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DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 25, 2008

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): I seek leave to proceed directly to debate on Bill 230.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for us to deal directly, go directly to Bill 230? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 230—The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen), that Bill 230, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act; Loi sur la responsabilité et la transparence en matière réglementaire, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Taillieu: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 230 and bring it before this Legislature to address some of the needs in small businesses, some of the difficulties that are encountered with regulations in small businesses and experienced by people that run those small businesses.

Why do we need this bill? Well, regulations, what are regulations? Regulations are simply red tape: the number of forms, permits, government information that's required to operate a business. Some are necessary of course; some are restrictive. Some are obsolete and some, in words of some of the businesses owners I've spoken to, are just downright dumb.

It's all of these, an accumulation of all of these kinds of regulations that restrict the small-business owners' ability to actually spend the time they need to do in doing their jobs rather than filling out a number of forms. This is the kind of thing that frustrates small-business owners. It's not one regulation, it's not one form, it's the accumulation of a multitude of regulations, and not any specific one,

and accumulation of the number of forms and things that they have to comply with.

In a survey of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 71 percent said yes when asked should the Manitoba government count, track and publicly report requirements by ministry. Mr. Speaker, 71 percent agree that this would be a good idea. Let's not forget that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business does represent 4,800 small- and medium-sized businesses in Manitoba.

The report also estimates that the annual cost of regulation on the Manitoba economy is \$864 million. That's because the amount of time taken away from productive time in doing business to make a living, that's the livelihood of small businesses, the amount of time that's actually required, the hours in a day, if you accumulate that and add that up and assign a dollar value to it, that's the value of the amount of time that's being wasted on having to comply with regulation. So imagine that you're a small-business owner and you have to spend 10 hours in every month having to fill out these forms.

I don't know if members opposite have had the opportunity to start a business right from the ground up. But I have, and I can tell you it's daunting when you start getting into: What do you need to do to start a small business? How do you get the forms? What forms do you need? What do you do with those forms when you fill them out? It's very frustrating as you're trying to start a business, especially if you're a one-person or two-person operation and you don't have the time. In fact, the business I started was a newspaper business, and that's very, very deadline orientated. Every single day is a deadline day. There's not a time in the day to comply with all the restrictions and all the regulations that need to be complied with. So that has to be taken home and done at the end of the day, and that, of course, is restrictive and it eats into your home and family life.

I spoke to some people, small-business owners this week from Winnipeg. They were very frustrated when their licence fees went up as much as 300 percent in one case. In another case, Juliana Pizza, for example, they were very frustrated that they were now classed as high-risk category because they prepared food on site. So their business licences

were going up. It's an accumulation of all of these things, and small-business owners don't necessarily differentiate between what's a federal regulation, a provincial regulation or a municipal regulation. So it's something that we all need to work on to reduce the regulatory burden. There are currently tens of thousands of provincial regulations in place in this province, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to say that this really is a non-partisan issue. It's reduction of paperwork, reduction of burden to small businesses. All across the country, governments of all stripes are looking at it. I just note from the Prosperity Restricted by Red Tape report, which is now three years old, but done by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, when you look at the accountability report card on political leadership, and let's remember that every province has different political leadership, but is there political leadership is the question. In B.C., yes; in Alberta, some. In Saskatchewan, well, this report says no, but now we know that Saskatchewan is on board, and I would like to speak to that in a minute. But Manitoba, it says no; Ontario, some; Québec, some; New Brunswick, yes; Nova Scotia, yes; Newfoundland, yes; Yukon, yes. So there are a number of provinces that are on board, wanting to look at this, as is the federal government. The federal government is setting a target of 20 percent reduction in red tape. Regulatory reform, started by the previous government and carried through into the now government—still the now government, even though we are in election mode.

* (10:10)

So there is political leadership and political will in other instances. I also just want to say that, in Saskatchewan, just on September 17, I'll just read it out to you: Advanced Education, Employment and Labour Minister, Rob Norris, and Enterprise and Innovation Minister, Lyle Stewart, will also be looking at a business—sorry, it's called the Regulatory Modernization Council. The business community and stakeholders in Saskatchewan will now have direct input in the province's regulatory reform process and business services improvement following the establishment of the Regulatory Modernization Council.

The Enterprise Saskatchewan Board identified establishment of this council as a high priority in enhancing Saskatchewan's business environment and growing the economy. So, at the very minimum, Mr. Speaker, we need to be looking at what is happening

in Saskatchewan. I think our Premier (Mr. Doer) has said in the past, we cannot be behind Saskatchewan. Here's one more example of where we are at this point, behind Saskatchewan in reform of regulation and regulatory reform.

What we need to do in Manitoba is look at something like this. As I said, it's a non-partisan issue, and I know that the current government has taken steps—BizPaL, TAXcess, I know are very good first steps toward this. I know that they're committed to this. We hope they will look at going that step further and supporting this bill because, Mr. Speaker, I just want to also say one of the most complained-about regulations in Manitoba is around Workers Compensation Board and provincial sales tax, just as an example of things that would need to be worked on, things people have to comply with and have to spend time on.

I know my time is running short here, Mr. Speaker, but I just want to also say we need to have the business-friendly climate in this province. We are developing a CentrePort Canada which is great and, with the development of an inland port, business will be locating here, which is great. That will stimulate entrepreneurial spirit, entrepreneurial growth, small businesses, but let's provide a climate where small business can operate, can concentrate on doing what they do best, working in their businesses, growing their business, employing people, and let's cut down the regulatory burden that they have to deal with.

I think everybody is in agreement. They'd like to have less red tape and less forms and papers to fill out. I think we could all agree with that. I really look forward to hearing what the members opposite have to say today and I look forward to them supporting this bill and moving forward with the reduction of red tape and regulatory reform in the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House Business

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business.

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is a resolution on Global Food Crisis, sponsored by the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with rule 31(9), it's been announced that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is a resolution on Global Food Crisis, sponsored by the honourable Member for Steinbach.

* * *

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): I'm glad that a number of us on this side of the House want to get up and talk about the government's record on improving the business climate in Manitoba. I'm pleased that we're moving forward on this. I'm pleased also to follow the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) because what's interesting is, she must have opened her business under the former government where there was lots of confusion, lots of red tape.

I'm pleased to see that when I was Minister of Industry we moved forward in leadership in the country on cutting the paperwork burden and reducing duplication of services. I was pleased to be Minister of Industry and stood beside Rona Ambrose, the Minister of Western Economic Diversification when she said Manitoba was a leader when we announced one of the first jurisdictions to do BizPaL. What BizPaL was—and it's nice to see that the Conservative government commended the Manitoba government for leading the initiative to move forward on the reduction of the paperwork burden. I thought that was very good because it was an important step. I'm sorry that the previous government did not take it.

I am pleased that, as a person who's opened many businesses in this province, I am pleased to see that we moved forward on BizPaL. BizPaL is wonderful because it doesn't take just one level of government. It takes three levels of governments and puts the regulations on that but, more importantly, when we went forward and moved forward on the paperwork burden we looked at it and we talked to small businesses. I'm pleased that the CFIB is here because what we did is we actually had conversations. We talked about the paperwork burden and what we did was we tried to figure out how to make it easier for businesses.

