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Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 15, 2008

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, would there be leave to proceed directly to second reading on Bill 300, and then following 300 to go to Bill 229?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to proceed directly to Bill 300 and then once that's completed to proceed to 229? Is there agreement?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Add to that then proceeding to 232 following 229.

Mr. Speaker: First of all, I'm asking agreement of the House dealing with the request of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet that we proceed directly to private Bill 300 and then public Bill 229. Is there agreement for that? [*Agreed*] Okay.

Mr. Ashton: I was asking if there could also be leave to then proceed to 232, if there was time.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to proceed to public Bill 232 if we complete 229? Is there agreement?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): No, I'm not in agreement. I think we should wait and see what happens after 249.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, there is no agreement. There's agreement for us to proceed with private Bill 300 and then proceed to public Bill 229, but there is no agreement for us to proceed to 232. There is no agreement.

SECOND READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 300—The Royal Lake of the Woods Yacht Club Incorporation Amendment Act

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), that Bill 300, The Royal Lake of the Woods Yacht Club Incorporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation « The Royal Lake of the Woods Yacht Club », be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: This bill, as mentioned in a first reading of the bill, essentially changes the Royal Lake of the Woods Yacht Club from a for-profit organization to a not-for-profit organization.

I wanted to thank members of the government for agreeing to pass this bill through to committee. I know the Member for Fort Garry (Ms. Irvin-Ross) has helped out somewhat with the drafting of this bill. So we will be without further ado passing this through to committee. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

The honourable Member for Selkirk, are you speaking to the bill?

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): No, I'm going to adjourn it, Mr. Speaker.

I move, second by the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 229—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Elimination of Benefits for Auto Thieves)

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I move, seconded by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 229, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Elimination of Benefits for Auto Thieves), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Hawranik: I'm pleased to put some comments on the record with respect to Bill 229.

It's an important bill, a bill that highlights the fact that, as a Province, we can do something with respect to auto thieves. We can, in fact, participate in providing penalties to auto thieves, unlike what the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) and the government has been trying to lead Manitobans to believe. They simply point to the Criminal Code and to the federal government to determine, to try to lay the blame on the federal government in terms of

penalties in the Criminal Code without looking elsewhere, without looking to what we can do as a Province, what we can do to ensure that there are penalties for auto thieves in the province.

There is a role for us to play and, clearly, when you look at Bill 229, you can see that there is a role by the Province with respect to auto thieves and ensuring that not only is there a deterrence but also that penalties are given out appropriately to auto thieves, even if they are youths.

We're very disappointed. I notice publicly that the Minister of Justice has indicated that he wasn't going to support this bill. I hope that he reconsiders the position that he took prior to this.

We've become, under this NDP government, the auto theft capital of Canada. I know the Minister of Justice will point directly to the auto theft initiatives, that the committee that has been struck and, in terms of their activities, they've reduced auto theft in the province. While they've done so temporarily, Mr. Speaker, there is that underlying problem within the province and that is auto theft continues to flourish in this province.

*(10:10)

Even though the numbers of auto thefts and the attempts of auto theft have decreased in this province over the last few months, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the auto theft rate is still two, three times larger than it was in the 1990s. So, it's about time that this government took the initiative, stopped blaming Ottawa and took some responsibility for the problem, to take a look at what other provinces are doing at very least, and at very least look at supporting this bill because here's an example of something that this government can do right here in Manitoba rather than continuing to point the finger at Ottawa.

I'd like to point out that the Criminal Code that is passed in Parliament, of course, has applications throughout the entire country. It applies evenly in Manitoba as it does in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario and right throughout this country. Those jurisdictions don't have the auto theft rates that we have here in this province. Obviously, something that they are doing in other provinces has curbed auto theft. This is an example, Bill 229, of something that we can do, and I would encourage the government to support this bill. What kind of benefits are auto thieves entitled to through MPI? They're entitled to an income replacement indemnity. Even if they're not working, they're

entitled to income replacement. They're entitled to death benefits. They're entitled to compensation for permanent impairment, personal home assistance, medical and paramedical care. They're entitled to eyeglasses, hairpieces even, shoes that are prescribed by a physician, entitled to all kinds of benefits that other Manitobans are not entitled to.

I give as an example a senior who may be driving down the road and getting into an accident is not entitled to these benefits under MPI legislation. They're not entitled to income replacement benefits. They're not entitled to many of these benefits that I just indicated. Yet, an auto thief, someone who steals a motor vehicle, gets into an accident and injures themselves is entitled to those benefits. How fair is that? It's not fair at all. I don't believe that MPI ratepayers should be paying for benefits for auto thieves.

The very thought of allowing auto thieves to benefit from crime, Mr. Speaker, is unbelievable. To allow them to get into a motor vehicle, to steal a motor vehicle, get into an accident, be injured and then allow them to benefit really is contrary to the principles of natural justice much the same as a life insurance policy. Under common law, you're not allowed to claim the proceeds of a life insurance of an insured who you may have been responsible for their death.

This is not any different. This is an auto insurance policy that pays out to an auto thief in the event that they get into an accident. In fact, take as an example the Winnipeg cab driver who, four or five weeks ago, was killed in an accident with an auto thief. The auto thief in fact is receiving benefits under part 2 of MPI legislation. They're receiving benefits because they were injured in that particular accident. The very cab driver who lost his life, by payment of his Autopac premiums, is in fact paying in part for some of those benefits for the very person who is responsible for ending his life. That is repugnant, Mr. Speaker. That is wrong, and that flies in the face of the principles of natural justice to which all Manitobans should be subject.

I know that the members of the government will say that obviously we pay those benefits anyway, but it's not correct. There is some responsibility, of course, for the social safety net to pay benefits, whether it's the medicare system to ensure that an individual, no matter who they are, if they get hurt in no matter what situation, they will receive medical care. That's not the issue, Mr. Speaker. The issue is

the extra benefits that are given to auto thieves. We're not advocating that an auto thief not be denied medical care. That's absolutely incorrect. We're not denying that even an auto thief should receive social assistance. That's not the issue. The issue is whether MPI ratepayers should be paying for the benefits of an auto thief and whether they should be contributing through their premiums for benefits for somebody who may have stolen their motor vehicle. That's the issue. It's a sad day in Manitoba when we may see this government not support this bill.

There are many hardworking Manitobans who have been victims of auto thieves and the precedent has been set, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) has indicated at one time that it's wrong to deny them benefits; in fact, they'll get benefits from other sources. The precedent has been set because, three or four years ago, this very government didn't completely deny benefits to auto thieves but they reduced benefits to auto thieves in certain cases. It was okay then to reduce benefits but now, if this Minister of Justice, if this government is taking the position that it's wrong to eliminate them, I think that's a wrong position, that they should be supporting this bill.

I would hope that the Minister of Justice and the members opposite support this bill because the very principle of the bill is something that they should be supporting. That's what we're arguing in second reading, Mr. Speaker, is the principle of the bill. The principle of the bill should be supported because we have to do all that we can to eliminate auto theft in Canada, or at least reduce it. This is one small part of the solution; it's not the panacea, I'll acknowledge that. There's got to be a multi-pronged approach to auto thieves, and we have to deal with auto thieves from many directions. This is one of the ways that we can send a message to auto thieves that Manitoba treats that offence very seriously and, if you're going to get into an accident after having stolen a motor vehicle, you're not going to get benefits. Thank you very much.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to add my comments to Bill 29 that's been brought forward by the member opposite with respect to the elimination of total benefits to the auto thieves in Manitoba.

I listened very carefully to the comments that the member made with respect to why he wishes to bring this legislation forward at this time. I have to wonder why, when we've already made significant changes

in this regard as a government and the simple fact is that auto theft is down over 50 percent in this province year over year. It seems a little like the member opposite closing the barn door after the horse has escaped, trying to use an analogy here that he might be somewhat familiar with, why he would want to make these changes now.

Now I listened quite carefully to his comments. He calls us the auto theft capital of Canada. I'm not sure how you can call us the auto theft capital of Canada when we've had a 50 percent reduction in auto theft in Manitoba. I have to give credit, Mr. Speaker, to the Winnipeg auto theft suppression task force that was in place in this province and the good work that they have done now over a number of years in providing—*[interjection]*—let's give some information to the member opposite, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

I was just at a community meeting in my own community in Transcona just about a week and a half, two weeks ago. This is the CFCA in your neighbourhood brochure, spring 2008; let's take a look at just district 4, my own district in which I myself reside. This is City of Winnipeg police folks giving us this information: the theft of motor vehicles, actual, in this year January to April, 144. What was it in the same period last year? Two hundred and ninety-one, a 51-percent reduction. What was the attempt thefts in January to April of this year? One hundred and eighty-eight. What was the same period last year? Three hundred and twenty-one, a 41 percent reduction.

So let not the member opposite say that there haven't been some significant improvements in auto theft in this province. I think you're doing a disservice to folks when you say that there hasn't been some improvement.

