

FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD) Published under the authority of The Honourable Dan D'Autremont Speaker

N.S. VOL. 57 NO. 17B MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2014, 19:00

Bill No. 159 – *The Family Farm Credit Repeal Act*

Mr. Forbes: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on this bill, No. 159, *An Act to repeal The Family Farm Credit Act*. It's a short Act, but it's one of a lot of interest, and I think people tuning in tonight may find this of interest. I mean it's one of the ones that in fact, it basically says, and I'll read the gist of it, "*The Family Farm Credit Act* is repealed." But there's a lot more to it than that, and I think that when we have some time to really think about and reflect on *The Family Farm Credit Repeal Act*, its history, its intent, we have a lot to say of it.

You know, and I know the members opposite think of this as a bit of a holy ground, that only they can talk about the family farm, but I can tell you that I come from a family farm. We have a very proud history out in Mortlach where my brother still farms the family farm. It's been in the family for over 100 years, and we have a great connection. You know, they say, Mr. Speaker, that you can take the kid off the farm, but you can't take the farm out of the kid.

And so it's always interesting to take a look back at *The Family Farm Credit Act*. And I'll just take a minute, and I'd like to read what it is that the intent, the purpose of the Act at the time was. And I have a question for the minister. Has this really changed?

The purpose of the Act, *An Act to provide Assistance to Farmers in the Establishment and Development of Family Farms as Economic Farm Units*, we'll talk about this over the next little while, about what's happening in rural Saskatchewan.

And while I represent downtown Saskatoon, probably one of the most urban ridings that we have in the province, we still are and we still believe and we still feel this strong connection to the family farm. But in many ways it is changing, and I'll talk a little bit about that.

But the purpose of the Act and the title of the Act is *An Act to provide Assistance to*

Farmers in the Establishment and Development of Family Farms as Economic Farm Units.

The purpose of this Act is to make long term credit available to farmers to assist in the establishment and development of family farms as economic farm units and in the transfer of family farms from members of one generation to members of a later generation and to assist in the enlargement or conversion of family farms that are uneconomic farm units into economic farm units.

And so it has a lot to it actually. It's about the intergenerational transfer, but it's also, how do we assist in making family farms that were, in the '70s, uneconomic into economic farm units? And that can be either enlarge them — help them become bigger in size — or convert them into some other purpose that would be more appropriate.

So I think this is important. But you know, when I look at the Act, and when I look at and I'll talk about the minister's comments, I think about this government that takes a lot of pride in being one from the country. And clearly they have the seats in rural Saskatchewan, but if this is the best work they can do in the year before the election . . . This is the only piece of legislation they have for agriculture. And that is what is on the table right now: the only piece of legislation that deals with agriculture and all the issues that are happening out in rural Saskatchewan and farms that are facing all sorts of issues. I know we hear this in the House, that they'll talk about issues that we should be raising, but here we have only one piece of legislation that's one line long, and that is to repeal *The Family Farm Credit Act*.

That's the best they can come up with? That's the very best this government can come up for rural Saskatchewan when it comes to agricultural policy? Is that what's happening over in the agricultural ministry right now, this one piece of legislation? Is this the deal that they've come up with, one piece of legislation?

Many members spoke. Many members from their side and I know from our side talked about agricultural issues. And I've got to tell you, our critic, our critic has raised issues about rural Saskatchewan agriculture. And they can laugh because they think they own it, they own it.

But I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, if this is the best they can do, this is the very best that they can do, one piece of legislation that's not even . . . It's three lines long when you have the short title, then you say repealed, and when it comes into force. That's the whole thing of agricultural policy for the Saskatchewan Party in the year before an election? In the year before an election, this is their piece of legislation?

We have talked a lot about how their legislative agenda is pretty thin, but the thinnest, the very thinnest, the very thinnest is in agriculture. And I would like to see and I hope that we see in the days ahead, because we are in that session, the time of the session when they are supposed to be bringing forward their best ideas so that we can talk about it and talk to the stakeholders . . . But if this is all they have, if this is all they have for agriculture, it's a pretty sad day.

I'd like to take a minute, Mr. Speaker, to talk about the minister's speech. And he rose on November 18th, just a few days ago, and he talked about *The Family Farm Credit Repeal Act*. And all he says is it "... needs to be repealed. This Act has long since become redundant. *The Family Farm Credit Act* was enacted in February of 1979."