So the BizPaL and all the government forms we reviewed to see if there was duplication, we removed any duplication. Number 2 what we did was we made sure the forms could be saved on Google save. So the average person could save the forms and move forward on that very efficiently and submit the forms very effectively—with only the needed

information. We made sure that what we did was we talked to businesses to make sure that the forms were efficient and understandable and readable and non-duplicating and when they were, we removed them.

We also looked at other things that would save time and effort. We would evaluate whether the regulations were necessary or not and remove unnecessary regulations. The member opposite keeps on confusing the difference between regulation and red tape. One of the keys is, regulation is necessary to protect food supply. I know the member opposite might not want to protect the food supply. We do, and we want to make sure that restaurants do have health inspections. We want to make sure that the food is safe. We want to make sure there's proper workplace and health and safety standards. They may not. We do believe in that and we also believe in making sure that there is some regulation.

Now, we know from the States there may be some results from not having any regulation. We believe that there should be some reasonable regulation. That's all. We're talking about health and safety. We're talking about issues that are important to all Manitobans and not just the workers but also the employers. So what we want to do is make sure that there's good regulation but also effective regulation.

The member opposite talked about business-friendly climate. I am pleased that when I set up my first business in the '90s, in Manitoba, I worked through all the bureaucratic things. I, as Minister of Industry, made sure that there was less—far less—bureaucracy. I made sure that there's no wrong door when you come get government assistance. So whether you come into the Manitoba Canada business centre, you can come in anywhere. You can come in on a GO Centre. You can get assistance. You can get mentorship. You can get support. You can get all that sort of stuff, and that's important. But more importantly, what we wanted to do is make sure that we do have a business-friendly climate. I'm proud of the fact that, under the former Conservative government, where we were the highest-taxed jurisdiction for small- and medium-sized business in the country—the highest in the country, under the Conservatives—I'm pleased to see that now we're the lowest.

I'm pleased to see that because if you look at the economy, the drivers of growth are small- and medium-sized business and I'm glad to see that,

under this government, we've moved forward from, under the Conservatives the highest taxed, under us, the lowest taxed. Under us, a lot of promotion of small business and medium-sized business through the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, through a lot of these composite innovation centres, a lot of the very positive groups, we've worked together with small and medium-sized business to make sure that they can grow. I'm not saying that we did everything perfectly, but we are working with our partners to grow the economy. So, I'm pleased on that. I agree that the paperwork burden is a non-partisan issue. So we've moved forward on that.

* (10:20)

Other examples. The fact that we're doing business on-line. I know that under the former government, they believed in supporting Canada Post and mailing out all of these forms, and filling out the forms, and mailing them back, and making sure that they do this. I understand they'd like that because it's the old way of doing business. I am pleased to see we brought us into the 20th century and started delivering services and projects and reports on-line. So you can get support on-line. You can get it and send it at any time, and that's positive. So, whether you use the Internet to find out—pay your taxes any time, that's good.

I know I'm a morning person. I like to get up early and fill out forms. I can do it and, rather than work from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. under the former government, we believe that people can fill out their forms when they choose. I think that it's very, very important that taxes—the information is now on-line through TAXcess program. A lot of people can fill it out like that.

The elimination of the sales tax filing requirements for 5,000 home-based businesses was important. The fact that we're actually talking to other levels of government to make sure there's not duplication of services is important. The fact that just on-line—it was funny because when the member opposite started talking about setting up on-line business, one of the things I'm really proud of is that I set up my first business and I had the wrong name. I had a name that was claimed by somebody else in Québec. So then I had to apply for another name. Oops, sorry, that was applied for by someone in Alberta. So, by the third time I had given them \$40 the first time, \$40 the second time, I waited two months, thank you very much. Now if a person wants to set up a business, they go to the Canada Manitoba

small business centre. They can register on-line, they can find out if anyone has that name on-line, and they can put it in that day. It's a very effective way of setting up a business. You don't have to worry about—it's a saving of time, effort and frustration and it's very effective. It was something that our government did. We didn't do it to get this huge, huge headline. It was done in co-operation with small businesses solving a wonderful long-term problem that we solved with a very small step.

I think what you have to do is—I know that the Fraser Institute or CFIB want to continue down this road and we want to work with them because what we want to do is we want to be a jurisdiction that cares about small business. I think by continuing to emphasize a number of improvements across the board is important. I think what we want to do is we want to be a business-friendly government. I'm proud that under our leadership we've made a number of steps. I know, from the member opposite, we do agree on one thing, and that is we need to continue down this road, and we will continue down this road. But I am pleased that we took the steps, steps they hadn't done prior, and steps that we're moving forward in.

But I do reiterate, there's a huge difference between cutting red tape and getting rid of all regulation, and we believe some regulation is necessary for health, safety, and we know what happened in the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. We want to make sure that our food is safe, and that does require some regulation. So I do believe that we do differ in that, where I believe that we do need some basic standards, the members opposite may not do that.

So we will continue down this road, and I am pleased that I'll be followed by the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan), who will continue to go over some of the projects that we've moved forward in because it does make a difference.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): I certainly would like to support the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) for Bill 230, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act.

I would just like to remind the minister that there's a huge difference between cutting the ribbon and cutting the red tape. That comes from actually running a business and knowing what the difference is.

Just as an example, right off the top, we have the education tax on property. You pay the tax, you apply for the rebate. Why not just do it at source? It would be so simple, but apparently—

An Honourable Member: Got to fund the bureaucracy.

Mr. Pedersen: But maybe we want to keep the bureaucracy funded there or keep jobs for the bureaucracy. That is just a glaring example of how we could do.

The other point I would certainly want to emphasize, we do not want to cut regulations in terms of health and safety for Manitobans. Those are vitally important. We support those. Those are necessary.

But there are so many other regulations that we could make much easier; loosen the burden on small-business owners. Small-business owners just spend a tremendous amount of their time, and I have experience of this from running my own business, about how much time you spend each month doing regulations. Regulations cover the gamut between municipal, provincial and federal and we realize that you have to have some regulations in there. But what we're asking here is to streamline these and try to take out the redundant regulations, the overbearing regulations that really inhibit small-business owners from doing their day-to-day work.

Recently I was part of a meeting where we met with a group of West End BIZ owners. They certainly were sharing their frustration about more regulations, fees going up, just out of control. They felt that regulations and fees were out of control, and they were feeling very frustrated. While they were not talking specifically about all provincial, there were some City of Winnipeg regulations, the federal regulations with GST et cetera, but there are things that the Manitoba government could be doing there.

They revised the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission surcharges. I know that I've had discussions with the minister on this, but what this has done is it's put an extra burden and an extra cost to small-business owners with these revised surcharges.

What businesses are asking is just to streamline these and get rid of the redundant ones so that we can be more competitive with other jurisdictions, whether it's within the province. We know that small businesses face a much higher cost in terms of spending time on government regulations.

Small-business owners versus the large—if I can call them the box stores because of their size, and it affects the competitiveness of these small-business owners.

What the Province needs to be doing is doing their utmost to make sure that these small businesses are in fact competitive and keep them here because they are so vital to our economy. Bill 230 actually sets out some requirements, and it requires the government to develop formal procedures to make the process of enacting regulations more transparent. It also requires government departments to develop regulatory reform plans to eliminate unnecessary regulations and to encourage restraint in making new regulations. Both the government procedures and department plans must be made public. It's all about becoming transparent.