* (10:20)

I'll start, Mr. Speaker, by thanking Manitobans that recognize that they have a role to play in preventing auto theft in the first place. We have over 100,000 Manitobans now that have immobilized their vehicles in Manitoba to try and prevent theft from happening in the first place. In addition to that, we have another 125,000 vehicles that are new, or have come into this province, that have an improved Insurance Bureau of Canada immobilizer on the vehicle. Those vehicles are also being prevented from being stolen.

Now, I have to say that I'm a little bit disappointed that the member opposite said that we shouldn't also ask the federal government that has complete control of the Criminal Code of Canada to play a role in preventing and stopping auto theft and then making sure that there are appropriate sanctions in place not only in Manitoba but across this country. I listened very carefully when the Prime Minister came into my own community and said that we've got to stop vehicles from being stripped down for parts after theft and then sold offshore. I think it was perhaps the right announcement for some other jurisdiction in Canada, but that is not the evidence that we see here in the province of Manitoba. Most of the vehicles stolen here are used for joy-riding purposes. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, those vehicles are sometimes used as weapons in the communities of this province. We want to take the appropriate steps to prevent those thefts from occurring in the first place.

An Honourable Member: It's an important bill. Don't pay them to do it.

Mr. Reid: Don't pay them to do it, the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) says.

So what the Member for Brandon West wants to have happen is he wants to have those that are apprehended by the good work of our police forces in the province of Manitoba and where there are people that are injured or killed or maimed in those types of circumstances, he wants to transfer those costs onto the taxpayers of Manitoba under the health care or the social assistance programs we have in this province and to have those programs pay for those that are hurt in those accidents, whether you be a passenger in those vehicles or whether you be the actual auto thief themselves. You want to transfer those costs onto the full taxpayers of the province of Manitoba. I think quite clearly, that's the wrong step to take.

I know that I listened very carefully to our Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) saying that we didn't want to transfer those costs. We want those costs to be borne by those that are involved in auto theft, and, Mr. Speaker, we want the good citizens of Manitoba who have indicated by their actions that they believe very strongly in the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy that our government has brought forward, under the guidance and leadership of the various police forces and, of course, Professor Rick Linden and the good work that he has done in guiding us through this process.

I listened to the police forces when they say—I'll just give you an example. On the way in to the Legislature here this morning listening to CJOB, they're talking about the overnight police work that had been ongoing here. Not one auto-theft issue was reported on CJOB this morning. It was a clear night.

So you say that they're not having some impact on both the immobilizer program and the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy. I say to members opposite, these two programs are working, and we're starting to see the positive benefits of that by virtue of the numbers I just put on the record from the spring 2008 crime statistics right in my own community in the northeast section of Winnipeg where the Winnipeg police reported those numbers that I just related to members a few moments ago.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have indicated that, through the mandatory immobilizer program, we have over a hundred thousand vehicles, some 70,000-plus vehicles that are immobilized as a part of that and over a hundred thousand vehicles have been immobilized. Now members opposite obviously don't support that.

I listened very carefully to the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou) here in the course of the last session and through this session, where he said that vehicle theft was an issue in Portage la Prairie.

So what did our Manitoba Public Insurance, our government and our Minister of Justice do? We have the immobilizer program many residents living in the community of Portage la Prairie have taken advantage of.

An Honourable Member: Couldn't start my car, so they burned it. I had the immobilizer on it and they couldn't start it, so they burned it.

Mr. Reid: So the member says that the immobilizer program is not working in his community. That is what he is saying. But I think if the member looks at the statistics for rural Manitoba and for the city of Winnipeg, you will find that there have been significant improvements in auto theft in our province.

Now I look at the members that introduced this piece of legislation, and I say to them—and I know of situations like this even in my own community where sometimes children will take the family vehicle without permission. *[interjection]* You think that doesn't happen? That happens. You're living

under a rock if you think it doesn't happen in our communities of our province.

What do you do in a situation like that? You deny those children of those families that perhaps took the vehicle without permission to have the benefits that are entitled to them under the PIPP program? I must add that the Conservative Party of Manitoba brought in the PIPP program. Now you're saying we should deny those same benefits that you afforded those Manitobans when you brought the program forward in the first place. Why didn't you think of that at the time? If you wanted to deny the benefits, I think it would be wrong to deny the benefits, but I think there are many circumstances that you're not taking into consideration when we have to deal with the legislation.

Now our government says that when you steal a vehicle in Manitoba, you lose. You can have your licence suspended up from five years to life. You can't get your driver's licence until 21 years of age. Manitoba Public Insurance has a subrogation program that members opposite, and many members of this House may be familiar with, where we go after third parties and parties that are involved in illegal activities to try and recover those costs, where possible. So we have programs in that. Of course, the individuals would lose the opportunity to obtain auto insurance as a result of any illegal activities involved in auto theft in this province. Of course, you have the criminal code sanctions that are in place.

I think that we have put in place a number of programs to support the reduction in auto theft in this province, and I think we are well on our way to solving this problem. I'm not saying it's perfect. I'm not saying that we don't have more work to do, but what I'm saying is that we have made significant progress that the members opposite fail to recognize, and we are now over 50 percent reduction in auto theft in this province year over year. Yes, we have more work to do, but I think we're well on our way to solving this problem.

I thank all Manitobans for recognizing that they have a role to play in this and it's not just the police forces, which are obviously doing a good work, as well, but we have many Manitobans realizing that we all collectively can play a role in improving auto theft. I think this legislation is the wrong bill and it will penalize all Manitobans as a result of the actions you intend to take from this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to add my comments to this bill and I'll listen intently to

the comments of members opposite to see whether or not they want to penalize Manitobans by this legislation.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I do want to correct the Member for Transcona on two things. No matter whether we have one car theft, or not, it's still one too many. He talked about how the bill would be affecting a family. But obviously, he didn't read the bill thoroughly, because it states very clearly, in Bill 229, that benefits denied under the part of the MPIC Act to a person for injuries received in an accident if he or she is convicted of stealing a motor vehicle involved in an accident. It doesn't say anything about a family member taking a car. If the family's not going to press charges and they're not convicted, they'll still be entitled to those benefits if they're not convicted. So his comment about whether or not the family would be pressing charges against their child for taking a vehicle is absolutely untrue.

I know that the members opposite take offence to good ideas coming from this side of the House. This is a very good bill that's been brought forward by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik). I think that the intent of the bill is certainly worth listening to. I'm very proud to have seconded this motion. I refer to an article that was written August 17 by Tom Brodbeck which states very clearly it's a no-brainer bill. There are benefits that are being paid for the car thief. They should be stopped. This has an opportunity for the government, in fact, to do something meaningful in regard to curtailing some of the car thefts within the province of Manitoba.

I know that the member talked about the immobilizer system, too. That's not a be-all, end-all system for stopping car theft either. Certainly, it's a start. But there are also problems with that, as well. I know the member is well aware of them, some of those problems that are being brought about because of the immobilizers. But, also, know very clearly that the benefits that the Member for Lac du Bonnet is talking about, in his Bill 229, such as whenever someone else is injured or a stolen vehicle.

* (10:30)

In fact, I lost a member from my community to a car theft. It's very traumatic. I know that they're very proud of the fact the car thefts are down but, still, any car theft that goes on within the province of Manitoba, be it rural, urban, is still one too many. We have to drive home the message that they're not going to be eligible for some of those benefits that they think they're entitled to. They'll think twice

before they get behind that wheel of a vehicle, and until that comes forward and until you take that responsibility, I think that we're going to have to be tougher on crime. We have the responsibility right here in Bill 229 that we can certainly do that.

Whenever we talk about MPI to sue or garnish wages to try to get their money back, I certainly see that most of those are juveniles. There are some that are in the working class, but there are some that are not as well. I would be sure that the amount of money that's recovered back from MPI is probably a very insignificant amount of money that they actually do get back.

I would be interested to see from members opposite they put that on the record in regard to how much money actually is returned back to the public purse that's being paid for, quite frankly, by the people of Manitoba through their insurance rates, and also through their income taxes because the hospitalization is covered under our Income Tax Act. Also I know that the people that get behind the wheels of these vehicles don't even value their own lives a number of times. They think it's just an opportunity to play with a loaded gun, so to speak. I know that, whenever they get behind this vehicle, now the new fad is to charge police officers, whether they're in a car or on foot. We've seen time and time again those officers—and I know they have to be very frustrated. I know that I commend them for the work that they do in the service they provide to us, but they have so many risks when it comes to trying to deal with these car thieves that I certainly feel they need more tools, and 229 would've certainly been one of those tools whenever the youth or individual gets behind that wheel would think twice before he or she takes their lives into their hands and may cause some bodily harm to someone else.

We know that they get behind these vehicles, and the method which they use to speed up and down the streets and charge another car is one that can cause severe damage to, not only themselves but other public property, and 229 would certainly be one of those that I would feel would be beneficial to the government having a look at. Unfortunately, as the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) said, the government is not prepared to support this bill. I think that even if they would take back anything out of this bill would be the fact that the intent of the bill is certainly worth having a look at. I would encourage members opposite to bring in their own bill. I know that's what they like to do, because I've brought certain bills forward in this House, and it's

unfortunate they won't listen to this side of the House but, certainly, in regard to 229 I think there's enough intent in that bill that they can certainly move it forward into a way that at least they can draft some of the ideas from the Member for Lac du Bonnet. So with that, that concludes my remarks for 229, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): I am pleased to be able to put a few words on this bill on the record. First, when you're looking at the laws, when you're looking at change in society, you have a choice between doing a knee-jerk reaction or looking at the root causes and making fundamental change. I'm proud of the government, this government for making fundamental changes to change the amount of cars that are being stolen, and so when you look at what we've done, Mr. Speaker, we've taken a very, very proactive approach to change behaviour that was growing under the members opposite, that was growing by leaps and bounds under the Conservative government previously.