He talks about the long-term credit being "... available for the establishment and development of family farms," and the purpose of intergenerational transfer. He talks about the Co-operative Trust Company of Canada and its role in this, and how this had been raised by the Ministry of Finance in April of 2012 and again December 2013 that they were not aware of any present securities or anything really happening.

So they consulted with agencies. I would be curious to know what those agencies were and what were the circumstances. Apparently there were no issues identified, so I'm not sure if they just talked solely about the credit, the loan aspect of it. Or did they talk about the intergenerational transfer aspect of it? I think that's an important piece to be talking about. Did they talk about that at all with this group that they consulted with? That would be of interest.

Did they talk about how they can make farming more economic? Actually this is an interesting one because, you know, farming in the last few years has been doing well, so maybe they've just taken it and said that there's no need anymore to talk about this any further. But I know that there are always challenges, and if it's the role of government and if this side is saying, if the government side is saying that it's basically done, that would be of interest.

So I would be curious to know, who did they consult with? What were the purposes of the consultations? How did it go? What were some of the issues raised, and was anything left on the floor because they really didn't want to talk about that?

He did give credit. He did talk about the Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development had administered this Act, and then there was a period of Consumer and Commercial Affairs took over this. Then it went to Justice and then back to Agriculture in 2007 and '08, and the last payments were in '94.

Interestingly though when I look at the Act, I see that there were amendments, and I think about when those amendments happened. They were in '88-89, '89-90. And of course if we remember those times, those were not great times in terms of ... The interest rates I think were still fairly high, and it was still a challenge for pretty much everybody to be talking about credit and making sure that loans were being paid off and that type of thing.

Again in 2004, and I think that was the time when we had the look at the farm land ownership legislation and all of that, so whether there were changes then. And again apparently it looked like just even earlier there were still more amendments. So I don't know if the Act was so dormant, but we were still, the government was still amending it or amending the regulations that go along with it.

You know, he does talk about the purpose, "... that this redundant Act be repealed from

the records of the legislature. As far as is possible, records should be kept clear of redundancies.” Therefore he moves that the repeal Act be read a second time. And fair enough.

But I think that I would have liked him to say . . . What have they done in place of this legislation? What are we talking about in terms of intergenerational transfer? What are we talking about in terms of making sure farms are economical and that type of thing? What’s happening in rural Saskatchewan? I think that this is the floor; this is the place to talk about those kind of things. And if the best that they can really say is that everything is okay, there’s not going to be any legislation, really for this government I think that prides itself on its connection with rural Saskatchewan, that when they have no legislation to speak of other than this one piece, that we’ll have lots of questions about that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I don’t know if you’re aware that this year is the International Year of Family Farming. This is an article that, when I was doing a bit of research on this . . . This is from Yorkton, *Yorkton This Week*, and the writer, “Agriculture This Week,” Calvin Daniels I think really raises some interesting thoughts and really poses some things that I think we should be thinking about.

Because in rural Saskatchewan, we look back on the history of rural Saskatchewan and the changes that have happened, whether we talk about the one-room schoolhouse and the fact that basically if you had 12 children from four different families, you were able to have one school, and so schoolhouses were springing up all over the place. And of course with the development of better transportation, the fact that people expected more from their schools, schools began to consolidate. Rural electrification: what a change that happened in rural Saskatchewan. All of those things.

Really Saskatchewan, rural Saskatchewan goes through a lot of changes, and we’re seeing that now with the size of family farms. And what does that mean? What does that look like? And as I said to you, Mr. Speaker, I grew up on a family farm. Actually we had a family farm, but we were one of the town kids. So we were one of that generation where we lived in town, but we still had the family farm just a few miles out of town.

Things change. Things change, but is it always for the better? Sometimes should we be looking back at how we make sure the intergenerational transfer can happen? It’s happened for three generations in our family, but will it happen for a fourth? We’re not sure, and that will be something that will be of interest as we watch over the next few years as my brother becomes older and starts to think about other things that he’d like to do. What happens then?

So this was an interesting column, and I’d like to talk about it because it really does fit into the idea of economic farm units and about intergenerational transfer. And he goes, and I quote:

It is not something I suspect most in Saskatchewan are aware of, but the United Nations has declared 2014 the International Year of Family Farming.