Within three months after this act comes into force, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) must establish a baseline measurement for the current number of regulations against which progress towards regulatory reform can be measured. Again, we're asking for measurements.

It reminds me of the discussion on Bill 17. There's no measurement in Bill 17.

What we're asking here is for measured regulatory reform. The Minister of Justice must develop a policy that requires all proposals for new regulations to include the following: An assessment of the need of the proposed regulation, with a view to avoiding duplication; An analysis of alternatives—we can always look for alternatives rather than creating more regulations. We're asking that the policy have a study of economic impact on the proposed regulations, including an analysis on its effect on provincial competitiveness and how compliance costs can be minimized.

* (10:30)

We must remain competitive. We must try to remain competitive with other provinces. We are not competitive with other provinces for many of our regulations right now, and the purpose of this bill would be to try and create the level playing field for all small businesses within Canada.

They're also asking that confirmation that public consultation has occurred. We need an estimate of the time and the cost required for implementation. What we're asking for in this bill is an ongoing review for relevancy of the proposed regulation through an inclusion of a sunset clause and, one year

after this act comes into force, each minister must develop and publicize a three-regulatory-reform plan for his or her department that establishes the regulatory-reform targets to ensure that only essential regulations are enacted and to work toward reducing the number of new regulations.

It also would provide for a comprehensive review of existing regulations to identify and eliminate unnecessary regulations. It's all about streamlining. It's like making government work like small business—efficiently and with the least cost.

This summer, I was at the CPA conference. There was talk about reducing regulations and comparison between different provinces, and I listened to the Speaker of the Alberta Legislature. In Alberta, they actually have a committee of MLAs that looks into regulations to see whether they are current, whether they are redundant, whether they're still needed. Apparently, this committee spends an awful lot of time on this.

I can only imagine how much time we could spend in Manitoba, because this has not been done to date to my knowledge. Certainly the government can tell me if they have undertaken this, to bring out, to review the regulations we have on the books right now. It would be a good signal to small business and to all business in Manitoba if the government would actually undertake this.

Mr. Speaker, what we're asking is that the government take a lead here in regulatory reform. Manitoba needs some leadership with collaboration with the private sector, because we can always have help from the private sector on this. The government needs to sit down and figure out how processes can be streamlined, how they can make it more efficient and how regulatory burden can be reduced.

Given the talk about CentrePort, the bill that's going through the House right now, one of the first questions that businesses will ask when they propose to come to CentrePort is: What are your burdens? What are your regulations? What kind of regulations do we have to meet?

Unless this government is willing to send out the signal that they are interested in attracting business and being competitive with other businesses, CentrePort businesses just may not look to come, to be a part of CentrePort, if they realize that this government is not serious about reducing regulatory burdens.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the government sees fit to support this bill, and it will go a long ways to helping small business in Manitoba.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise and to speak about this bill. I listened carefully to the speech of the MLA for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) and the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen), and I know the Member for Morris would like to say this should be a non-partisan issue but it clearly is. The Member for Morris, unfortunately, does not understand the difference between regulation and red tape.

I think we can actually agree. I think every member of this House could agree that the government does have a responsibility to continue to improve and reduce the level of red tape. I think that's understood and I will talk about what our government has done to reduce red tape. But to suggest that regulation and red tape are the same thing is actually to, I would say, minimize—to put it another way, perhaps show the Conservative members' view of the role of government. Indeed, we do have extensive regulations and Workplace Safety and Health. We have extensive regulations to protect our water supply. We have extensive regulations to protect our food supply, and certainly, there are extensive regulations for employers to comply with Workers Compensation. Well, if that's what the Member for Morris is getting after, then I suppose we are guilty as charged, because this government believes that Manitobans are entitled to live in a safe province, to have a safe water supply, to have a safe food supply, to be safe whether they're self-employed or they're going to work. So we don't apologize for having regulations in place that protect Manitobans.

Having said that, I believe that we can agree with many of the things that the Member for Morris said and even what the Member for Carman has said, that there should be a focus on reducing red tape, and I'm very pleased to stand today and talk about some of the efforts that this government has made, is making, and will continue to make to ensure that our province remains in the competitive position that it enjoys.

Despite the doom and gloom that's spread around by the members on the other side, the fact is that Manitoba is performing extremely well as an economy, both internally and also in comparison with other provinces. For example, I will say,

Mr. Speaker, that businesses—[interjection] well, I hear the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) wants to join the debate, and that's great. I'm hoping that when he gets up on his feet, he will make sure he reminds this House that capital investment in this province, private capital investment is going up by 22 percent this year, year over year, which not only demonstrates that businesses are voting with their feet and coming to Manitoba and expanding in Manitoba, but shows that the business climate in this province is stronger than just about every other province in Canada.

I'm sure the Member for Ste. Rose also realizes that employment continues to grow in this province. I'm sure he's aware that full-time employment continues to grow in this province at a rate high above the national average. I'm sure he's a good man—he will be happy about that. As well, he will also be aware that construction work is booming across the province of Manitoba as, again, public enterprises but also private businesses make investments in the stable, healthy climate that we have in this province.

Now, our focus certainly is on cutting red tape to make it that much easier for businesses who, as I say, are voting with their feet. They're voting with their investments here in this province, and we want to improve service delivery and accessibility. We want to make it easier so they're accessible as much as possible through a single call, a single visit to one government office and not a runaround to four or five offices or certainly, increasingly, by clicking on a Web site and being able to access an entire range of services.

We believe that you don't accomplish efficiency by some counting exercise, which apparently is what the Member for Morris would want. The thing that you need to do is to have a service-based delivery. We'll take our lead from what business is telling us and particularly what small business is telling us. We've done that in this province, but at the same time we're going to maintain the protection for our citizens and our environment. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, it's a balance which is working very, very well for the citizens and businesses in Manitoba.

I have delivered the message to the CFIB, to business groups, to individual businesses, that if there are particular problems with licences, particular problems with permits, that they need to let us know that, not a general statement as the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) has made and, to a large

extent, the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen), that there's too much regulation. If there is a particular problem that is posing an obstacle, my department and any other department in this government is quite prepared to sit down to listen to what business or citizens have to say and to improve those services to make sure that we are being as efficient as possible.

* (10:40)

I listened carefully to the Member for Morris, and she had a complaint about the Workers Compensation Board which has the lowest premiums in the entire country. I listened carefully and I listened carefully to the Member for Carman, and he mentioned the West End BIZ and Juliana Pizza, which is having a problem with the new City regime which has been put into place. I didn't hear him say anything, save one comment that the Member for Carman made, which is about the Manitoba Liquor Commission. Indeed, I have discussed this matter with the Member for Carman. In fact, he asked a the question in the House last session, and I confirmed that the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission took away a 2 percent supplementary fee, and instead increased fees to actually cover their costs.

The net result of that change is going to be over a quarter of a million extra dollars going back to licensees across the province. But there was one fee which did increase, and that was the late fee because we believe that if a business cannot have an appropriate reminder system, and can't be bothered to send in its annual registration on time, if an MLCC employee has to spend their time and their effort just to get that company to comply, there should be a charge which covers the actual additional costs. We don't think that's unreasonable. In all honesty, I don't think the Member for Carman thinks that's unreasonable, anyway. That was the only item that either member has been able to mention in their speeches telling us about regulations.

