is a whole range of programs: the at and east rate; a reduction in crop insurance in that 1989 budget of $200 million; a reduction in the rail line rehabilitation program of some $50 million; and a reduction in the gas tax rebate.

What does the gas tax rebate mean? Last week, I was talking to a group of grain producers in the southeastern part of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Some of those producers were talking in terms of a fuel tax rebate loss of some $3,000.

The government talks about its grand schemes of a $500 million program to support western agriculture while it glibly overlooks that one year earlier in April, 1989 it reduced support programs to Canadian farmers by exactly $500 million. Essentially it is refunding, with a grand sweep of the pen, support programs. This at and east rate, Bill C-26, is to implement the reduction the government made in 1989.

I believe that the amendment that the hon. member for Lambton—Middlesex has introduced into the House is a good amendment, because the government obviously did not know what it was doing. A few weeks ago, it announced that it was going to put in place a special commission to investigate how to support agriculture because it was removing this support to the grain elevators and the at and east rate to Atlantic Canada. Surely, delaying the removal of this rate for five years would allow the government an opportunity to find out what it is going to do to support agriculture as a result of this ill-conceived project to remove the at and east rate.

I would hope that hon. members, especially on the government side, would look very closely at the hon. member's amendment for the at and east rate, so that it would not be implemented for five years. Perhaps by that time, the government either will be out of office or will know what it is doing with this ill-conceived removal of the at and east rate as proposed under Bill C-26.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I rise to debate Motion No. 1 which would have the effect of delaying this particular action to do away with the at and east rates until April 1, 1995.

This motion makes some sense, given the recent actions by the government in a couple of instances when it has indicated that it is prepared to restudy this issue. That leaves the impression that the budgetary move to cancel the at and east rates without any discussion has created some problems which the government is apparently now talking about redressing.

For instance, on May 16, the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds announced that the federal Department of Agriculture would conduct a study on the future of the grain elevators in the Atlantic region. The study will look at the Halifax elevator, the Saint John elevator, a proposed elevator in Summerside, and how they can be made viable. There is not much point in having such a study, if there is no method or means of getting the grain to those elevators. Therefore, it makes eminent good sense to delay the implementation of this government proposal to cease the movement of grains in that direction and to look at other options.

There have been options put forward by my colleague for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre, one of which would have the effect of raising the transport rates from Quebec City further east. This would not have cost the government as much money in subsidizing the rate. It would have saved about $10 million, would have provided an opportunity for Atlantic Canada to get used to slightly higher rates, and very likely would have kept the flour mill now faced with closure in Atlantic Canada in business. It would have kept in business the two terminals that are at risk, the one at Saint John which has announced that it will be closing if the program does not go forward, and the one at Halifax which has a very shaky future now that at and east rates have been discontinued.

The impact of the policy change stretches beyond just terminal operators and the jobs that will be lost there which are quite numerous. We understand that the closure in Saint John which occurred February 28 meant a loss of 90 jobs. There is a possible loss of 483 jobs at the Halifax terminal with the termination of this program. As well, the closure of Dover Flour Mills, which is expected if this program goes into effect, will mean 45 more jobs lost and something in the neighbourhood of 250 indirect jobs in those cities, all due to the closures of these fairly major employers.

Further to the government announcement on May 16, there is the statement by the new Minister of Transport on May 30 when he appeared before the committee. He