

Conservative government. It has done a good job over the years.

Those institutions should be strengthened and enhanced, rather than have the foundations chipped away a little bit at a time. They should be held up as an example to the rest of the world as to how we can produce ample quantities of clean quality Canadian food for the consumers of this country and other members of society.

Having been a farmer for a good many years, this is a time of anticipation. I always make a point of getting out in the fields for a few hours on the weekends. It is a time when life springs up all around us, whether it is the grass that is growing or the wildflowers and the bushes, the birds nesting, or the arrival of new calves. It should be a time of optimism and hope, not a time of despair, apprehension and neglect by governments.

I ask this government to make that initial payment known immediately for the Ontario wheat producers. Let them know that their cash flow projections can be based on the wheat they have left after the winter kill to allow them to go ahead and make alternative planning arrangements.

I ask this government to pay special attention to this major resource industry of Canada whose spin-off effects impact across our total economy.

• (1740)

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in this House today and speak on this motion that calls upon the government to endeavour to strengthen the economic position of Canadian producers with a cash injection, with or without provincial participation.

As I have said in this House before, I feel very strongly that as goes agriculture so goes the economy of a country. There are four creators of wealth in the world: fishing, mining, forestry, and farming. The policies of this government do not seem to recognize the importance of those four. The policies of this government have put in jeopardy the future of those involved in those four industries.

I know that there have been *ad hoc* policies and *ad hoc* programs in the past few years but like many people, I feel that they are not the answer. They are a short-term bandaid but that is not what we need. We need recogni-

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tion by the government, we need recognition by everyone, of the importance of agriculture to any country.

I do not have to remind people in this House, but I remind those who are watching of the importance of the agri-food business. It does over \$45 billion worth of business a year. It is responsible for 10 per cent of Canada's domestic product. It provides over 1.5 million jobs, which is over 15 per cent of the jobs in Canada. Fifty per cent of our agricultural production in Canada is exported and that accounts for over 7 per cent of our Canadian exports. The production of much of that export, a big percentage, is grain production. Many sectors of the farm community are suffering right now, but those who are particularly hurting are our western grain producers.

I wonder when this government is going to realize the importance of that industry and stop cutting the feet out from underneath the industry with the removal of such programs that have been management tools by the industry over the years such as the Advance Payments for Crops Act, the at and east grain and flour transportation assistance, the removal of the fuel excise rebates and other moves that have been made. Sure, they put an *ad hoc* program in, but now we have an *ad hoc* program put in place that was asked for, and it was needed, not as big as needed but it is better than nothing, I will admit that, and the government claims it is on the table. Well, that is exactly where it is, on the table.

It is not doing the producers any good when it is on the table. This was requested last fall. The need was outlined many months ago by ministers of agriculture in the west and by premiers in the west, so it was put on the table, but it was not put on the table until it was so late that the producers could not get their hands on it. The supposed purpose was to assist the producers in their seeding expenses this spring, but here we are in the third week in May when the seeding decisions have been made, when the cash flows at the bank have had to be established, when the credit has had to be established and no one knows whether they are going to benefit from this program of \$500 million that has been offered to the provinces with the words: "If you match it, you can have it".

The buck has been passed from the federal government to the provincial governments. The provincial governments have to decide what program it is, and the provincial governments in conjunction with the federal