Now, let's get back to how we rank across the provinces. The Fraser Institute is not an institution with which I share a great ideological similarity. I don't know how the Fraser Institute does their calculations, but they did a review, they did a report in 2007 called the Canadian Provincial Investment Climate. However they do their numbers, they determined that Manitoba was actually the third best in the entire country on red tape costs. They didn't count the number of regulations. They examined the actual impact of red tape and, in fact, they ranked

Manitoba third best behind only Alberta and Newfoundland.

We will certainly continue to do better, but the Fraser Institute has done their thing and they actually say that Manitoba ranks very well. Again, I don't agree with them on everything they do. If the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) wants to pick apart their analysis, she can certainly do so, but I didn't hear anything in her comments, and I didn't hear anything in the comments of the Member for Carman.

Let's talk about what we've actually done in a concrete example. The on-line BizPaL service is a tremendous resource to assist businesses to become as efficient as possible, to be able to expand or create their businesses. It's a one-stop shop. A business owner can go on-line, and within a matter of minutes determine what its requirements are. Indeed, we work closely with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They're a strong supporter of BizPaL, and indeed they've made comments, and they consider it to be a key part of the solution to reducing and eliminating red tape. And indeed, they've been quite prepared to say that publicly.

BizPaL is up and running in Brandon, Winnipeg, Morden, Thompson, Winkler and the R.M. of Stanley. If the members can hold their breath, I'm sure we'll be rolling out BizPaL in a number of other communities across Manitoba. Currently, it provides service to approximately 64 percent of Manitoba's population. More municipalities are ready to launch in the near future, and others are collecting their license and permit data to allow this to happen, and in our budget 2007, we committed to continue to expand this award-winning service.

So, Mr. Speaker, my time is running short. There are so many more things I could say. There are so many more statistics I could pull out, real numbers of real businesses, investing real dollars here in the province. I don't have time to do that. I could speak more about the benefits and the things that we are doing to reduce red tape, but let me just say that on this side, we balance the need to reduce red tape with the interest of protecting our citizens, something for which I and no other member of this government need apologize. Thank you very much.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): It is indeed a privilege for me to rise this morning to participate in debate of private member's Bill 230, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act, as brought to the Chamber by the honourable

Member for Morris. I'd like to congratulate her for bringing forward this legislation. To this point in time, I have not heard any contrary remarks to the legislation, and so I'm looking forward to this legislation going on to committee.

Although there has been commentary by government members of how wonderful Manitoba's economy is performing and how their government has been responsible for that performance. Well, Mr. Speaker, one can cherry-pick all they want and select small points from a very large ledger sheet and say how wonderful one is doing, but the bottom line, and indeed I am a bottom-line person, when you get to that bottom line, each and every year of this government's performance, or reign, has resulted in this province receiving a greater amount of transfer payments from the federal government.

Every year, we receive more transfer payments, and I know there're government members that are starting to chuckle and think that's a good thing. Well, that is in their own terminology and that's why they believe that they are doing so well is because they really don't understand. Transfer payments come from other provinces that are performing better with their economy. Also involved in the formula is the overall—*[interjection]* It's based upon what is required by a province to bring their programming to a minimum standard.

There are two components. There are transfer payments and then there's equalization. Transfer payments are basically to keep the provinces up to national standards in health and education, and we are having to receive more and more of those because we, as a province, obviously, are not keeping pace with other jurisdictions around the nation in order to maintain a minimum standard of health care and of education.

Then there are equalization payments. That's when you really get into the nitty-gritty of the performance of an economy because that's where you evaluate the average citizen of a province's income. If that income is less than the national average, then we, as a province, receive equalization payments. Those equalization payments as well have been increasing year over year over year. In fact, right now, the Province of Manitoba, 36 percent of the provincial budget comes from other provinces. More than one-third of what this government spends on an annual basis has to be provided into our economy, or our government coffers, by other working Canadians elsewhere in the nation.

That is absolutely so embarrassing to me as a Manitoban but, across the way, the New Democratic members believe that is something they're very proud of. All that you want to speak about and if you want to cherry-pick here and there and say that you're doing well in small little areas, but I would say that you should go to the bottom line and then really truly evaluate your success.

Now, the honourable Minister for Science and Technology stood up, and it was with great accolades from other government members that the minister is a businessperson. Well, indeed, he is engaged in a business and a quite successful business, at that, so the compliments are definitely there to the minister. However, if one really gets into a business which is conducted in a retail sector and has to have an off-premise location, that's when you really get into an awareness of what government asks of oneself to carry on business. There is again the minister of trade and training saying that there's two different things between regulation and red tape. Well, regulation spawns red tape because when you pass a regulation, then you inherently have red tape in order to be in compliance with the regulations.

I'll just give an example of if a farmer wanted to keep in compliance with all of the regulations this government's put forward in manure management, for instance. There are regulations about the water quality that comes from the farmer's operations and landholdings, but there are also regulations as to how the nutrients are applied to the land. There are regulations as to how those nutrients are stored. There are regulations as to how those nutrients are conveyed.

* (10:50)

Why all the regulations? Why not just go to the bottom line? If the farmer is polluting the groundwater, then charge the individual for doing so. Why do you have to have each regulation? Because if he's polluting the groundwater, obviously he is not in compliance with any of the other regulations before that. You just go to the bottom line and charge the individual for the infraction on the polluter. You don't need all of the other rules and regulations because, obviously, if one is broken over here, the other one is going to be broken over there. So what's the necessity of the others?

I have to chuckle at the Minister of Conservation's (Mr. Struthers) shock when in fact an engineered manure storage facility was constructed, and the farmer actually increased the specifications

of his manure storage facility by lining it with a little extra—actually in this case it was concrete, not just an impervious clay liner. They wanted to go one better. They did a little bit more landscaping, so they made sure that if there was any possibility of overtopping with a violent rainstorm, for instance, they put an extra catchment basin, and all that.

You know what this government did? They ended up fining that farmer for overbuilding the specifications that the government had prescribed. He went above and beyond, and he got fined for going above and beyond. Then you think about all the time, effort, court charges and legal costs. Because he did a better job? That's what this government's all about.

I'll just say about an operation—my time is already running short, Mr. Speaker, and I haven't even begun to talk about this government.

I am a small-business owner, and we have a retail shop. The other day a government employee came in, and his car is sagging in the back, but he runs into the shop, and he declares himself as the government inspector of audiovisual tapes, that this government has a regulation that if it doesn't have a Manitoba sticker on it for approval, then he is going to confiscate. He is so proud that he's now got over 1,500 tapes in his car—DVDs and tapes and everything—because they didn't have Manitoba stickers on.

Do you realize, Mr. Speaker, we are the only province, the only province in Canada, that has a separate regulatory body that has to put a sticker on an audiovisual tape here in the province of Manitoba. Anywhere else in Canada, once you have had that inspection and you've been rated as to the audience which that tape can be viewed by, it's all across Canada, except here in Manitoba, because this government believes that we've got a different set of standards. We're a cut above. Our nose is a little higher in attitude than any other place in Canada. We know better here in Manitoba. So, this government is around collecting all the tapes.