There is obviously a chasm forming in farming, with the so-called corporate farm on one side, and the so-called family farm on the other.

The problem, of course, is clearly defining which side of the chasm any particular farm falls.

And I think that's true as we see how people make their farms economic, how it works for any particular family and in the products they produce, what works better, what kind of economic unit works best for them. So it's all about definition, and it's all about how we make things work in our communities.

He goes on to say:

It is simple enough if a multinational firm holds title to a farm to toss it on the corporate side, the side which carries with it the shadow of doom for many people these days.

If the farm is small, and owned by Bill and Margaret who farmed it for 40 years, it's a family farm, and in the spin-doctored world we live in, that makes what they do somehow better than the corporate-held farm down the road.

And that's sort of . . . that happen a lot, doesn't it, where we have these fond memories, these sentimental memories of farming.

But somehow we've got to come to terms with what is a family farm, what is a corporate farm, and we've got to call a spade a spade. I know we would like to hang on to those past ideas or values we've had about family farms, but are we really talking about the same beast? And I think that we have a lot of thoughts on that.

And he asks:

But what happens when a family farm grows, and Uncle Stan and his two sons take a share of the operation, and the dentist Phil who married Bill and Margaret's only daughter buys in. He'll never ride a combine, but he can invest and have a say in that fashion.

So the only solution to keep everyone's investments and returns straight, does the farm then become corporate?

It gets even more difficult when you look at something like the hog sector where not so long ago communities on the Canadian Prairies built barns.

And so you go, talk about farm investors or corporate farmers, and is there a difference?

So on the international level, and I quote:

On an international basis, it is easier to grasp why the United Nations holds interest in the idea of family farms.

In many countries of the world, it is still very small farm holdings operated by a single family unit which produce the food.

Following the UN proclamation of the year, the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission organized the international conference [organized this conference] “Family farming: A dialogue towards more sustainable and resilient farming in Europe and the world.”

And so he goes on, talks about that there are 500 million family farmers all over the world feeding humanity, making up 80 per cent of all farms, although a nice, succinct definition of the family farm is missing. So that it’s one that we wrestle with, isn’t it, Mr. Speaker? You know, 500 million family farmers all over the world feeding humanity, making up 80 per cent of all the farms. “That said, small farms and the idea of family-operated generally seems to go hand-in-hand.” And so the trend in North America is to massive farms while the ones in Europe and the rest of the world are much smaller in terms of farm size.

He talks about the European Union average farm size is about 14 hectares and about 70 per cent are under 5 hectares and only 3 per cent are larger than 100 hectares. So if you think about that compared to North America, that’s a huge, huge difference.

So it’s interesting how family farms evolve, and you know, rural areas in Saskatchewan, you may see them growing larger. And actually there’s some census stats that I will get to in a minute talking about how the size of family farms are growing here in Saskatchewan, but there’s a niche of farms that are staying quite small because they found other ways to be innovative and meet the needs of agriculture production. And I think that’s very important.

So it talks about, and it’s interesting that the writer, Calvin Daniels, talks about many innovations which move farming forward came from those on small holdings. And he talks about “Seager Wheeler made huge strides in breeding wheat in Saskatchewan in the early 1900s, and [he] was a homesteader.” And this is so true. “Farming by its nature breeds innovation.” There are hurdles to be overcome “and at times there are no available options or the money to purchase them if they existed, so farmers have learned to be inventors.” So he talks about these kind of things and I think this is, this is really, really important.

And so you know, he talks about:

And this is where the debate about family farms always muddies for me. There seems an assumption because the owner isn’t getting his hands dirty seeding the crop that he will automatically not care about the long-term viability of the farm.

And hand-in-hand [with that], whoever is hired to do the work will care little for the farm either.

And he talks about how that’s a questionable assumption to make, and I think that’s fair.

I think he raises a really important point about what we think about the family farm. I think in many ways the family farm holds a very romantic, sentimental feeling for many of us because so many of us grew up on the farm, are connected to the farm.