We've actually worked very hard to change this action. I'm pleased we've had a sea change. We've had fundamental changes that were not supported by the Conservatives or the Liberal parties in Manitoba, so if you look, we've hired a unit that is focussed on preventing cars from being stolen and monitoring those car thieves that have had a history of car theft.

We voted for it. We worked with the City of Winnipeg and MPIC to put that proposal and that group together and the Liberal Party of Manitoba, the Conservative Party of Manitoba voted against giving this group money. We also worked very, very hard to do other things. We've now got a very innovative program which is using ankle bracelets on repeat car offenders. This is where you take the repeat offenders that you need to make sure that we are working with the level 4 offenders. We put ankle bracelets on so we know and monitor where they've been. We monitor what the actions they are actually taking.

I'm pleased that we worked with the City of Winnipeg, with Justice officials, with, again, MPIC, to put in monitoring and an ankle bracelet program which is very, very innovative in this province.

I'm pleased to say that the Liberal Party voted against the money for that and the Conservative Party voted against the money for that.

The other things we've done is that we've worked on making sure that we also have Lighthouses so that kids are prevented—what we're doing is we've expanded a number of times. We have Lighthouses throughout this province, in the city of Winnipeg, in the city of Brandon, Thompson, etcetera. What that does is keeps kids busy. I was a former educator. I know that if you have kids that are busy kids you then make sure that they don't get in trouble as much. So we've worked with many groups to make sure, whether it's KidSport, whether it's other groups, to make sure kids have the opportunity to be busy.

I'm pleased our party, the New Democratic Party, moved forward on these initiatives. I'm also pleased to tell all Manitobans that the Liberal Party voted against the money for those programs and voted against prevention, and the Conservative Party voted against prevention. So if you look at that, that's the reality. So I'm pleased to say that we're doing this.

Now I'd like to give the Conservative Party a history lesson. The Conservative Party, the Tories, introduced the Personal Injury Protection plan in 1995. I know that some members weren't in government at the time, but some members were in government.

I notice that most of the people who were in the front bench might not be listening to this comment, but that act, in 1995, chose to provide a full range of injury benefits with the exception of drivers that were impaired. In other words, their bill could have income replacement indemnity for just drunk driving but it did nothing about car thieves.

So, in other words, in 1995, the Conservatives who are crowing about the difficulties that might be in this law they implemented, now they're saying, wait, there's a problem. Maybe they should pay attention to what we've done.

Our government has since strengthened provisions that limit the benefits to car thieves. We limited the benefit for car thieves, you instituted benefits for car thieves. The changes that we made were part of a package of measures that increased penalties and consequences for those convicted of auto theft under the theme. The theme was if you steal a vehicle in Manitoba, you lose. It was something that we've worked in and that was to change what the Conservative Party of Manitoba implemented in the first place. Changes were also

implemented for The Highway Traffic Act designed to hit auto thieves.

Basically what it was was it was a provision to lose driver's licence with suspension ranging from five years to life if someone had stolen a car. They lose the chance to get a valid licence at age of 16. First time offenders under 16 must wait until they are 21 to take a driver's test and get their licences. They lose their future by gaining a criminal record. They lose future job and travel opportunities as a result of the criminal record, especially into the States and other places. They lose thousands of dollars by having to repay the damages caused by theft or vandalism. This applies to the passengers, et cetera. They lose the opportunity to obtain auto insurance. If they're under 18, their parents may also be forced to pay for any damages they caused, including the value of the vehicle. Those are things that they do now, we do.

* (10:40)

Like the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), I'd like to quote some stats. The statistics were, under the former government, car theft went up. Under our government, car theft went down. I'm pleased to see this. If you look at this year, we've got a 40-percent decrease in car thefts—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite are going to crow about the fact that they voted against prevention, they voted against taking positive action with the police intervention unit, they voted against ankle bracelets, they voted against more police. I know that the Member for Inkster's (Mr. Lamoureux) crowing that he didn't vote one way or the other. We know that the vote on the budget is on the record for the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party. They voted against police, they voted against ankle bracelets, they voted against prevention, they voted against money to schools to make sure kids stay in schools, they voted against more money to colleges and universities, they voted against the youth and long-term planning of Manitoba and instead, they voted to perpetuate the increasing car thefts that started under the Conservatives.

We have voted to do a sea change, and I'm pleased to see that we've moved that forward. In closing—I know I have only a couple of minutes—we instituted, as a government, immobilizers and

immobilizers actually work. If you're trying to steal a car, you're not going to do the damage and hurt individuals if you have an immobilizer. MPIC, under our watch, has set up an immobilizer. Under many jurisdictions, people have to pay out of their pocket to make sure that they have an immobilizer. Under the MPIC system now, it's basically free.

What we've done is extended it. We've pushed the federal government to make change. The members opposite said, don't push the federal government to change the Criminal Code, don't make them look after their own obligations. We are pleased that we are working with the federal government to change the Young Offenders Act, to change the Criminal Code, to make sure there are consequences for action. I know the members opposite don't believe in consequences for what they do. We believe in it because we've worked with the federal government to make sure that they change the Criminal Code.

I hope in the future that they join us to work with the federal government to make these changes on the Criminal Code. I think they're necessary, and I'd love to see some consequences, but I'd also like to see them vote for good programs like we've introduced.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I am truly totally amazed by the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau). I don't know who provided them the briefing notes, but they are so out of touch with reality, it's truly amazing.

Having said that, I do applaud the fact that they stood up and they put on the record that the government does oppose this bill. The next step, of course, would be to allow for a vote so we could actually make sure that all 35 of them would vote against this bill, contrary to what the member just finished saying about consequences. He's saying that the opposition doesn't support consequences when, in fact, this bill institutes consequences to the actual criminal that's committing the offence. Instead, he is defending those people and he is making sure he goes about the immobilizer program which is, in fact, another burden for the victim. It's the victim that has to go out and put in, or the potential victim that has to get the immobilizer put in. He's defending the people that are stealing the cars.

Having said that, there's a couple of things that I really take exception to. One is the government still

doesn't quite understand why it is that I voted against the budget. It's because, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the government has any idea in terms of how to prioritize. I believe that there's other parties inside this Chamber that would do a better job at managing the overall budget of the province. If you carry the logic from the minister, or from the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) when he talks about voting against and he lists off several things. Well, I voted against the budget. Yes, that is true. Well, then you could say as a result of me voting against the budget, that means that I voted against money going to the Health Sciences Centre where babies are being born so that means I voted against babies being born in hospitals. That is the logic of this minister and, I would suggest to you, this government. I voted against the budget because this government doesn't know how to spend the \$9 billion-plus in terms of good priorities; Mr. Speaker, this bill is a good suggestion in terms of what it is that we should be doing.

The Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and the Member for Assiniboia talked about, we're an effective government; we're reducing automobile theft. The Member for Assiniboia even went further by saying that they're doing much better than the Tories were doing.

Reality is a strange thing when it comes to the minds of the New Democratic Party inside this Chamber. They created the problem. In 2004, there were 13,000 cars stolen in the city of Winnipeg, 13,000. So they say now, we created the problem. This is the government that, year after year, allowed car thefts to continue to grow; now you have some government members saying, you know what? Now we've cut it back. The Member for Transcona says it went back by 50 percent.

Sure, it went back in certain areas of the city by significant percentages, but the reality is we're still the car theft capital in Canada when it comes to the city of Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker. We're still No. 1 in that category; what is the Province's attitude towards it?

Here we have an opportunity to do something that sends a very strong message to those car thieves. If you're going to steal a car, you're going to use it as a ramming rod and you're going to cause an accident or anything of that nature, don't expect that you're going to be covered through Autopac, if, in fact, you're convicted of automobile theft.

Mr. Speaker, this is the type of legislation I believe that a vast majority of Manitobans would support. Only the New Democrats inside this Chamber and I suspect, only those New Democrats—the New Democrats don't have any choice because the Premier (Mr. Doer) of our province enforces solidarity forever, when it comes to anything that passes through this Chamber.

Because the Premier has made the decision that this is a bill that we will not pass, all of them have to abide by it. Whether it's a good idea or not, whether it goes against the wishes of their constituents or not, they have to vote against this bill, but some of the individuals in the NDP ranks have something going for them when they realize this is actually a good bill, I really don't want to vote against the bill.

As opposed to being forced to vote against the bill, they will not allow the bill to come to a vote. This way, they can still salute the king of our province, or the leader of the New Democratic Party, and be a part of the NDP team inside the Chamber, but they don't technically have to vote against the consequences to the car thief. If they canvass their constituencies, I will suggest to each and every member of the New Democratic Party, if they canvass the opinions of their constituents, they will find that there's overwhelming support for legislation of this nature.

