

Supply

have ever been recorded in the month of June. I think there was one year that was lower in the 1940s.

Farmers have been devastated, not just by the conditions that have hit prices, which are also hitting western Canadian farmers and farmers elsewhere in Ontario, but they have been devastated by the fact that the yields which they expected to receive have been a minuscule proportion of their hopes.

This is the fourth year in a row in which they have received very serious weather problems. As a result, for many of them their crop insurance has faced penalties which has reduced crop insurance protection to a 70 per cent level.

With the low prices which exist and the fact that crop insurance, even where it is held by farmers, is only going to give them 70 per cent of those low prices, it is easy to see that farmers in Essex County and elsewhere in southwestern Ontario face the very real possibility of being wiped out this winter.

I have written to the Minister of Agriculture about this. The minister replied to me in a letter which reached me yesterday. His letter unfortunately concluded, after a good deal of discussion of the potential benefit of crop insurance, not recognizing that people have been hit so hard in recent years by these weather problems reducing their crop insurance protection, that: "At the present time I do not believe that further federal action is warranted".

That is an attitude which does not respond to the very critical situation in southwestern Ontario.

• (1210)

I appeal to this government to make such a response as the Ontario government will be doing. Please make such a response. The minister agreed yesterday—if I could just finish the last sentence, Madam Speaker—to meet with farm groups from Essex County. I think that is an important step. I urge him and this government to listen seriously and to respond urgently to that severe drought crisis which has hurt so many people.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Madam Speaker, I asked a question of the previous speaker's colleague a few minutes ago concerning the Ontario government contribution.

It is my understanding that if the Ontario government was to support the NISA program that is available to it—the offer is still there from the federal government—with the contribution of another 1 per cent, that would trigger another half of one per cent contribution by the federal government. That would very quickly put some \$24 million into the hands of Ontario producers.

I know we are all in this together. The federal government, the provincial governments, we from all parties and the industries are all in this together. Why can the member not convince his colleagues in the Ontario government that it would be a good investment in this important industry and his farmers in the Essex area? Why will they not do that? It boggles my mind that that small investment is not seen as a good investment by the Ontario government.

Mr. Langdon: Madam Speaker, I would not want to get partisan in what should be a non-partisan debate.

The same problems in convincing provincial governments that NISA is something which is worth the extra payments have been experienced in trying to persuade the Prince Edward Island Liberal government, the New Brunswick Liberal government and the Quebec Liberal government to participate completely in the program.

I would say from my discussions with the minister's office—I am meeting the minister on Saturday—that the Ontario government's concern is to see to it that the greatest possible increase in cash flow can be generated by the province of Ontario in response to the problems of the past crop year. It is not convinced that NISA is necessarily the best way to do that.

It is reviewing a number of different options. The federal government has tried to persuade it that an investment in NISA is the best approach. Frankly, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has suggested that the Ontario government should look at NISA, but there are some other things that it should look at which might be of more use.

The National Farmers' Union has suggested some points that might be of more use. All of the points are being looked at and I expect an announcement very soon. I expect an announcement particularly with respect to the drought situation as it exists in southwestern Ontario.