You know, in our case there was a family of eight, but the farm wasn't large enough for eight of us to stay there and to make a living. So seven of us moved on. Seven of us went on to do all sorts of work, whether it's in social work or whether it's in mining, uranium mining in fact, whether it's in my work as a teacher first and now as a politician, whether you're a carpenter, whether you're a nurse. So many people from Saskatchewan farms have moved on but still feel very connected to the family farm.

But we understand the nature of change, that things have changed. Now in our case, our case, interestingly, interestingly, you know, my brother runs an organic farm and very proud of it, and has been for about 15, 20 years now and is doing very well, feeling very connected with his work as a farmer, in terms of marketing, looking after the land. And he's doing very well. He's been very fortunate that way. He's been very fortunate that way. And so in terms of making the farm economic, it's been very, very good.

But the question will arise about the intergenerational transfer. This is something I would've liked to have heard more from the minister in terms of.

So if he's repealing this, fair enough. Legislation every once in a while needs to be repealed, and we move on to something else. But what takes its place? Those key issues that were present in the '70s about the cost of running a farm, the economics of running a farm, the cost of borrowing, all of that were a big issue in the '70s. The size of the farm was also changing, and that's a big issue, but also the intergenerational transfer.

So in that Calvin Daniels goes on and closes, says:

In the end there is no doubt small holdings farms operated by a single family remain important to localized food production in most countries of the world.

But for large grain exporting countries like Canada, those small farms have been disappearing since the end of the First World War, and when a trend is so long entrenched, it is for a reason.

Bigger has been found to be better here, and while I applaud the UN for keeping talk of family farms around the world at the forefront, we have likely outgrown that side of farming.

And so I'm wondering, is this where this government really is at, at the end of the family farm? And the minister wasn't clear on that, and it would be interesting to have that discussion. And I'm sure when we get to questions, that will be the discussion.

And you know, I looked . . . There was an article in *The Globe and Mail*, "Do corporate buyouts signal the end of the family farm?" And he talks about how this is really becoming more and more the thing. And we'll talk a little bit about this in terms of some of the things that are happening, but it seems to be, with the price of land, that this is

becoming more and more the issue and a thing that's happening.

It starts out "Larry Spratt," and I'll quote:

Larry Spratt was combining with his father on their grain farm near Melfort, Sask. last November when a car pulled up along a nearby highway.

Out jumped Wally Johnston, a former Ontario farmer and now a vice-president at Bonnefield Financial, a Toronto-based investment firm. Mr. Johnston waved the Spratts over for a chat. "He said he was touring around Saskatchewan trying to meet farmers, and we talked to him for a while," Mr. Spratt recalls.

Mr. Johnston explained that Bonnefield was looking to buy farmland for investors and then lease it back to farmers to operate. The Spratts had heard that pitch before. They knew several farmers who had signed up with other investment companies and land prices in the area had been soaring as a result. Some farms were going for as much as \$1,200 an acre, more than double the price in other parts of the province.

Now this is from 2010, and we'll talk in a few minutes about what it seems the price of farm land is here now. And it's an interesting dilemma that we have such good farm land, but because in some ways it's affordable, it's become an interest to other people around the world.

It goes on to talk about:

Similar deals are being struck around the world in what has become an unprecedented rush by global investment funds to buy farmland. By some estimates these funds have sunk as much as \$20 billion (U.S.) into these acquisitions. Last year alone they bought 111 million acres of farmland, a tenfold increase from previous years.

It goes on to talk about how:

Saskatchewan has become one of the new frontiers in this global trend. The province has some of the most productive, and least expensive, farmland in the world. But restrictive ownership rules have largely kept out foreigners, pension funds and publicly traded companies. [But] pressure is mounting inside and outside Canada to change the rules and open up the province.

And now we, you know, and we've had the discussion about the Canadian pension fund, CPP [Canada Pension Plan] buying farm land and what happens with that. And so we have some . . . This is an interesting discussion here. It goes on to talk about:

Today, investment funds at places as diverse as the Mormon Church, ManuLife Financial Corp. and the Dallas police department are pouring billions of dollars into farmland. In Canada, the CPP Investment Board is looking at investing in farmland and four companies are already snapping up thousands of acres . . .

And we know that in fact CPP has bought farm land, I believe, in Saskatchewan. So it goes on and to talk about what's happening with farm land. And so it's of interest that we see this bill before us. In the minister's speech, it didn't really talk about what's happening in the world. It says it's redundant. We're going to get it off the books. It sounds a bit like the statutes Act that I was talking about last week. And so we have some questions here about this, you know.