One has to question what it is that's driving the members of the New Democratic Party in terms of their attitudes towards legislation inside this Chamber, that there's a time to recognize that the Premier's Office has too much power, Mr. Speaker, that there needs to be more independence inside this Chamber so that, when we do get legislation of this nature, it has the opportunity at least to be voted upon; it doesn't have to allow for members to do whatever it is that the Premier's Office is saying.

* (10:50)

Mr. Speaker, I don't say that lightly because I have to believe that the Member for Transcona and the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) were probably given some of those briefing notes. Based on the comments, I think they genuinely believe that Manitoba has resolved this car theft problem, because they were talking about these huge decreases in automobile theft. Well, nothing can be further from the truth. Manitoba, in particular the city of Winnipeg, is still No. 1 in car thefts.

Mr. Speaker, did you know that we have, let's say, 30 kids that will steal, roughly. I believe it was in 2004, 30 kids, you're talking about thousands of cars, just those 30 youth. Well, if you provide a consequence, if you cannot ensure that those kids are not stealing cars, Manitobans would want to see those kids locked up. If you're just going to allow the youth out on the street continually, habitually, to steal car after car after car why are we allowing that? Why do we allow these types of crimes to go on?

Now, some members in the government benches will blame Ottawa. They'll say, well, it's Ottawa's fault, Mr. Speaker. The reality again is that the same legislation across Canada applies for all provinces including Manitoba, but Manitoba still leads the pack. Other provinces don't have the same issues that Manitoba—that the province of Manitoba can do a lot more. Those 30 youth demonstrate just how much more that we can do. Again it's not an issue of blaming Ottawa. It's taking responsibility.

Constituents of ours want consequences. If a youth steals a car they want a consequence to that action. They don't want to make the victim have to pay the price. They want a consequence for young people that are committing crimes in our province. I would encourage members of the government benches, members of the New Democratic Party to stop listening to the Premier on everything that he says and have an independent mind, start allowing for votes on legislation that's before this Chamber so at the very least we can allow for bills to pass, to go to committee stage so that the public, our constituents, would be afforded the opportunity to share their concerns in regard to legislation of this nature and members will find that the constituents that we represent support many of the legislation including this bill that is being brought forward. We are doing a disservice in this Chamber by not allowing bills to be voted on, Mr. Speaker.

If it means sitting more hours to allow for additional debate then let's sit more hours to allow for those additional debates but at least have the political courage to have a vote on every piece of legislation that comes before this Chamber. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for being patient and listening through my speech.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand this morning in the Chamber to add to debate of Bill 229, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Elimination of Benefits for Auto Thieves).

I've listened very intently to all the members debate this morning and I find it curious that we see from the New Democratic Party the way they address the problems or concerns is by treating the disease, treating the ultimate event after the fact. They look at saying that persons that get sick, well, we'll treat the persons in our health-care system. If we're looking for persons that potentially perpetrate a crime, well, we'll jump out in front and we'll put bars on seniors' windows. We will put immobilizers in people's cars and this is our way of addressing crime. This is putting upon, and I will say the onus, on law-abiding citizens of Manitoba.

Why do we go out and tell the seniors to put bars on their windows, to be in their own home as a prisoner, with bars on their windows? This is a New Democratic Party way of stopping crime. Why don't we put into our laws the consequences for criminals that perpetrate a crime?

The immobilizer which was mentioned earlier, I did install an immobilizer in my vehicle in Portage la Prairie, however the car thieves were frustrated that they could not steal the vehicle, so what did they do? They burnt the vehicle. They burnt my 1973 Mach 1 vintage car to destroy the evidence, which the police officer said was done with a high heat and soot; no fingerprints or any material evidence could be extracted from the car. This is what the immobilizers really ultimately do—they frustrate the criminals—rather than putting into our laws the consequences, so that the criminals themselves will feel the impact of Manitoba law, not the victims.

We have heard from the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) in remarks that the 1995 law only mentioned persons that were driving while intoxicated. We've learned that that is not the only crime that should be covered—not covered, I should say—by MPI insurance.

We believe, as Bill 229 describes, that persons who have perpetrated a crime should not get the preferential treatment that MPI provides for in their coverage. They should not jump to the head of the line for all the services that MPI pays for and all the specialists that MPI pays for.

Without question, the broader tax base of all Manitobans will be paying through our health-care services, but they won't be paying for the additional specialists; they won't be paying for all of the—off the income supplement at the higher levels. They will be available to family services and income supplement

but not at the higher rates. They will be given the broad-base lower rates which, again, are supported by, not only the Manitoba tax base, but the federal tax base as well, because our health-care services, our family services are supported by the federal government.

Right now the criminals are being supported by just the motoring public of Manitoba and that is wrong. We're all having to pay higher insurance premiums because they are being now currently covered, even though they perpetrate a crime, by the insurance which we all pay for.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to just leave with my comment that members opposite seem to always cherry-pick little nuggets out of the budget, for instance; when we vote against the budget, we are voting against some of these little nuggets that they seem to suggest. I will never in this Chamber vote for a budget that mortgages the future of our children.

That's what this New Democratic Party is all about; they cannot pay one's own way, and they look to their children and grandchildren to pay for themselves because they cannot stand on their own two feet. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It's a pleasure to put a few words on the record when it comes to this legislation, Mr. Speaker. I just heard the Member for Portage regretting his opposition to our budget. It must be hurting him back in Portage that he refused to support our budget which is producing a new emergency ward for his hospital there. It must be hurting him when he goes back home and they want to know why he voted against them.

Interesting—before I begin my comments on this piece of legislation, earlier on in this morning's session, we asked if there would be leave to deal with Bill 232 from the Member for Southdale (Ms. Selby), dealing with a very important issue related to allergies for children; the Liberal leader said no. He refused opportunity in this House for us to debate on a very important issue, to pass the bill that would deal with allergies for young kids. He's a big talker when it comes to he's going to defend children every opportunity he has but, when he has actually a chance to stand up in this House to debate an issue, he just says, no. He denies leave from members to debate a very important issue. That's shameful of the Liberal leader, but it's typical of his tactics, Mr. Speaker, in this House.

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have eight minutes remaining.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on a point of order.

Mr. Hawranik: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the Member for Selkirk spoke of this bill and, obviously, he isn't prepared to vote for it. But I would certainly ask leave of the House as to whether or not we would still vote on this bill. All pieces of legislation are important. Not only the Member for Southdale's bill, but also this particular piece of legislation. I would ask leave that we vote on this bill.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Transcona, same point of order?

Mr. Reid: Same point of order, Mr. Speaker. I don't think the member opposite has a point of order. The Member for Selkirk had some eight minutes remaining in his comments here, and I think that he wanted to use that time, but we have other business of this House that needs to be taken care of here this morning. So, Mr. Speaker, I say, through you to the member opposite, it's not a point of order that he has here today.

Mr. Speaker: One more and that's it. The honourable Member for Inkster.

Mr. Lamoureux: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. In order to accommodate both the Opposition House Leader and the Member for Transcona, we'd be prepared to give leave so the Member for Selkirk can finish his speech, and then we could have the vote.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The request that has been presented. Is there leave to vote on this bill?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? It's been denied.

Mr. Hawranik: Unfortunately, it's been denied by members opposite, and they should take full responsibility for that.

House Business

Mr. Hawranik: I rise on House business at this point, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet on House business.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I would like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on VLT revenue sharing with legions, sponsored by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon).

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution of VLT Revenues for Legions, sponsored by the honourable Member for Emerson.

RESOLUTION

Res. 10—Interprovincial Trade Agreements and Decreased Barriers to Trade

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., we will now deal with resolutions, and we'll deal with Interprovincial Trade Agreements and Decreased Barriers to Trade.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I move, seconded by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler):

WHEREAS Manitoba has benefited immensely from trade as a result of the Province's entry into the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement, CUSTA, and the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA; and

WHEREAS the value of Manitoba's bilateral trade with the United States is now valued at more than \$14 billion; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's entry into CUSTA and NAFTA was met by scepticism by critics; and

WHEREAS the current provincial government has shown reluctance to even enter into interprovincial trade agreements; and

WHEREAS the governments of British Columbia and Alberta have entered into Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement, TILMA, to reduce barriers to trade; and

WHEREAS the barriers to trade facing companies in Manitoba are often greater across provincial boundaries than they are with their international trading partners; and

WHEREAS barriers to trade are hindering the ability of individuals and firms in Manitoba to reach their full potential; and

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba needs to exhibit the same leadership that was illustrated when the Province entered into the CUSTA and NAFTA; and

WHEREAS our exporters and manufacturers have reaped tremendous benefits from international trade; and

WHEREAS further benefits will be enjoyed by Manitoba firms if the Province enters into trade agreements with other provinces in Canada and if progress is made on eliminating barriers to trade.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to exhibit leadership and to consider moving forward on interprovincial trade agreements and reducing barriers to trade.