You know what it's done to business here in Manitoba? Now, because we are a small market, as it pertains to the overall national market, we don't get to see all those tapes—

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

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this bill brought forward by my

colleague from Morris. I always enjoy listening to the great titans of industry in the Conservative caucus. They have this belief of buying high and selling low. They bought a money-losing gas company, and they sold the money-making telephone company. So we certainly don't need any lessons from the members of the Conservative caucus, Mr. Speaker. But it's a good debate to get into, about regulations, deregulations, when we're watching what's happening down in the United States. We watched it happen to the financial industry, the housing industry, the mortgage industry in the United States—capitalism unfettered, unregulated capitalism—and now we see the poor person in the United States being asked by the Bush administration to bail it out at the cost of \$700 billion.

Mr. Speaker, now we have a conservative Republican saying, this is socialism, down in the United States. You have the Democrats—everybody, they're questioning whether or not we should even engage in this kind of a debate and force the American people to bail out these companies, these companies that for years were unregulated, which racked up huge debts, gave mortgages to individuals at zero percent down payment. They subsidized the mortgages for a number of years and then they abandoned these individuals. They gave them mortgages of \$200,000 to people on minimum wages.

This is what deregulation does to you, and it's coming back to haunt the American economy. Because of the American mistake, because of George Bush allowing deregulation, now he could potentially drag down the Canadian economy as well.

That's a fear for all of us but, fortunately, we seem to be in—I give credit to our colleagues in government that Manitoba is still doing well. We're still doing well on the economic front, and I think one only has to look at the business section of the *Free Press* and I quote from the—I think this was September 9 and the headline is "Building booming in Manitoba."

The Conservatives all like to say, well, it's all public sector which, we're proud of that. We're proud of the public-sector investments that our government is making, whether it's in hospitals, whether it's in highways, whether it's in the new ER hospital—the new ER expansion in Portage. I didn't hear the Member for Portage criticizing the new ER he's getting in his community, Mr. Speaker, or the new

overpass that was built in his area there or Highway 75 that's being built through Morris.

I didn't hear the members criticizing that as they see the provincial economy is booming in this province. I think all of us should be quite proud of that. I know I am, Mr. Speaker, but the issue of regulation accountability I think is important. As was mentioned by the minister in his Speech from the Throne, we have announced that our government will lead a campaign to reduce red tape in government and focus on the creation of a single-window service for business. I think the members of the Conservative caucus don't recognize that regulations are different than red tape.

We're supportive of the concept of cutting red tape, but it's the government's responsibility to ensure the health and safety of the people in Manitoba, especially when it comes to regulations for workplace health and safety, and obviously those are important, that we maintain regulation for those industries.

Mr. Speaker, so while it's important that we agree that there needs to be some regulatory changes and that business—we are very supportive of businesses and we recognize that business needs to prosper in this province, but there's also a need for certain regulations. I know the Conservatives are very supportive of limiting all regulations but we don't want to jeopardize the health of Manitobans or jeopardize the workplace by making the workplace unsafe, although as I said we're supportive of some of the things. We're in favour and we have eliminated the sales-tax-filing requirement for up to 5,000 home-based businesses and we've reduced the sales-tax filing requirement for up to 25,000 small businesses.

So 25,000 small businesses now don't have to file or we reduced their sales-tax filing requirements—

* (11:00)

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

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 21—Promoting Manitoba as an Inland Port

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., we will now move on to resolutions, and we will deal with Resolution 21, Promoting Manitoba as an Inland Port.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), the resolution promoting Manitoba as an inland port.

WHEREAS cities and provinces rise and fall based on their place in the flow of international trade; and

WHEREAS existing North American seaports are congested and increasingly inefficient; and

WHEREAS governments in countries such as China are making massive investments in ports with a view toward capturing a larger share of economic activity in transportation, trade, logistics, manufacturing and distribution; and

WHEREAS the government of Canada has recognized both the opportunities and threats associated with these developments; and

WHEREAS the government of Canada has accordingly allocated over \$1 billion for the creation of inland ports in Canada; and

WHEREAS historically Winnipeg has been the gateway to the west, and the development of an inland port in Manitoba has the potential to make Manitoba the gateway to the world; and

WHEREAS Manitoba has the geographic location and existing road, rail and air links that make it the most desirable location in Canada for an inland port; and

WHEREAS there are other provinces, notably Alberta and Saskatchewan, that have expressed a desire to develop a prairie inland port and are pursuing this opportunity more aggressively than Manitoba; and

WHEREAS Manitoba is viewed as a threat by these jurisdictions who have criticized Manitoba in their communications to the federal government, meaning that the Province of Manitoba needs to be equally aggressive or risk the loss of this historic opportunity; and

WHEREAS federal decisions are in part based on the expressed priorities of provincial governments and imminent federal decisions have created

urgency, which means that the time for action is now; and

WHEREAS inaction by the Province of Manitoba could result in a lost opportunity that could cost our province thousands of jobs over several generations; and

WHEREAS the establishment in Manitoba of the leading inland port in western Canada could create tremendous opportunities and be a step toward restoring Manitoba as a have province.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider making it a priority to take a leadership role co-ordinating efforts of industry, the City of Winnipeg, the Rural Municipality of Rosser, the Winnipeg Airports Authority and potential investors to develop and advance a proposal to locate Canada's inland port in Manitoba, establishing our province as a gateway to the world.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Member for Carman, seconded by the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden,

WHEREAS cities and—dispense? Dispense.

Mr. Pedersen: I am certainly happy to lead off discussion today, and I can tell by the government's enthusiasm here that they're going to support this resolution. The importance of CentrePort Canada cannot be overestimated. This has the potential to make Manitoba a have province, to lose our welfare status and to really propel us into the transportation age in the future here. It's something that we on this side of the House have been talking about for years.

We're glad to see the government has moved ahead with CentrePort Canada, Bill 47. We know the committee is meeting tonight and we look forward to participating in committee, and to bringing it back to the House for speedy passage.

I would like to remind the government this is not a photo op. We need positive action on this. This is not just to have the smiling faces in front of the camera, say this, and then move on to something else. This takes a great deal of commitment out of this government. We have the commitment on this side of the House to proceed with this.

We know that there are private-sector proponents who are driving this project to make CentrePort a reality. The Winnipeg Airports Authority, the R.M. of Rosser, the City of Winnipeg, numerous private businesses are all on board with this, and we really do have the opportunity to take advantage of our natural geographic position in North America. There have been some other announcements which have been related to CentrePort. We have the vision, now we need to make it the reality. We really need the government of the day to get behind this and get on with it.

There's been some tie-in financing with this, so it's already been announced. With the Port of Churchill—the financing coming through for the Port of Churchill for the OmniTRAX rail line, Inkster Boulevard, the twinning of Inkster Boulevard and the Port of Emerson and Highway 75, but that really is just—although it's a tremendous amount of money, that really is just a start of this process.

We need, as a province, to push on the federal government. We will certainly be happy to talk to that federal Conservative majority after October 14. Regardless of what happens through the federal election, we will have a federal government that we need to be able to push on them to make sure that Winnipeg, that CentrePort, is the location of choice for an inland port in Canada.