But as I was saying, that it is interesting when we talk about the size of farms in Saskatchewan. And this is from 2011, and so it is about three years out of date, but the 2000 census of agriculture recorded that there were 36,952 Saskatchewan census farms as of May 10th, 2011, a decline of 16.6 per cent from 44,329 census farms as of May 15th, 2006. So this government has seen a decline of almost 17 per cent of farms in Saskatchewan: farm units, economic units. And we know that many of these are actually getting bigger. And so we don't know what the number is today.

And maybe the minister, when we go into committee at some point, will tell us what the number of farms were in 2014. But we know it declined from 44,329, May 15th, 2006, to 36,952 in 2011. And that's 16.6 per cent. We know of the 37,000 farms, about 16,600 were larger than 1,120 acres, and we know that about 6,700 were less than 240 acres. And so you can see how the numbers are breaking out. And it's quite interesting here that actually the size of farms that decreased the most were the larger ones, the ones that were 1,600 acres or more to 2,200 acres. That had a big decrease. That was 23.4 per cent. So it seemed that you had to be really large or . . . The next size down, a quarter of those were snapped up. The number of farms that were in the 760 to 2,239 acres decreased by 23.4 per cent, almost a quarter — so that's something else.

Whereas the large farms, the very large farms, and there's, according to the census, 8,357 of them, and that would be ones with more than 14 quarters or more than 2,239 acres, increased slightly. But of course when that happens, you know, it's a matter of numbers, isn't it, Mr. Speaker? Because it takes a lot to make a big farm much bigger because they're already big. When they're gobbling up, when they're gobbling up the big ones, they have to really gobble up a lot to make themselves bigger. It's like the whale issue, right? How much bigger can you make a whale, right?

But you know, I do find it interesting, I do find it interesting that on the chart, the chart really demonstrates that the ones that were smaller were the ones that were not seeing the huge changes, and obviously because there are not that many of them anymore.

But this is something, this is something that will . . . And I don't know if people are aware of this, that there's actually, that there is at least a 17 per cent change. Now it would be interesting to see what the latest stats are. And of course this is something that happens every five years. And of course I don't know whether this is something that the Ministry of Agriculture does or is it something that StatsCan does. And if it's StatsCan, we won't know whether or how accurate these stats are because of course with the whole slashing of staff at StatsCan, whether that will impact on these statistics at all. But it will be interesting to know, if this continues to be the trend, that we'll actually see the number of farms decrease in such staggering numbers. The size of farms will get larger, but the

number of farm units are actually going down in quite significant.

Now we had talked about in that earlier story about the price of farm land. And I think it'd be of interest to people at home to talk about what is happening here in Saskatchewan with the fact that while the farms are disappearing, that actually in many ways the price of farm land is increasing and now from my understanding is levelling off. But we understand that in May, and this is from a CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] news story in May, that farm land values shot up in Saskatchewan between January 1st of 2013 and December 31st of the same year. And while nationally farm land prices went up by 22 per cent, and that's a significant increase, 22 per cent, that in Saskatchewan it was nearly 30 per cent, 28.5 per cent in that one year alone. And Farm Credit Canada told CBC news that it's actually the largest increase they've seen since they've been doing their study for the past 20 years.

And so it's really something to see that in that one year that you could see such a significant increase. And as I was saying earlier that, you know, the reason that Saskatchewan is looking more and more like the place to invest is because the land is so good, but it was so much more affordable. But this is really the changes that we're seeing.

Now apparently what happened in the spring were some of the changes in some of the regulations that happened, and one of the regulations then allowed for non-Saskatchewan residents and institutional buyers such as investment groups or funds like the Canada Pension Plan. As I was saying, in that *Globe and Mail* article from 2010, this was the issue that was starting to rise was that large groups or corporations were looking for places to invest and to buy, such as CPP, and this is something that they saw.

Now some people were saying they were going to see some levelling off, that that was a bit of a shock, but the prices would level off. And you know, another factor as the marketplace stabilized, of course, was the commodity prices dropping off. But anyways, they did go up and people were taking advantage of it. And there's numerous stories about, you know, farmers would say that this is the time, if they were thinking of retiring, that they should retire.