Mr. Speaker: There's some different words used. Is it acceptable for the House to accept the resolution as printed? *[Agreed]*

WHEREAS Manitoba has benefited immensely from trade as a result of the Province's entry into the Canada–United States Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); and

WHEREAS the value of Manitoba's bilateral trade with the United States is now valued at more than \$14 billion; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's entry into CUSFTA and NAFTA was met with scepticism by critics; and

WHEREAS the current Provincial Government has shown reluctance to even enter into interprovincial trade agreements; and

WHEREAS the governments of British Columbia and Alberta have entered into the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) to reduce barriers to trade; and

WHEREAS the barriers to trade facing companies in Manitoba are often greater across provincial boundaries than they are with our international trading partners; and

WHEREAS barriers to trade are hindering the ability of individuals and firms in Manitoba to reach their full potential; and

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba needs to exhibit the same leadership that was illustrated when the Province entered into the CUSFTA and NAFTA; and

WHEREAS our exporters and manufacturers have reaped tremendous benefits from international trade; and

WHEREAS further benefits will be enjoyed by Manitoba firms if the Province enters into trade agreements with other provinces in Canada, and if progress is made on eliminating barriers to trade.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to exhibit leadership and to consider moving forward on interprovincial trade agreements and reducing barriers to trade.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, seconded by the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler): WHEREAS—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak on this resolution today. Of course, there are a lot of opportunities in Manitoba that could be expanded from increased trading opportunities, and this is just a resolution to look at trying to encourage the government to enhance those opportunities. Every time they have that opportunity, there are untold opportunities not only with our neighbouring provinces but with our neighbours to the United States and around the world, but particularly with Manitoba's trade with our American neighbours at being somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$14 billion.

It's a tremendous opportunity to create jobs and provide more opportunities for either immigration, where we need people to come in and fill some of those jobs now as well. I only wanted to point out that the opportunities are in aerospace. We've got tremendous opportunities this past few years in agriculture, first of all, our livestock prices were fairly good a few years ago. Of course, they're very low at the present time. I understand that hog prices are coming back in the futures market in the U.S. as well and that they're looking a little bit better.

But the grain prices and the exports of grain out of our province are going to hopefully continue to spark some interest in the agriculture community. I

even heard of a presentation this morning from our neighbours to the west, Saskatchewan, coming into Manitoba on the radio to put on a seminar to talk about increased land prices in Saskatchewan and opportunities to purchase land in Saskatchewan to raise wheat.

So I think these are times that are turning around, a bit, of our grain industry. They're being a little bit harder on the processing side here in Manitoba, particularly in the ethanol biofuels expansion. But at the same time there are opportunities in those markets in the neighbouring U.S. states. Of course, those of us that have had the opportunity of attending the Midwest legislators forum and some of the other forums that we deal with with our neighbours to the south know how much, as well, our American neighbours depend on trade with Canada and, particularly in this area, with Manitoba.

We know now that the Emerson border crossing is the busiest border crossing in western Canada. Having had the opportunity in March of being at the busiest one in Canada, the Ambassador Bridge between Detroit and Windsor, I learned even more at that particular time with the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) that was with me on that particular occasion in the Midwest legislators forum to understand exactly how important trade is between two neighbours. I will talk more about our provincial relationships in a few moments, but it's extremely important that we reduce red tape and barriers to trade wherever we have that opportunity to enhance the flow of goods and services as well between our provinces and our neighbours to the south.

Mr. Speaker, there are trade corridors that are extremely important in this whole area as well. The mid-continent corridor from Mexico to Winnipeg basically, which makes Winnipeg the northern end of that trade corridor, is very important. But it's only the beginning of the northern corridor that I would call it, the gateway to the north, with Winnipeg being the hub of opportunity in that area.

I raise this resolution that's coming forward at a very appropriate time because in decreasing trade barriers can also be achieved by improving our infrastructure, and I can't put too much emphasis on the improvement of our infrastructure needs to making sure that we increase the trade opportunities that this province can have.

* (11:10)

Mr. Speaker, the mid-continent corridor, of course, is the opportunity to move goods both north and south from here. It's an opportunity to distribute those products in the rest of Canada. We have now a federal government that has recognized the virtually three trade corridor zones of Canada, if you will. That being the Asia-Pacific Corridor, the western corridor, the Atlantic area which of course, from Halifax can be the shortest distance to India if you're going through the Suez Canal. There's opportunities for that end of the country there.

Mr. Speaker, we are on the beginning of the western Asia-Pacific corridor, and that's why the Asia-Pacific corridor talks are so important to us here in western Canada, particularly in Winnipeg and Manitoba. We need to encourage the government from our side to move forward with the projects. One such format that has just been released in the middle of March, Mr. Speaker, was the Mayor's Trade Council report which was chaired by a very capable individual, Mr. Chris Lorenc from the Heavy Construction Association, but of course, he is also very active in all of these trade corridors across Canada.

There are many good recommendations, and I'm not going to go into them all in this short time in that area, but I would encourage all my fellow colleagues to, if they haven't already, read this report to look at the opportunities that we have here. Because, Mr. Speaker, if we miss this opportunity, while others are out there now expanding their opportunities, we could lose the important opportunity that we have to combine our road, rail and air service, opportunities that come to a convergence here in the city of Winnipeg. We have both major rail lines moving across western Canada and through Canada and into the United States coming through this area. We have one of the busiest airports freight-wise in North America. I think it's in the top 16 for sure. We also have an opportunity with our trucking industries, of course, to move on those roads that are interstates to the south and the Trans-Canada east and west along with the Yellowhead Route.

So, I'm encouraging the government to move forward on those. I think that's one of the most important things that I can bring forward in this interprovincial trade agreements and decreased barriers to trade resolution because if we miss this opportunity, we may not get it back. Others will have taken the bull by the horns, so to speak. I know Edmonton's looking at a hub process for their area. Saskatoon's looking at opportunities to move into the

north from their area in Saskatchewan. The initiatives of the governments in those provinces cannot be taken lightly or we will be left in the dust on this area. I only raise that as a—seems like a strong term, Mr. Speaker, but we can lose out. If we lose out, it's not just the fact that the goods and services won't go through here, but we will not meet our potential to employ our youth and our citizens of this province or others that may want to move to Manitoba, more importantly or just as importantly, and have that opportunity to raise their families here.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the trade opportunities between Canada and the U.S. have increased annually by \$249 billion U.S. dollars, which is Canadian dollars as well. We're virtually on par with our American neighbours today as we speak, in the dollar. That means that we've got a, as I said earlier, \$441-billion trade as of '03.

I know that the government has the Manitoba International Gateway Strategy that it is proposing and trying to bring forward as an MIGS package. But, I look forward to the report. Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the government to come out with this report as quickly as they can, between the Minister of Infrastructure, Transportation and government services as well as the Minister for Competitiveness, Training and Trade, before we lose these opportunities.

I know that the government has not been, Mr. Doer was not very much in favour of trade until he got into power and found out what reality was—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maguire: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: By titles. When mentioning members in the House is by titles, not by name, please.

Mr. Maguire: I stand corrected. I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw that comment of the leader.

The Member for Concordia, the Premier of Manitoba, (Mr. Doer) was not very much a fan of free trade until he got elected. But he had a total reversal when he got into power and made a statement this spring that there isn't a Manitoban or Canadian alive that doesn't depend directly or indirectly on the benefit that has occurred from trade and particularly from NAFTA. But you know, earlier in his life, he said it really does beg the question why we are continuing to commit economic suicide, continuing to pursue NAFTA. Mr. Speaker, that's quite a flip flop, and that came from May of 1992.

So, Mr. Speaker, I only encourage the government to move forward—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): I listened very carefully to the comments the Member for Arthur-Virden made, and I wasn't sure quite where we were going this morning because I see his resolution is on interprovincial trade agreements and decreased barriers to trade, so I was prepared to come in here and do battle with the member opposite, but I actually don't disagree with very much that the member has said.

Indeed, I think that we can all agree on the importance of trade to Manitoba. I'm very pleased that the member opposite has noted, for example, the tremendous expansion of the aerospace industry in Manitoba. I'm very pleased that he's aware of that. I'm very, very pleased the member opposite put on the record some comments about agriculture, and how, with higher prices, agricultural producers, particularly those in grains and oilseeds, are very excited about their opportunities in this province.

I'm very glad the member opposite reminded this House that, indeed, the busiest border crossing in all of western Canada is at Emerson at the southern end of Highway 75 and, of course, the north end of Interstate 29. I agree with him that we're going to continue working on expanding that border crossing as we continue our flow of goods to and from our largest trading partner, the United States.

I'm also in agreement with the Member for Arthur-Virden when he talks about Manitoba and Winnipeg being in a very, very advantageous position, being at the centre of a number of different trade corridors, trade not just between Manitoba and United States but also going north to Churchill and points northward and east and west. I'm certain the Member for Arthur-Virden is very excited indeed at this government's investments, historic investments in infrastructure in the province of Manitoba.

Indeed, I also agree with the member opposite that the inland port is a very exciting potential project for Winnipeg, that Winnipeg is the correct place for this inland port to be. We have the natural advantages, and we look forward to working with

private industry to make sure that we pursue that opportunity with the greatest possible results.

