

While there are still many problems with transportation in this country, whether it be rail, air, or ground transportation, we are better off than we were just a few years ago. There has been another important change in the last number of years. There is a much better understanding of problems. I do not deny that there are many of them. However, whether it is provincial governments, farm organizations, transportation companies, the federal government or other agencies, there is much better co-ordination and co-operation in trying to delineate, sort out, spell out, and deal with, as well as resolve, some of the issues. The approach initiated by the former minister of transport in a massive study which involved industry, the unions and everyone else, was the beginning of that much better understanding. It has helped to solve many of the problems that have plagued us. We still have some distance to go.

I will turn now to the grain movement which has been referred to more often than not in this debate. Along with members opposite, I would like to see more rail capacity, more locomotive power, more twinning of tracks, extended rail service, and more extended facilities in Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Churchill and so on. There is no question that those kinds of facilities are more than desirable. However, they cost many hundreds of millions of dollars. It will be a long time before everyone's shopping list can be fully accommodated.

This brings us back to what can be done to improve car turnaround and our present facilities, and to integrate them to bring about the movement of more prairie grain to the terminals, either east or west. Everyone is aware that the railroads are moving a great deal more other bulk commodities, which has put some pressure on the system as well.

The question of dealing adequately with grain movement which has resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in losses to producers and the Canadian economy is in one of the paragraphs of the motion. The hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. Hamilton) dealt with that question. I am not sure how valid the claims are with regard to whether it is \$3,000 or \$4,000 that farmers may have lost. I suggest the word lost is being abused because the grain is still there. Instead of being sold at \$2.37 or \$2.38 as it was a year and a half ago, it is now very close to the \$5 mark.

As the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek pointed out, some of the grain now going out was contracted for at prices below the \$5. Many farmers are not all that unhappy if they have adequate storage.

Members opposite have short memories. It was only a few years ago that we were looking at four bushel quotas, clogged elevators, grain piled on the ground, and so on. We do not have that on the prairies today. We do not have anything like the backlog and the clogging of the system that was the case not many years ago.

**Mr. Towers:** Now we have a six-bushel quota.

**Mr. McIsaac:** The hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers) says we have a six-bushel quota. I do not know how many producers in his area have grain stored on the farms. I suppose there are not that many.

### *Transportation*

**Mr. Towers:** All of them.

**Mr. McIsaac:** If that is so, they are very fortunate producers. Last year will certainly have been one of the better crop years if that is the case.

I realize that improvements can be made. In fact improvements are desirable. I agree that the system is overloaded and is not taking out the amount of grain that has been grown in the last three years. However, this year Thunder Bay is running something like 13 per cent better than last year.

**Mr. Benjamin:** We were behind in both years.

**Mr. McIsaac:** We moved a lot last year and we moved a great deal the year before. If we can do a bit better this year, that will be three record years in a row. We have never before moved that volume for three years. I know it is more important today to the producers and farmers to get the grain to market, get the cheques in their pockets and pay the machinery companies and municipal offices, because they can no longer operate with one or two slack years. They must have that cash flow.

As I have said before in similar debates, the situation for many producers in rural areas in terms of the economic level of those districts, regions and areas, has never been better. Listening to members opposite, one would think there were dire thoughts of bankruptcy all across the prairies among the grain producers, and in the communities. That is certainly not the case. I see the hon. member for Vegreville smiling. He knows that in some of these communities the businessmen used to be better off than the producers and farmers. Today that is pretty well turned around. It is the producers and the farmers who can now buy out the businessman. That is what has happened over the past number of years.

I have listened to my friends opposite with their continual doom and gloom. However, we have not heard much about what they are going to do. I am waiting for my friend from Vegreville and others to tell us the Tory policies in terms of improving, expanding, and building for the 30 million tonnes we will be moving in a few years.

**Mr. Paproski:** Is that four-fifths or one-fifth?

**Mr. McIsaac:** That is 30 million as opposed to 20 million tonnes currently being moved.

**Mr. Neil:** Tell us about the lost sales.

**Mr. McIsaac:** There is no question that there have been some lost sales. Nobody has denied that. I say in spite of that, we are testing the system. We are moving considerably more grain. Under that pressure, we will come to grips with some of the problems. Hopper cars are only one of the responses of this government. Look at hopper cars, rail rehabilitation, branch line subsidies, and branch line rehabilitation which is going forward. It adds up to close to a billion dollars in the last five or six years. That is a great deal of money and effort to put into a system. It still needs more, but this government, when it