

Government Orders

longer maintain their farms. Some of those farmers feel that they have failed their fathers and their grandfathers, and their sense of being has been destroyed.

The crisis is very real and we will remember a few things. We have to remember that this government is pushing more and more of the costs on to the farmers and they are getting absolutely no support from this government in terms of raising the price of the product. My colleague, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt earlier today talked about the prices for farm products and he is absolutely right. Bills like this one before us today would be unnecessary if the price paid for farm products was adequate to meet the needs of the farm community.

Other programs that this government boasts about would be unnecessary if the price paid for the farm product was adequate to meet the needs of the production. A lot of the farm community is looking for that opportunity to indeed be carrying the weight of the economy. This is not the time to be pushing more and more costs on the producer.

I just want to remind you, Mr. Speaker, and some of the government members here today of what is happening out there in the farm community and why interest free cash advances are so important.

We know that the price is down on almost all commodities. Therefore, with the price down and support from the government down, obviously farm income is down, but interest rates remain very high. We cannot forget that the previous government had interest rates up to 20 per cent and 22 per cent and that is what forced many of the people in the farm community to get into this crisis situation.

Input costs continue to increase. With the free trade legislation and the goods and services tax being brought in, all of those input costs are increasing at the farm level. The expenses rise, the price continues to fall, and more and more of the costs of doing business are being transferred to the farmer.

We cannot forget that earlier this year oats was removed by this government from the jurisdiction of the Wheat Board. Subsequent to that move, the price of oats has fallen dramatically.

There was no stabilization payment for grains this year, even though in a period of time like this one

following a drought, stabilization payments are more important than ever. Do not forget the deficiency payments that the Minister of Agriculture has been so proud of have been stopped, and there was not a dollar of deficiency payments made to any producer last year or this year.

The rail line rehabilitation program has also been terminated, meaning that more and more producers are going to have to haul their grain further and further to the elevator. Again, the cost of that transportation cost has been pushed over on to the farmer, and there is absolutely no support for the increased price that is paid for that product.

I can go on. I am going to list just a few other things here. We have to remember that the compensation payment that this government promised after it took away the two price wheat system last year because of the free trade deal has disappeared, and \$270 million was promised, a one-time payment for a price that has been paid for years and years and years on the use of domestic grain in Canada. It disappeared.

The Minister of Agriculture was in Prince Albert not too long ago talking about crop insurance and how the crop insurance program that this government is going to implement is going to be the salvation of the agriculture community. Crop insurance is a very important aspect of the farm price circumstances, but the crop insurance system is not the end all answer to supporting the income of the farmer and certainly not if the farmer has to come up with higher and higher premiums every year just in order to stay in that program.

Too many of the people in the farm community are on the line. They have just barely enough cash flow, if any, to go from one year to the next. Interest and expenses cut into that cash flow significantly and we cannot increase that in any way.

One of the things that I discovered this summer as I worked more and more closely with labour market conditions in my own riding and as I looked around the province of Saskatchewan, was that Canada Employment Centres across the prairies are indicating that there is a tremendous lack of skilled farm labourers available at harvest time. Not only do the producers have to pull off these crops with more and more expensive equipment, because of course the cost of this stuff has all been increasing, but they are having to utilize it with less and less skilled labour. It is becoming a tremendous problem