I also find it interesting the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) wants to talk about population and keeping young people here because that is one of the great by-products of the good policies of this government is attracting and retaining more young people and people of all ages in the province of Manitoba.

Indeed, I looked, and when I was preparing for what I might say, I thought we might have a repeat of last year when the member, in a similar resolution, called upon Manitoba to join TILMA, the agreement between Alberta and British Columbia. Madam Deputy Speaker, it's interesting that, even though the resolution was entitled today Interprovincial Trade Agreements, I note that the Member for Arthur-Virden didn't once mention TILMA in his comments, and I'm not sure why that is.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it might be because the province of Saskatchewan has repeatedly said, both under New Democratic and Saskatchewan Party leadership, that they have no interest in joining TILMA, and indeed there was a very interesting discussion just a month ago when, at a regional meeting, an individual, an MLA named Michael Chisholm, suggested that Saskatchewan might consider joining TILMA. Well, that was interesting because then Premier Brad Wall in Saskatchewan stepped right up and, in an interview with the *Leader Post*, made it quite clear that Saskatchewan has no intention of joining TILMA, and indeed, mentioned that TILMA has been presented by Alberta and B.C. as a take-it-or-leave-it agreement.

Well, who knows? Michael Chisholm, as I think people in this Legislature know, seems to suffer from foot-in-the-mouth disease. Madam Deputy Speaker, he is the former legislative assistant to the Premier after some intemperate and sexist comments in the Saskatchewan Legislature.

I presume that my friend, the Member for Arthur-Virden, is also aware that the Union of British Columbia Municipalities has also expressed serious concerns about TILMA, again because it's a take-it-or-leave-it approach, and, indeed, they passed a resolution at their recent convention, calling upon that organization to enter into discussions with the provincial government to discuss whether there should be changes to that framework agreement, whether municipalities should be exempted or

whether British Columbia should withdraw from that agreement altogether.

* (11:20)

So, although the effort of Alberta and British Columbia to lower trade barriers is a good one, we favour a national approach, and, indeed, when I look at the resolution, or the BE IT RESOLVED section of the member's resolution, perhaps I can spend a few minutes educating him on the leadership position the Province of Manitoba is actually taking on interprovincial trade issues.

Indeed, I'm very pleased that this Premier (Mr. Doer) and this government have taken a national leadership position on bringing not just two western provinces together, but bringing together all provinces in Canada and the federal government to move ahead on interprovincial trade agreements which will make a difference for the entire country.

Internal trade is very important to the province of Manitoba; indeed, we do want to continue working to reduce trade barriers, but we are not going to do it by signing onto a regional agreement prepared by Alberta and British Columbia for the interests of British Columbia and Alberta. In this government, we believe that Manitoba's best interests are served by dealing with the country as a whole.

If you look at the statistics, Manitoba's combined export trade with Alberta and B.C. is considerable. It's about 30 percent of our total interprovincial exports, but our export trade with Ontario and Québec is almost twice as much at around 53 percent. So, indeed, simply dealing with Alberta and British Columbia is no way for Manitoba to continue to expand its trade opportunities in all four cardinal directions.

We believe that a strong and effective national agreement is needed, to be consistent in approach and to be truly effective in enhancing trade and competitiveness. Again, maybe I agree with my friend that we can't really argue for fair trade and freer trade internationally while there continues to be barriers between our own provinces. That's why, of course, the Premier and my predecessor and then in my role as minister, we will continue to keep Manitoba in a leadership position as we sit down with other trade ministers, other premiers and the federal government to make sure that the agreement on internal trade continues to expand, and we continue to break down those barriers between provinces.

Certainly, we're interested in trade; we know the benefits of trade. We know the benefits of reducing these trade barriers, but we're certainly not going to follow what I think was suggested last year by the Conservative Party—I know it's not now—that we join an Alberta and B.C. trade cabal which is going to exclude the rest of the country and also exclude Manitoba's interests.

I'm certainly in agreement with the majority of things that the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) has said. I don't agree with the resolution because it ignores the leadership and the moves forward that our Premier and our government have made on interprovincial trade agreements and reducing barriers to trade.

I look forward to continuing to discuss the ideas of the member opposite. I think we had a very good seven hours or so in Estimates to discuss matters of Competitiveness, Training and Trade. As I believe it's been said, no one has a monopoly on good ideas but, certainly as Manitobans, I'm very pleased that we are once again taking a leadership role, making sure that we have an interprovincial agreement which is going to benefit not only Manitobans, but all Canadians, rather than simply bowing down to the interests of those in Alberta and British Columbia who have very different ideas and a very different agenda than people in Manitoba.

Those were going to be my comments, but I hear the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) piping up about free enterprise. Indeed, if the Member for Brandon West would open a newspaper or would have a look at Statistics Canada reports, he would know that Manitoba, thanks to the policies of this government, thanks to the nimbleness of Manitoba business, thanks to the balance of Manitoba's economy, that we are, as I believe the Conference Board of Canada put it, firing on all cylinders. Statistics Canada tells us that we will lead the nation in private capital investment.

The Member for Brandon West, if he would read any of the fine newspapers in Manitoba, would know that Manitoba led the country in terms of the growth of our gross domestic product. We are anticipated to lead the country in gross domestic product expansion over the next year. He will also know that private sector employment has been increasing at a tremendous pace here in Manitoba.

Certainly, there's always more work to do and we do believe that breaking down trade barriers is a good way to do it. The fact is Manitoba is on a roll.

We're going to continue to be national leaders both first in many categories that are important to Manitobans but also, beyond that, national leaders at working on trade agreements which benefit all Canadians.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I do want to put a few things on record in regard to this resolution brought forward by the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), and we know that this government was elected in 1999. They've had ample years in order to make something meaningful happen within the province of Manitoba. I know the Member for Minto had just stated that he's very proud of their track record. In fact, I know from 2003, when BSE broke out, we had an opportunity to increase trade within the province of Manitoba. We called in for interprovincial trade for the processing plants here in the province of Manitoba and we never got that done yet either, and that's been five years.

We know that there's more needs to be done. We have brought resolutions forward a number of times on this side of the House to encourage the, not only the new minister now that's in charge, but the previous ministers, in regards to ensuring the fact that in fact these trade barriers be taken down.

I know that when we look at the hogs that we're large exporters as a result of the hogs being produced here in the province of Manitoba, and without those trade agreements—and I know the Member for Arthur-Virden had stated the fact that the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province has changed his position on trade back to what he was talking about in the '90s. Now he realizes that that's a good thing. In fact, we commend him for seeing the light, that he did, in fact, change his position in regards to trade with the United States, and certainly feel that we need more here in Canada.

I know the Member for Minto regarded, talked about national strategy, well, we start with our friends and neighbours first, and I know that I had brought forward in this House questions in regards to a processing plant just across the border in Saskatchewan whereby the cattle processed there weren't allowed to be brought back in to the province of Manitoba and that meat consumed here in the province of Manitoba, because it was processed in Saskatchewan, just across the line. If we would have had a bilateral agreement between the two provinces we would have certainly been able to do that. I know the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is saying

I'm wrong, but, no, that's the truth. In fact she was very aware of what happened in that particular case.

I know, as a past businessman, and as an importer-exporter, how important trade is in provincial, and also north and south of the border. I know that as, mainly, an exporter to the United States and to Saskatchewan, Alberta and Ontario, that we could've benefited immensely as a businessman, and certainly would've been able to have more business done as a result, if we had interprovincial trade, and certainly take that very seriously.

I know the trade that's going on between provinces now with the grain and hydro exports, cattle exports, hog exports. Unfortunately, what we've seen now with Bill 17, the government trying to strike down the hog business here in Manitoba we will have nothing to export here very shortly as a result of their mismanagement on Bill 17; certainly never had the consultation they needed to do on that bill. We hope that once this bill gets to committee we can bring amendments in to make the bill where, in fact, the government can make some necessary changes to that, because we realize that the trade that is so important in between the provinces and south of the border because of the economic impacts that it will have on our province as a whole.

We're talking a billion-dollar industry just in the hog business alone, never mind the other benefits that we have as a result of trade between the provinces, both to the east and west of us, and to the south. So we certainly are pleased to bring this resolution forward. I'm proud to second this resolution brought forward by the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), and I know the government is not going to support this resolution, but certainly would encourage them to get on with the negotiation process at the local level. Get the processing plants here that we need to get licensed and start with interprovincial trade just at the processing level alone would be a step in the right direction.

* (11:30)

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to put a few words on this very important resolution. I think what has to happen, you have to frame the discussion. In this case, I'd like to frame the discussion a little different than from my friend from Lakeside. My colleague from Lakeside talked about doing a number of

bilateral agreements: one province working with another province. I believe that I'm a Canadian as well as a Manitoban, but as a country I think what we have to do is come to resolutions because if we develop a series of bilateral agreements and one province working and making a deal with another province and then, say, B.C. working with Alberta and Ontario working with Québec and Manitoba—what we'd fail to realize is that as a country we are traders.

Canada is one of the largest trading nations in the world. On a per capita basis, we do more trade than almost every other country in the world. So what we have to do is look at it as a Canadian issue.

