

Government Orders

will be back to that level in the 1994–1995 crop year again.

The suggestion that this is an attempt to off-load is certainly not accurate. Whatever burden that has been shifted on to the provinces has been taken up by the improvements and the enhancements to the program. We firmly believe that, because crop insurance is a provincial responsibility, they should be sharing more than just simply the cost of administration. They should be sharing at least a part of the premium and equal to, if not more, than what the federal government is providing. I think that that is fair and that is what we have tried to achieve. We have tried to achieve a balance that will provide improvements.

As a matter of fact, the multi-year disaster benefit program, which has just unleashed an additional \$100 million or so to those who have had successive crop failures as a result of drought or other weather related disasters, is an add on and an enhancement. We are going to see more of that in this particular program.

The urgency of this is such that we should get along with it and move it ahead. It has had a great deal of public discussion. It does have a great amount of support from the provinces. We have tried to work together with the provinces and the producers, in designing this legislation as best we can.

I know that it is the job of hon. members opposite to try to get more and to identify weaknesses, and I am attempting to respond to them. I can assure them that this is the best possible solution that we can come up with at this time, and I urge their co-operation and understanding. If improvements are needed as we go along, I am sure that we can attend to them in the due course of time. This is a very major step forward and I commend it to all hon. members.

Mr. Laporte: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With regard to the rules, I believe that what we should have been doing is having 10-minute speeches with no questions and comment period. I believe that is correct.

As a matter of fairness, however, the agriculture critic from the Liberal party has had a question. I know that the member for Mackenzie has a short question and I would ask the Chair to allow the member to put that question, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): This is report stage today, and it is not committee of the whole. Each member should speak for 10 minutes, then we can go on to the next motion. There are two other motions, so it is not that we are going to delete any debate here today.

The hon. Member for Mackenzie.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I am aware that it is report stage. I just note that we had diverged from the rules and, since the minister was taking questions, I wondered if I could ask one.

We listened with great care to his explanations as to why he had to reject my amendment. I believe he said that he had to do this because he had no way of making certain that the share that the province paid would be the same as the share that the federal government paid. I think that he and all future ministers—and we always have to think of future ministers when we are putting bills before Parliament because the bills will last a long time—still have that power under Clause 4(1)(a)(ix) of the act, which he quoted today himself. It permits the minister to set out the elements that are to form part of an insurance scheme established in the province, in order for the scheme to qualify for contributions, including the manner of determining the premiums to be paid under an insurance contract, and the share of those premiums to be paid by the province.

I submit to the minister that his or any future minister's ability to determine what share of those total premiums the province pays is still well protected with my wording. I would ask him again to consider that, since it is in effect guaranteeing that the federal government will be contributing 25 per cent, and since this other clause that I just quoted permits him to extract an equal share from each of the provinces, is it not what we are really trying to do with this amendment that I have proposed? Are we not trying to guarantee that the producers will never be stuck with more than 50 per cent of the premiums?

He has been addressing the equality between the federal and the provincial governments, but the whole reasoning behind this change to the crop insurance legislation was to ensure that producers also had a certain amount of protection. I would like his response as to how he sees the producer being protected if an amendment such as mine is defeated by his members and if the governments, federal and provincial together, choose to pay less than 50 per cent. Where then is the protection for the producer? The producer will have to