Then we had the story on October 1st, just a couple of months ago, that "Despite prices rising as much as 10 per cent . . . [so it was almost 30 per cent in 2013 and then 10 per cent in this year] farmland is still a deal compared to the rest of Canada" — in many ways, I might add, Mr. Speaker. "Farmland [now] in Saskatchewan is listed for around \$1,800 per acre in the northwest and up to \$2,200 an acre in the central west region, according to Re/Max Market Trends Farm Edition 2014 . . ."

Then they were talking about, you know, land in southern Alberta. Apparently tile drained land sold for as much as \$10,000 per acre, which represents a 20 per cent increase there over the past year.

It goes on and some of the people in the article talk about how now that "You are not seeing people coming in and buying large tracts of land. They are only buying a few

quarter sections instead of the many quarter sections.” But the sections are moving along.

But he talks about how we have doubled, at least in price, in the last five or six years. “A thousand dollars an acre was big money five years ago.” And this is Wally Lorenz, and that’s no stranger to us, Mr. Speaker. But now he’s working for Re/Max of Battlefords. But he goes on, and I quote, “We have at least doubled (in price) over the last five or six years. A thousand dollars an acre was big money five years ago. Now there is some selling for \$2,200 to \$2,400 (per acre).”

So it’s something to say and this is something that we have to think about in terms of how does that relate to the original intent of the bill, *The Family Farm Credit Act*. And you know, in the ’70s, when I think about some of the legislation that was produced during that period of time, some of it was so innovative, so visionary when we talk about the fact that, you know, Sask Housing was developed at that time to meet the needs of a growing population in Saskatchewan. And here was one to talk about how the farms were facing real challenge.

As I said in terms of *The Family Farm Credit Act*, was to make long-term credit available to farmers and to establish the development of family farms, you know, as economic farm units, and in the transfer of family farms from members of one generation to members of a later generation and to assist in the enlargement or conversion of family farms that are uneconomic farm units into economic farm units. So even in this Act, it recognized that family farms were growing, and they continued to grow. And that’s the reality.

And as I was talking about the article by Calvin Daniels, you know, and he does describe the chasm between those with sentimental recollections of, you know, family farm and a home on every half section, and in many ways that has not become the way of production in Saskatchewan. It’s not the way that so many are used to now. And while that can be the way in other parts of the country or other parts of the world . . . And as the article quoted, there’s some 500 million family farmers or family farm units in the world, feeding the world.

I think that we would have really liked to have heard more. We would have liked to have heard a lot more from the minister about the issues that *The Family Farm Credit Act* set out to address. It set out to address intergenerational transfer. It set out to address how do you make uneconomic units into economic units and how do you address the cost of borrowing. Now it may be right now that the issue of cost of borrowing is not an issue and of course, you know, we often hear that we are fortunate that the cost of borrowing is reasonable. In fact, some would argue that we’re living in very fortunate times because the interest rates are so low. But how long will they be in that position? We don’t know.

And people are even, in talking about what the impact of some of the change is, and I would think this government is wrestling with this at treasury board and their mid-term reports: what is the impact of a lower Canadian dollar, a lower price for commodities? What is that impact for Saskatchewan? What does it mean for Saskatchewan farmers? Will we see interest rates go up?

And it seems weekly or biweekly we often hear people, the financial folks, have a debate about this. Some will say that interest rates are bound to go up at some point, but we've been fortunate for the last several years to see interest rates remain very low. But if that were to change, then things may have to . . . We may be back looking at a farm credit Act.

And I don't know whether the government would call it a family farm credit Act, whether they've decided that they've come down on the corporate farm side. I would hope that there's always a place for family farms here in Saskatchewan. I think that, you know, it's interesting that so much of Saskatchewan and, as I said, there's so many people who feel deeply connected, deeply rooted in family farms. While they may not be the farmer, they may not be the person who gets their hands dirty, but they do feel connected.

Whether it's the weather . . . We all are paying attention to seeing how the combines are doing in the fields. We all watch that. We all feel concerned about when seeding is late. It's just something that is part of the Saskatchewan psyche, and I think it's an important thing that we . . . You know, it's part of our heritage for so many of us.