I'd like to commend the Premier (Mr. Doer) and Bernard Lord for taking this as an issue. A few years ago they looked at it and said, you know, we're a country; we have to have economic benefits as a country. I know the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) doesn't believe that we're part of Canada. We are part of Canada.

We believe that we want to set up a solution, a long-term solution. I know that what we want to do is we want to break down trade barriers. We want to break down trade barriers across the nation and to tell people that what's happening.

When the Council of Federation was formed in 2003, internal trade was identified as one of the priority issues for the council to address. I'm pleased that Manitoba, New Brunswick were identified as co-leads for the efforts on internal trade under the council, and I'm pleased that Manitoba, in its traditional role as a facilitator, as a traditional role of a province that works with others to come up with large wins, we move forward on this. Under the leadership of our Premier and the then-Premier Bernard Lord, the Council of Federation approved a work plan on internal trade in February 2004 to guide efforts to address remaining barriers to internal trade. Progress continues.

Now, when I became Minister of Trade a few years ago, I looked at the file and there were issues on butter, there were issues on all sorts of agricultural products, all sorts of different things where there were barriers. It's not a barrier that was created in a year. Madam Deputy Speaker, these are long-standing, multi-decade issues that were never resolved.

Again, I look forward to the long-term solution and so, although the members opposite said that what

we should be doing is joining TILMA and just work on one simple solution, what we said was we needed, as a country, to move forward on internal trade. I think that what we need to do is work as a country.

I look at some of the things we've done. We have worked on some very, very important interprovincial mobility agreements so that a tradesperson in one can be a tradesperson in another province, that we can have labour mobility within Canada.

I'm pleased to say that we're moving forward on the trade mobility issue. It was important because what would happen is we would have a teacher in one province who couldn't be a teacher in another. We'd have a Red Seal journeyman in one province that couldn't be a Red Seal—and what we need to do is get rid of all that and move forward.

I'm pleased, Madam Deputy Speaker, we're also doing it, not just within Canada, but we're one of jurisdictions that is leading the way, that we have other professionals or other labour people who are coming into Canada and having their credentials recognized, whether it's from the Philippines or East Asian countries or Europe, we're having people who have got their credentials in other countries recognized in Manitoba. I'm pleased that we're leading that.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The other critical thing with this issue was there was no dispute mechanism. Although there was a trade dispute on coloured margarine in Québec many, many years ago, there was no dispute resolution. So, although Québec had an edict that said that they couldn't do what they were doing, they continued. The reason why they were able to continue was there was no resolution mechanism.

I'm pleased that, in August 2007, the premiers directed the ministers responsible for internal trade to develop an effective enforcement mechanism. The goal is to implement panel results successfully without resorting to the court system and will include an appeals mechanism. The focus is first on government-to-government dispute resolution and then there'll be future work on internal trade personal-government mechanisms.

The neat part about this was the Council of the Federation instructed the ministers on internal trade to work towards a dispute mechanism. This, we were working on. As the Minister of Trade, we worked on it; it was good that we're moving forward on this.

The other important part is on energy. We are a country— when we talk to other countries, Canada is an energy superpower; Manitoba is very, very important on green energy and energy. We have been working since August 2007 to set up a negotiating group on ministers to finalize wording on an energy chapter for an agreement on internal trade. That's neat that progress is still being made on the energy chapter.

Other areas we're working on is in agriculture, manufacturing, et cetera. When we're talking about it, we believe that it is important to work as part of Canada, as part of a country. You look at the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) who said, what's happening in Manitoba? I'd like to just go through a few things on what's happening in Manitoba.

The Manitoba economy will fire on all cylinders again this year after an estimated 3.7 percent gain in 2007. The province will keep up the same robust pace of growth in 2008, outpacing all other provinces. That was done by the Conference Board of Canada in its winter 2008 provincial forecast. This is a very, very important growth rate. We're growing.

Private capital investment in Manitoba is forecast to be up 22.4 percent, No. 1 in Canada. That means people are feeling good; they're investing. It's well over the national average of about 3.7 percent, about 700 percent up, which is good. The total capital investment for Manitoba is forecast to rise 18.8 percent, in Canada No. 1, and more than three times the national average.

So, Mr. Speaker, taxes are down. I'd like to remind the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), he likes to talk about taxes but the taxes under the former Tory government were 8 percent. We're now at two percent for small business. What's happened is we've raised the threshold from 250,000, raised it up; that's very positive.

The jobs and earning over the past 12 months, jobs in the private sector grew by about 17,200 or about 3.9 percent; it's triple the national growth rate. Earnings are increases. I'm pleased to see that we have a very diversified economy and it is working, but we are a trading nation. If you take the goods and services that we actually export, 76 percent of what we produce in Manitoba is exported to other provinces or other countries. We believe it's very, very important to continue to export, continue to look at markets. We want to continue to look at the

value added that we export, so we want to make sure we move forward.

I'd just like to end by giving two quotes. One is from Peter Hall, the deputy chief economist. Export Development Canada is forecasting Manitoba will post the second-best export growth in Canada next year and the next. It's like you wave a magic wand over Manitoba; what is happening here completely destroys forecasts and runs counter to everything that's going on in the rest of the country.

That's what we continue to do. We're defying gravity, and I'm pleased to see that we're also leading the charge on a Canada-wide effort to reduce trade barriers. I think it's where we need to go and, as a Canadian and as a Manitoban, I'm proud of our approach. Thank you very much.

* (11:40)

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I find it very ironic that the member, the Minister of Science and Technology (Mr. Rondeau) now talks in such an open, wonderful and accepting manner of free trade when, in fact, he and the new Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan) and his government were absolutely opposed to NAFTA. They stood up and they said it would be the worst thing that ever happened with respect to trade in Manitoba. Their Premier (Mr. Doer) was opposed to NAFTA, and now they've embraced the opportunity of free trade with the United States and NAFTA is the best thing that ever happened.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, NAFTA is the best thing that ever happened to Manitoba and Canada because our trade did increase quite substantially. The minister states that 76 percent of what we produce in Manitoba is exported. It's true, but what he didn't say is 80 percent of that 76 percent goes to the United States. What we're saying in this particular resolution, of which I thank the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) for bringing forward, is let's look at expanding our trade opportunities in other areas, not just simply going with the NAFTA agreement that was put into place by a Progressive Conservative government with opposition from the NDP, I might add. This is what we said at the time, is that it would expand our trade opportunities and, in fact, it did. Now what we're saying is let's take the blinders off and expand our trade opportunities within the country itself.

But, no, the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, as new as he is to the portfolio—I

give him a little bit of leeway—is terribly naive when he says, well, no, we don't want to enter into any bilateral trade agreements; that would be just silly because we want to have a national standard, a national perspective.

Well, this gentleman is going to be very, very, very old, Mr. Speaker, before that happens, and in the meantime he's going to sit back, sit on his hands, and let all of the other opportunities escape. He says—

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister for Competitiveness, Training and Trade, on a point of order?

Mr. Swan: On a point of order. I'm sorry, I didn't hear the Member for Arthur-Virden suggest it. Is the Member for Brandon West suggesting that Manitoba should join TILMA?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That's not a point of order. On the point of order, that's not a point of order.

Everybody that wishes to speak will have the opportunity. Points of order are to point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure from our Manitoba practices. It's not to be used for debate.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Brandon West has the floor.

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I just proved my point, obviously, with the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade not really understanding the rules and certainly not understanding the rules of trade as to be accepted with the fact that he's relatively new to the portfolio.

But what we have, Mr. Speaker, and he said himself that Manitoba only trades 30 percent of our product with Alberta. Well, of course, we do, because there are trade barriers set up. Wouldn't it be the better idea to expand that 30 percent that we trade into Alberta to make that substantially more, that we open up those different avenues of trade rather than slam the door shut and say, no, we're not going to do anything until this is a national standard. We're not going to trade with Saskatchewan. We're not going to trade with Alberta. We're not going to trade with those terrible people in B.C., by the way, because, I'll tell you, they haven't got this national standard in place.

But, by the way, B.C. and Alberta have collaborated and said, you know what, there's a

really good opportunity here to have trade between and across our provincial boundaries. Saskatchewan, albeit as the member suggested, Mr. Speaker, maybe Saskatchewan's not there yet, but they will be. Saskatchewan is very aggressive. It's got a new government that wants to look at different areas to trade. They want to be able to develop some other markets in other areas.

By the way, at the federal level, we recognize that there are a number of impediments that are thrown in place with interprovincial trade barriers, Mr. Speaker, and that's wrong. We in this province can trade easier with our neighbours into the U.S. than we can with our neighbours in Saskatchewan or our neighbours in Alberta. That's wrong. We're all Canadians. We should have that interprovincial trade. We should be able to get rid of those barriers. We should be able to get rid of the barrier for investment. We should be able to get rid of the barriers for labour mobility. But, no, we're going to stand up and we're going to say, we're not going to do any of that right now because we're going to wait. Well, they can sit and they can wait forever, but the longer the wait, the more we lose opportunities in those provinces, the more we lose opportunities for our businesses.