As was mentioned in the resolution, there has been a great deal of work happening in Edmonton, Regina and Saskatoon. Those provinces realized what is at stake here and they've been very aggressive in pushing forward their own cause. We as opposition have been somewhat concerned about the lack of drive, the lack of position taken by this government until now, and the leadership taken by this government. With Bill 47, we hope that this is the start, that they will get behind.

There are a number of private businesses who have solid business plans to go forward. As we just finished discussing Bill 230, about regulations, we also know that that is part and parcel of this CentrePort too. We need to make sure that our regulations are not overbearing, that we can attract potential businesses to CentrePort because we don't have an overbearing regulatory government here.

As I mentioned, we need to make sure that the R.M. of Rosser is involved in this. They have a large portion of the land which is being talked about for

CentrePort. Hopefully this government will be involved and have the R.M. of Rosser be involved in this.

Another important part of an inland port is the creation of a free or foreign trade zone. That becomes vitally important to this. The idea of a foreign trade zone is very simply so that products can move into this CentrePort, can be imported in here and the tax regime on it will not take effect until it moves out towards its destination.

* (11:10)

I worry about this because we know how this government has a penchant for spending. We don't want to see them putting up obstacles, putting up taxes in place so that it wouldn't work in terms of creating this foreign trade zone. This is an initiative that has to happen through the federal government, but we want the Province to make sure that they are on side with this first. We've had no clear message out of the Province that they really are in favour of a foreign trade zone. That is what is key to making this not just successful but very successful, because it has such a potential for CentrePort. I noticed the other day in mid-October the federal government will start formal negotiations on a free trade zone with the European Union, and it'll certainly be interesting to hear the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan) whether they're in favour of a free trade zone, a free trade agreement with the European Union, labour mobility and all that will come in there. Well, it just wouldn't be fair if I didn't mention that I hope they send Scott Smith over there to be involved in it.

There will be huge community impacts. There will be huge community impacts from this CentrePort development, and again we need consultation in terms of air traffic, rail lines, highways. There are some fairly elaborate plans for bypasses around Headingley, around St. Norbert, Morris, and we need to have the communities involved in this as these plans come forward. We know that Greyhound and Canada Post are already relocating to the airport, where right away we're going to be into increased traffic out of there. What is the plan or do they have a plan? This is what we're asking: Where is a concrete long-term plan? And make sure that they get out to the general public to make sure the public knows about what's going on.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other main concerns has come forward, and this government really does need

to address this, but we have already heard back that potential investors, companies that want to come to CentrePort, one of the first questions they ask is: What is the tax regime? What are the regulations? And when they mention a payroll tax, this is a huge disincentive for them to come here. We know that taxes are what make the world go round, and you're going to have to pay taxes, but you must, you must be competitive with other jurisdictions. The payroll tax does not make us competitive with other jurisdictions.

So I see my time has run out already. We want clear commitment, and in debating this resolution, we would like to hear some clear commitments come out of this government as to how they will move forward with CentrePort and how they will make CentrePort become a reality for Manitoba. This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance for Manitoba to move ahead with some very constructive private enterprise investment that will help bring Manitoba forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As a minister in the government, a representative of the Crown, very seldom do you ever get an opportunity to bring something forward that is so profound and has the possibility to change what has happened within the province, and I believe the CentrePort, our inland port, has that ability to change Manitoba, to bring us back to where we should be as a leader, quite frankly as a hub.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, the government recently introduced The CentrePort Canada Act. This new legislation is part of the government's economic agenda and marks a significant step forward in developing our new inland port. The CentrePort Canada Act is a result of the Premier's (Mr. Doer) leadership and productive partnerships with municipal business and community leaders. Together we are working as one community to build a stronger economy in Manitoba and attract new jobs, investments in our inland port. We believe in building relationships, friendships and partnerships. Allow me to list the organizations that contributed to the work on the inland port thus far: Premier's Economic Advisory Committee, the Business Council of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Airports Authority, the City of Winnipeg, the R.M. of Rosser, the Manitoba Federation of Labour, the Manitoba International Gateway Council, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Manitoba Chambers of

Commerce, Destination Winnipeg, Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, Manitoba Trucking Association, CN, CP, Burlington Northern Santa Fe and CME.

Mr. Speaker, the government has listened to these partners to create the vision and plan for this inland port. The inland port is the new centre of transportation, manufacture and warehousing on 20,000 acres of land around this James Armstrong Richardson International Airport.

Mr. Speaker, it is the new infrastructure that connects and integrates our intermodal transportation system—planes, trains, trucks, ships, from the Port of Churchill to the Emerson border to the Pacific gateway. It is the new international trade route for goods, travelling via Manitoba to the United States, China, Europe, the Americas and across Canada.

It is working with the companies to create and assemble new products in Manitoba that can be exported to global markets. Mr. Speaker, it is about creating new jobs for our growing and educated workforce.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. The government continues to call on all members of this House to pass The CentrePort Canada Act as soon as possible during the session. Join with us. I ask the members opposite: Will you support The CentrePort Canada Act?

Mr. Speaker, the resolution before us today is positive; it provides another opportunity to share ideas about our inland port. However, I feel it's a responsibility to correct the members opposite because the resolution they present is behind the times. The facts are incorrect on a number of fronts, and I'll go through a few of them.

Firstly, as I indicated earlier, the government is working with its partners—the City of Winnipeg and Mayor Katz, the R.M. of Rosser with Ms. Bourgouin as their reeve, Winnipeg Airports Authority with Barry Rempel and other partners such as the Business Council of Manitoba, the Manitoba Federation of Labour, the Heavy Construction Association and a number of organizations that I mentioned previously. All are partners of Manitoba's in the inland port. They have encouraged and endorsed the inland port.

As published in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, following the introduction of The CentrePort Canada

Act, Dave Angus, president of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, stated: We see this inland port as the best economic opportunity for our province.

As well, Barry Rempel, the president, chief executive officer of the Winnipeg Airports Authority, said: We are pleased the inland port is being developed in conjunction with the airport lands.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the government is moving promptly and immediately. That is why new legislation has been introduced and why all members are being asked to pass this legislation urgently.

Government action was also clear this week when my colleague made the announcement of a Business Call program which will benefit from the \$50,000 provincial investment; also the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce invested in this Business Call program.

Thirdly, when it comes to comparisons with Alberta and Saskatchewan, Manitoba is succeeding. We have our own vision and plan for an inland port. This builds on our significant transportation assets that other jurisdictions do not have. Manitoba already is connected to east and west by rail, to the U.S. and Mexico to the south of us by rail and truck, to the north by rail and sea, the Port of Churchill, and around the world by our 24-hour airport.

I would caution the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, when they make accusations and use misleading information about the position of other jurisdictions. I'm concerned that the members opposite are trying to isolate Manitoba when our government is trying to connect Manitoba to new economic opportunities.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, there is not a threatening relationship between different jurisdictions working on different inland ports as suggested in the resolution. In fact, we are focussed on making our inland port succeed, with the understanding that improved economic activity will create jobs in Manitoba and could also further strengthen the economy of western Canada. We are not about dividing and conquering, like many of the different issues presented by members opposite in the province of Manitoba. We are looking at working with western Canada to benefit all of us.