So when we have these kind of discussions and, as I said, when we see this kind of legislation but the fact of the matter is that this is the only piece of legislation from the Ministry of Agriculture, we start to get concerned. Is this all that the ministry and the minister can come up with? Is this the extent of their vision, that they want to just repeal an Act and that's it, that's done?

You know, and I know and when we listen to throne speeches we know many on the other side, many people on the other side, many members on the other side rightfully spoke about agricultural challenges, rightfully spoke about that. But I don't know if they were expecting that this would be the extent, the extent of their legislation, the extent of their agenda for agriculture in Saskatchewan. And when I look at it, it certainly is pretty thin and it doesn't give a lot of insight into the thinking of this government.

And of course while the minister, his speech, you know, compared to the length of the bill was quite lengthy, but really, really didn't talk about the intergenerational transfer and didn't really talk about what happens when you find yourself wanting assistance to make your farm more economic . . . Now there are different ways of making that happen. Not all of it has to be legislation. But at least in the speech, the government may have taken an opportunity to say, these are the things that are meaning that the original Act set out as a challenge, the three things: costs of borrowing, intergenerational transfer, and how to make uneconomic farm units into economic farm units. He didn't really address those other two, and so I know that there will be questions about that.

[20:00]

And we will be hoping that while this government is preparing for an election, that you would think they would have more to say about agriculture than this Act to repeal *The Family Farm Credit Act* because, I've got to tell you, people think and expect more from any government, from any government. I think, Mr. Speaker, if this had been . . . If we

had presented only one bill in the last year before an election and this was the extent of that bill, I think these folks over here would have a lot to say about that. They would have a lot to say about that. So I think they need to think about where . . . This is the best we can come up with? This is the very best?

You know, and we're going to hear in just a few minutes about the statutes bill. Again you know, when we were talking about the kind of legislation that shows direction, shows vision, and we're getting this kind of legislation at this time of year, this is the kind of stuff that really can be brought out in the spring when . . . In many ways it's not controversial because, you know, as the minister did talk about the fact that it hasn't been fully utilized since '94, even though interestingly, as I pointed out, there has been several amendments it looks like to the regulations. And the last one was in fact this year, but I don't know what that amendment was because it looks like it was in the regulations.

We have some questions about that. We have deep, deep concerns about that, because clearly a government that prides itself on agriculture, and this is the extent . . . I'm not just holding the title page here, Mr. Speaker. I'm holding the whole bill in my hand. You know, I may be walking on thin ice because I know I'm not supposed to be using a prop, but in this case the prop is the legislation. The extent of . . . This whole bill is the extent of this government's agricultural agenda in many ways, and that is a sad thing. That is a sad thing.

So I really would hope that in the next few days we're going to see much more legislation or something from the Minister of Agriculture. Because I know he can get on his high horse and talk about how he's from the farm and he knows what's what. And you know, I give him credit. He appears to be a successful farmer. But I've got to tell you there's a lot of people that are depending on the wisdom of this government.

What we know, though, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately that number is shrinking, isn't it. Because it shrunk from 44,329 farms in 2006 to just under 37,000 farms. So there's fewer and fewer farms out there that are depending on this government for leadership because they're getting bigger. But still, they're our people and they do have a responsibility.

Now I know that we have many bills in front of us that we want to debate tonight and I know many people will want to get up and speak about this. And I really will want to hear what the critic has to say about this because I think this is a big deal, Mr. Speaker, that if this is the best the government can do at this time of year . . . It's had all spring and fall to come forward with legislation around agriculture, and this is the harvest. This is all we got. This is sort of like "Jack and the Beanstalk." This is what I came home with. This is all I got. This is all I got is this one page, this one page. The Minister of Agriculture shows up with one page. I don't know. I don't know. There's got to be more. There's got to be more. There's got to be more.

With all the stuff that's happening out in rural Saskatchewan on the farms, there's got to be more. There's got to be more. There's got to be more. You know, when you talk about rail lines and the trains and all of that, and I know the government will get up on its high horse and say, we know . . . We're there. We're there. And this, I just got to say, if the

government's staking its credit or its reputation on this one piece of legislation, it's a pretty thin reputation.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I know that there will be many people who will want to get up and speak on other bills, but with this Bill No. 159, *An Act to repeal The Family Farm Credit Act*, I would move adjournment of that bill.