and our neighbours to the south — they have the large federal treasuries that are subsidizing them, that are supporting them, that are replacing income that is not there in the marketplace that has led to overproduction and so on. I think we've heard the story before.

So what is the solution? Well we need to look at other income streams to the farm, to the family farm. And the family farm has changed over the years, Mr. Speaker. At one time it was a family — a father and a mother and their children — operating a smaller acreage. Now it's a combination of brothers and neighbours and father and sons. But they have been . . . many of them are incorporated because they need to operate large acreages because the margins have been so slim and have declined, Mr. Speaker.

But there is a movement or concepts out there, Mr. Speaker, that what we need to do is provide other income streams to the farm. And one of the basis of those income streams could be payments for environmental goods and services that our producers are providing to society for the good of society. And society values those goods and services. Up until now, all those services that producers are providing to society, they bear the full costs and they receive no compensation for them.

Take the example of wildlife habitat; water; protecting, repairing areas and watersheds; minimizing soil erosion by adopting technology. All those sorts of things are happening out there, Mr. Speaker. And society — and I think the citizens of our province and the citizens of our country — are recognizing that these are valuable services, and they are willing to compensate the producers, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, in that whole area there is a unique opportunity for western Canadian farmers, and particularly Saskatchewan farmers, in this whole area of dealing with climate change. It's scientifically proven that agricultural soils have great capacity to store carbon. And our federal government has signed on to a climate change international treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to sequester carbon. And that whole area, Mr. Speaker, will provide or could provide some opportunities for our producers. But we need to develop that.

And the federal government is developing or started down the road of developing a whole system of offset credits and so on, but it's in its very preliminary stage. And when I asked the Minister of Agriculture, our provincial Minister of Agriculture, where he and his department were on this issue last spring, they said well we think it's a little too early to get involved in this. Well the fact is anybody that's knowledgeable in this whole issue realized, Mr. Speaker, that they are two or three years behind.

I have made a point of asking each minister whose department may have a role to play in this whole area of sequestering carbon and carbon offsets and carbon trading to see where this government is on this whole issue. And you know where they are, Mr. Speaker? They're not even in the ballpark or on the planet as such as far as this issue. They pay a bit of lip service and they'll say, well if you ask the Minister of Agriculture, well it's actually the Minister of Environment. And if you ask the Minister of Environment, it's actually the Minister of Industry and Resources that's dealing with this issue.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a group, a farm group out there. It's called the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association who have done a lot of work led by John Bennett and now Edgar Hammermeister — who's the new president — who are very, very knowledgeable, have met with their counterparts across Canada, have met with the federal bureaucrats, Mr. Speaker. And they are the people that are the go-to people when anyone in this province — and I dare say in Western Canada — want to know how this whole system should be set up. What are the pitfalls? What are the opportunities? They are the people that have done the research and have the knowledge, but it's an ongoing process, Mr. Speaker. And this is an organization that is largely funded by memberships and also by accessing various funding sources through both provincial and federal government.

Well the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that their funding sources will run off as of March 31, Mr. Speaker, and both federally and provincially. And so they have made proposals to this provincial government to help in developing this whole carbon offset trading system and all the extension work that needs to go along with that, and the research and development. And you know what the response was, both from the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Environment? They got Dear John letters, Mr. Speaker. They said yes, we think you've got a great idea, but we haven't got any money for you.

And yet there is no capacity within this provincial, within this NDP government to deal with this issue. They've got an organization that can deal with the issue. Do you think they would have enough sense to at least provide them with some funding so that they can continue the work, Mr. Speaker? No. And what is the reason? Well I don't know what the reason is, but I think they have the feeling that if they can't do it themselves, we're not going to let anybody else do it, Mr. Speaker.

And who will suffer? The people that will suffer will be the farmers of this country, Mr. Speaker. So they stand up. They propose emergency debates, pay some lip service. Then they go home and say, well we've dealt with agriculture and whatever happens in farm country will happen, Mr. Speaker.

It is pathetic, Mr. Speaker, excuse me. There's no vision. There's no leadership. And my voice is going, Mr. Speaker. And I would move that we adjourn debate. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood that debate on this motion be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the

motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried. The debate is adjourned.

The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move this House do now stand adjourned.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.]

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