Fourthly, with regard to the federal funding, the members opposite are incorrect by claiming that

there's a billion-dollar federal fund for an inland port. This is, quite frankly, not true. However, given the need for federal funding for our inland port, our government and our business leaders are united to work to secure new federal investments that will build infrastructure and enable international trade in our inland port.

To be more specific, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba business leaders and officials met with the feds and federal officials regarding inland ports, before the federal election. This is a positive and productive dialogue, and we know, after the next election, we'll work with whatever federal government is in place to ensure that we move ahead on our inland port.

Fifthly, as outlined in The CentrePort Canada Act, the government is working with business and community leaders to establish CentrePort Canada, a new private-sector-focus corporation. This will be our primary point of contact and a one-stop shop for Manitoba's inland port. This name, CentrePort Canada Inc., has been endorsed by the business and community leaders and members, and we're confident that, pending passage of legislation and a strong board of directors, we'll move quickly to market our inland port and new investment.

* (11:20)

Mr. Speaker, The CentrePort Canada Act and our inland port are good news for Manitoba. Our government is committed to the inland port and to making meaningful incremental progress. I would like to thank all of our partners and business leaders, the mayor of Winnipeg, the reeve of Rosser, for their ongoing co-operation in this initiative. Mayor Katz has been a very, very strong supporter, as has Ms. Bourguin, the reeve of Rosser.

And, as I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with them to build on our history as a transportation hub and secure a long-lasting successful inland port far into the future. As well, I believe that the opposition recognizes that the inland port is a shared priority, and I want to acknowledge any efforts that the members opposite make to advance Manitoba's inland port.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we are confident that our inland port will deliver results for Manitoba, and we'll call on all members of this House to support the government's legislation and our Premier's (Mr. Doer) leadership on the inland port. From Latvia to Lorette, Murmansk to Morden, Rotterdam to Russell, Brandon to Beijing,

Lac du Bonnet to London, Emerson to Europe, Portage la Prairie to Paris, Rome to Roblin, Manitoba's beginnings, Manitoba was recognized as the gateway to western Canada. With CentrePort Canada, this will make us the gateway to North America and the gateway to the world. Thank you very much.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak to the resolution put forward by the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen), promoting Manitoba's inland port.

I was pleased to hear the Minister of Infrastructure put his comments on the record on the commitment of government that gives us the record that we can refer to to make sure this does continue forward. He appears to be taking an awful lot of credit for the idea, but I believe that one of our proponents from this side of the House, the former member for Emerson, Jack Penner, was the one that really, really pushed this idea for a good number of years before almost anyone else was on board.

Winnipeg has a long history of being a trading hub in this country. It started by the confluence of the two rivers here, the Red and the Assiniboine, but it continued well into the early part of the 1900s, with the development of the rail lines and then the grain centres and the banking institutes that were developed here. A lot of that effect was lost when the Suez Canal was built, although we do still have some of the things that are critical to developing an inland port and developing CentrePort.

I believe we're the only place in western Canada that is a hub to both the major railways so we have a unique advantage there. We also have some of the largest trucking companies in western Canada and in Canada located right here in Winnipeg and in surrounding areas. There is certainly, not used as much, but there are some advantages to the waterways we have here, and certainly the international airport is key to the whole thing.

It's certainly a process that we're supportive of and would like to see go ahead. I believe that the Province did drag their feet. The NDP government did drag their feet for a period of time on this, and part of it was connected to the growing Canada Fund and the arguments over the money that was to go into the Red River Floodway. Finally, a day before the federal election was called, I think with much reluctance and arm twisting, the Province did finally

sign an agreement which I don't think was probably as good an agreement as they had hoped to get, but it was either sign or forget about a lot of these other projects that would fall under that. By other projects I mean, and the money has been on the table for quite some time, but I think there was a possibility of us losing badly on some of it if that agreement hadn't been signed before this election.

The money that is slated for the Churchill port and rail line, the money that's slated for the Emerson crossing and the highways that are involved and the money that was committed to the Brookside Boulevard development, those were three separate pots of money that the feds had put on the table and I do give an awful lot of credit to Minister Toews—principally Minister Toews—on his drive to see that a growing Manitoba fund signed and go into action.

The infrastructure programs and the infrastructure money are certainly critical to this. I also commend the federal government for recognizing the need for an inland port development and the development of CentrePort and give credit to the MPs from Manitoba, the federal MPs in the Conservative government that have pushed for this. They have made substantial further commitments, promised to help these projects move along as time goes on.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The best way to attract business to our province is make it a good place to do business. We've heard some of the others that my colleagues talk about some of the drawbacks to doing business here that are certainly in the government's control and the government has the opportunity to make that business climate a lot friendlier. I don't think you need to do major subsidization of business. You may need to create a climate that is friendly to business and where business is attracted to come to your province.

We do have some of the tools that are needed there. We have a lot of places where there's a lot of work to do. Tonight the bill on CentrePort goes to committee. Certainly, we will be supporting that bill through the committee process and back into the House and the passing of that bill. A business plan is essential and something like CentrePort needs an entrepreneurial spirit, it needs a business climate that is sound. It needs all of us as community working together to make it happen.

To propose a good business plan, we need a good understanding of who wants to do business with us. As I said, we need a climate that will attract that business. I don't know that we have a strong business plan in place yet. I think it's something that needs co-operation from every direction, co-operation, co-ordination of the entrepreneurs, the municipalities and both senior levels of government.

I, as I referred to earlier, I think we were a little slow out of the blocks here. I think probably with the passage of the bill, we'll start to move ahead a little quicker. Once again, I certainly give credit to the federal ministers that said move now or you'll miss the boat. Finally, finally, after months of discussion and months of foot dragging, the government of this province heard them and finally decided to move ahead, propose the bill that we'll be dealing with tonight in committee. I look forward to what comes out of that.

With those few words, I thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I will be supporting that bill.

* (11:30)

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Yes, well, it's a pleasure to put some words on the record. This is indeed a happy day. It's a happy day because, of course, The CentrePort Canada Act will be going to committee tonight. We expect, from the comments that my friends have made and from the work of this government, they will be moving it through committee and, hopefully, getting this bill passed in the very near future.

It's a happy day, despite the obvious geographical challenges that members on the other side have, they have certainly got on board. They're on board with this government now, and I think they understand the benefits of the inland port. I know they have some challenges. It was just a couple of months ago I know that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) rose in this House and criticized the Premier (Mr. Doer), and criticized the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), for their ongoing efforts to promote Manitoba as a leader within North America as the northern terminus of the Mid-Continent Trade Corridor.

I know at that time they had some obvious challenges. They hadn't even looked at a map of Mexico. But that shouldn't be a surprise, because they know we know they really don't understand the

map of Manitoba. It was just a couple of months ago that there were some great geographical challenges, and they really didn't even know that northern Manitoba existed. I'm hoping they understand the Port of Churchill, and I'm always positive that education is a great thing and we can move for the members ahead.

I'm not sure if I heard correctly the Member for Ste. Rose's (Mr. Briese) comments. It's actually the Panama Canal that's in Panama, not the Suez Canal. But I know we can keep educating them.

An Honourable Member: I may have said that. Thank you for that clarification.