And, by the way, we hear these wonderful statistics. Well, I can give contradicting statistics to every one that was quoted here right now, but let's give you just two. There was an article in the newspaper and, unfortunately, I don't have it right now, but Louis Dreyfus is developing a canola-crushing plant in Yorkton. You know why they're developing it in Yorkton, Mr. Speaker? Because, first of all, it's business-friendly. Secondly, the tax rates are so much lower in Saskatchewan.

They will develop in Yorkton, not a plant in Manitoba. That's wrong. We should be developing that plant here. We should be able to trade interprovincially, but do you know why this government doesn't want to do that? It's because they are afraid to compete. They don't have the tax regime to compete. They don't have the labour legislation to compete. They don't have the business-friendly environment to compete, so they're—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Borotsik: They're totally afraid and they're going to sit back and say, What? Why would I want to worry; we can be just a little island amongst a

whole bunch of trading opportunity that's sitting out there just waiting to be tapped, but we don't want to tap it because we want to be just this little island all unto ourselves that have these very restrictive labour laws, that have these very restrictive tax regimes, and by the way, we're going to lose all of that opportunity.

Their own Premier (Mr. Doer) was opposed to free trade. Why is it do you think that this same Premier is opposed to trade across interprovincial barriers, Mr. Speaker? He's afraid to compete, and they know that right now. If we open our doors, they would have to be more competitive in those regimes and they're not prepared to do that, and that's wrong because our businesses our being impacted by it. They should stand up and they should defend our businesses and give them the proper tools to be able to trade with our partners in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, but they're not doing that. It's a travesty, and I put that at the feet of the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan).

When this thing falls apart and blows up in his face, unfortunately, he's the one who's going to have to take responsibility, but by that time, they'll be out of office and they won't have to take responsibility, but somebody else will make sure that we can negotiate with our friends, our own friends within western Canada, and that's the way it should be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that opportunity.

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I was about getting excited to stand up and to speak in a rebuttal of the Member for Brandon West who, absolutely, has disappointed me by his logic and points on debate.

I think this particular bill talks—I mean, this resolution talks about—the point I'll read, Mr. Speaker, here, it says that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba—urge the provincial government to exhibit leadership to consider moving forward on interprovincial trade agreements and reducing barriers to trade.

Now, this resolution is like trying to say somebody who's on the top of the class, to say, I like you to be on the top of the class. We have demonstrated leadership. We have demonstrated things that are being talked about, particularly in this resolution, and I would suspect, Mr. Speaker, this is the four-year-old piece of paper that they have pulled not having any new ideas to come, pull this particular one and present it so that we can have some discussions.

This particular resolution is outdated, Mr. Speaker, and I like to talk about the Member for Brandon West when he talks about leadership of the past. This province here led by Mr. Filmon never took the leadership of leading Manitoba on international trade missions, always piggyback with Ottawa as a substandard subordinated province led by the country's prime ministers. This was first time in the history of Manitoba that our Premier (Mr. Doer) led a trade mission to India and it was exclusive, largest trade missions, resulting in huge amount of development of international trade, followed by our Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) who took an agricultural-oriented trade mission, which is going to serve the rural Manitoba agriculture community of our province who need to be connected with the huge, huge market available there.

Initiations have come in the name of the leadership, so this particular thing talking about leadership is absolutely absurd in terms of my judgment to this. Talking about this new minister, I think this minister understands the values of trade, values of competitiveness and values of training much more than I would suspect any member from that side, because I have not, so far, in last five years, not heard a single positive, endurable comment on ideas, suggestions that would work and be sustained.

* (11:50)

I think that when the minister was asking a question on TILMA, the member ducked that question. I mean, the question is simply, you want to go and have a project that will be in the name of a project, it will be okay, but it won't work. So, if something that does not work, why initiate and fail. I think we initiate projects, we initiate resolutions, we initiate actions that work and get results.

So now, I'd like to say that we are talking about one issue here about leadership, and I understand, Mr. Speaker, what the Minister for Science, Technology mentioned about our Premier (Mr. Doer) working with Premier Bernard Lord to have a Council of Federation, which approved a work plan on internal trade in February of 2004, which is being still worked out and it's getting improved upon.

I think that we have to be very careful when we make such agreements which are like patchwork of repairing of a highway, then trying to really reconstruct and rebuild it so that it's sustained and it will sustain the load of futures to come. This country has different states, they have their own laws, they

have their own mandate and to really try to do a patch-up work with one province to other province and it does not work in the third province, this will create more of a hodgepodge, more of a problem than it will give a solution. We are working on—I'm positive we have a group of very competent bureaucrats and civil servants that are providing the framework to say how these agreements, which are of national nature, should work.

I mean now we're talking about international trade, so particularly when in the country itself, we don't have a national agenda, what kind of country we will leave? So we have to think that we need a national strategy on such agreement that should not be between us and Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan versus Alberta, but won't work with Manitoba and Ontario, or won't work with Manitoba and British Columbia. We need to have a national strategy. I'm positive the leadership displayed by our Premier and our government, and with other jurisdictions, this kind of thinking is coming to be realized. I'm positive that time will say, approve that that will work much better than having a patch relationship between two provinces.

As my colleague here, the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) and the minister said that we are showing leadership. The news that comes in the paper you read that. I was just reading, Mr. Speaker, and I said do I believe myself looking at Manitoba in the fear of economic slowdown in the U.S., in the fear of falling-down economies elsewhere, is doing so well. I realized it is not our news release, it is done by papers that go on the statistics and go on data.

I'm proud to say that only last Friday I was at a dinner—Canada West Foundation dinner, they're opening up a chapter, I think, in Winnipeg—and the Premier (Mr. Doer) was there, so was the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and we had some other dignitaries from political angle. But there were leaders, business leaders of Manitoba. Hartley Richardson when spoke, a keynote speaker he was, he spoke how proud Manitobans are, how proud the business community is, to see Manitoba doing so well on all fronts, on economic front, on job creation, on investment.

So, this is something very positive and I really urge members opposite that let us at times share and enjoy good news that is for all Manitobans. It is not for a particular group that we are talking about, all Manitobans enjoy the growth. I would like to see this

face smiling, clapping, on good news. I think when we heard last time Premier spoke that the Leader of Opposition talked in the Chamber of Commerce saying that he cried from bad news. I mean, this itself to speak very, very sad that we are not proud of our private business people, our small business people that are working very hard to create Manitoba as a have province.

I'm equally proud to say that the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk), when she went to India, a farmer—and I must share this with you, Mr. Speaker, because that particular area of India is not that developed, but when our Deputy Premier went and shared the emotions of the farming community in that community which has about 90 million people, I was astonished to see the reaction of how positive they were to develop relations with Manitoba.

This is called leadership, Mr. Speaker. This is called leadership which this particular piece of paper calls about. We're already doing, and I'm saying, requesting all of the members here, enjoy what we are successfully doing and bring some positive, constructive suggestions that we can have.

I can guarantee, on behalf of my colleagues here, we will follow that, but ideas have to be doable, workable, and new ideas, not something which is five years old, their piece of paper. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): I welcome the opportunity to put a few words in support of this resolution from the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire). I think if we go back and you look at the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement, which was the first agreement that was in place, probably NAFTA, the North American free trade, would never have happened if it hadn't been that first. So, if you take that perspective back to Canada, here B.C. and Alberta have an agreement now. Why don't we build on that and build onto Manitoba?

I hear the government members talking about it has to be the federal government. It has to be the federal government, and I have a quote here from Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, who says, I am a fan of Alberta-B.C. agreement, and I urge other provinces to emulate it, and if they can, they should join it. Now that comes from the federal Finance Minister so where are we here in Manitoba? The government in Manitoba is saying, oh no, we can't do this. It has to be the feds. Goodness' sakes, we

wouldn't want to be ahead of ourselves and set up and be ahead of our time here instead.

Mr. Speaker, if Manitoba talks about being part of the Asia-Pacific trade corridor and a hub of transportation, that whole idea would gain that much more credibility if we actually did have trade agreements with Alberta and B.C., and Saskatchewan can decide on their own. It's okay to be a leader in these things. You don't always have to be a follower.

Manitoba is falling behind again because there is no leadership here to take this, and I don't know, I just sort of, as I was sitting here preparing my notes, I was thinking, well, maybe it's—we know how the Premier (Mr. Doer) flip-flopped on the free trade agreement, first of all coming out against it and then now, he's a wholehearted supporter of it, maybe he's taking direction or this government's taking their direction from unions and being afraid of taking this on.

I'm glad I just was able to get a few comments on the record about this, Mr. Speaker, and I hope we all can vote for this resolution. Thank you.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): It is indeed with interest that I listened to the members opposite and some of the comments that they are making with regard to internal trade. You have seen none of them came right out and said that they support TILMA, Mr. Speaker, but rant and rave about the free trade agreement and other issues.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that, although they say that Manitoba hasn't got internal trade, there is a tremendous amount of trade that is going on between the provinces and territories, and we want to continue to build on that. We can build on it if we would have a national trade agreement, and that is what this government has been working on. That's what the Council of Federations has been working on, looking at internal trade, and it has indeed been identified as a priority.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to touch on a couple of comments made by the—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have nine minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, we will recess and reconvene at 1:30 p.m

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 15, 2008

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<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>