Mr. Swan: Well, the Member for Ste. Rose, every day in this Legislature should be an education and today is no exception.

So let me say that I'm very happy that I think we have—well, who knows what the Liberals will do. We never know what the Liberals will do. But I do believe it's going to be a very positive evening, and it will be a positive thing to get CentrePort Canada Inc. up and running and promoting Manitoba as the most logical place for an inland port in Manitoba.

You know, I've had some good discussions actually with the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), who is my critic, who I understand, among some other responsibilities, is the critic for the inland port. He and I have actually agreed on the advantages. I think we could actually—well, we have, we can sit down and have a coffee and talk about all the reasons why this is the right place.

We know, of course, that we have the James Armstrong Richardson International Airport, which is being expanded and which operates unrestricted 24 hours a day. Indeed, it's the No. 1 airport in Canada in the number of dedicated cargo freighters operating through it because of Manitoba's geographical advantages and because of the positive business climate. Many people in this Chamber maybe don't know that Winnipeg International Airport is the 15th busiest cargo airport in the entire world.

Now, the border crossing south of Winnipeg at Emerson, again, due to the positive economic climate in this province, has now become the busiest border crossing on the Prairies. This trade route to the United States and Mexico, of course, is the biggest port of entry on the Prairies, and it's also being

upgraded with \$85 million being invested in Provincial Highway 75.

Even for the geographically challenged, everyone knows that Highway 75, of course, connects with Interstate 29, which, together with Interstate 35, takes traffic all the way south to Mexico, and, as that mid-continent corridor is being developed, it will take Manitoba products all the way south to seaports in Mexico.

We also know, and again, that the Member for Arthur-Virden knows well and we've agreed, Winnipeg is the only location between the West Coast and central Ontario where the key lines of our two major national railways, the CN and the CPR, intersect. Both railways, of course, have extensive intermodal yards here in Winnipeg and, as well, CN, CPR and Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway provide convenient connections in direct access to southern markets.

Of course, there are more bonuses, which I can tell you former Minister Emerson was quite aware of. Manitoba has the only deep-sea port in mid-Canada, and that is the Port of Churchill. Churchill really is located at the northern tip of the Mid-Continent Trade Corridor running all the way south to the U.S. and Mexico. Manitoba is linked to the Asia-Pacific Gateway via Prince Rupert in the west and, of course, through Thunder Bay in the east. Churchill is a major inland seaport. It's definitely able to handle more traffic. There are some serious consequences of climate change. This may be one of the few positives as the Port of Churchill is becoming more and more viable every year as a two-way port for goods.

Manitoba's inland port and international gateway have strategic location advantages and significant transportation assets that other jurisdictions simply do not have. We have easy access to markets in all directions from the Port of Churchill to Mexico to Thunder Bay to the west coast, and indeed this inland port is a priority for certainly Manitoba's government, but equally or more importantly, Manitoba's business community and private sector business leaders, and the Province has partnered to develop a solid inland port development strategy.

Now, Mr. Angus, the president for the Chamber of Commerce, has just the other day declared the inland port as the best economic opportunity for the province, and indeed I think that's a statement that's

being repeated not just by business leaders but by politicians on both sides of the House.

I know the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) just spoke out in Brandon, and I think I can agree with his comments about the importance of the port and the tremendous opportunity that this provides. Manitobans certainly do support the vision and now we need to move ahead.

Recent announcements from Standard Aero, from Greyhound Canada and from Canada Post, all of whom are expanding their operations at the airport, are strong indications the private sector is confident in Winnipeg inland port capabilities.

Now, I've had the opportunity to put forward Manitoba's advantages to former Minister Emerson. I was disappointed that he was transferred out of that portfolio, but Minister Bernier ran into a few well-publicized problems, so they found some other work for Minister Emerson to do.

I've also had the chance to put these comments forward to Minister Ambrose, who, of course, represents an Edmonton seat, but we expect that whatever decision is made by the federal government to work with an inland port will be based on the facts, will be based on reality and not based on political considerations.

It has happened in the past that Winnipeg has been bypassed for purely political reasons and I hope that everyone in this House, whatever their political belief, whoever their MP will be at the upcoming election, will advance Manitoba's interests first and their own partisan political interests second to make sure that we get the federal government on side because Winnipeg is truly the right place for this to go.

Now, certainly we know, and again I think we all agree, that the development of this port will improve economic activity. It will create jobs within Manitoba. It will also strengthen the economy, not just of Winnipeg, but all of Manitoba and indeed all of western Canada. Certainly this government has faith in Manitoba's business community, and with The CentrePort Canada Act, we believe it will be well on the way to making the inland port a reality.

Now, on September 10, the Province introduced the act, legislation that will create CentrePort Canada Inc., a private-sector focused corporation that will develop and will promote Manitoba's inland port and, of course, build on the province's

well-established network, as I've already said, of rail routes, but also air routes, trucking routes and indeed sea routes through the Port of Churchill.

Now, the new act will establish CentrePort Canada. It will designate 20,000 acres of land to the west of the airport for the inland port to serve as a transportation, trade, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing and logistic centre. It will support the fast-tracking of investment in economic development decisions based upon a single comprehensive plan, everybody working together, everybody rowing in the same direction to make sure we take advantage of what we have to offer.

Just the other day I was very pleased to announce, with the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, \$80,000 for a private-sector-run initiative to identify and attract new business investment to Manitoba's inland port. I was surprised and rather disappointed to hear the comment from the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) saying, photo op. I will make sure that I pass on to Dave Angus, to the members of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, that the Member for Carman who is the critic for Competitiveness, Training and Trade, feels that the Chamber of Commerce doesn't have the ability to carry this forward because that's not a view that I share, and I would expect that's not a view that his own caucus members share. I'm very surprised and disappointed, and I hope the Member for Carman will apologize to Dave Angus and the Chamber of Commerce at his earliest opportunity.

This Business Call program will connect with Manitoba business leaders to identify and to pursue viable prospects for new investment, business relocation and business expansion both on a local and international level. So indeed it is a happy day for Manitoba. We look forward to moving ahead.

* (11:40)

I'm glad finally that the opposition, at least the Conservative opposition, is on board. We don't know if the Liberals even know where the train is leaving from, but we look forward to seeing them tonight at committee and to working together as far as we can to promote Manitoba as the right place for the inland port. Thank you very much.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Madam Acting Speaker, it's my privilege to stand and speak to this resolution that I had the privilege of

seconding, the Member for Carman's resolution on promoting Manitoba as an inland port.

Of course, I've spoken to this in the House when the minister seconded the CentrePort bill, Bill 47, The CentrePort Canada Act that the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briesse) indicated in his presentation to this House this morning on this resolution which we will certainly be supporting this evening in committee.

We look forward to any presentations that may be there in committee tonight at the legislative building and would encourage this type of development to move forward as quickly as possible in Manitoba. I know the resolution that we have brought forward was only to encourage the government to move as quickly or quicker than they had been, Madam Acting Speaker.

If there was any criticism of the program, it was simply because of the fact that other areas and jurisdictions have been moving forward. There has been lots of work going on in the background in Manitoba. It's been going on for quite a few years, Madam Acting Speaker, and I know that, as mentioned, the former member for Emerson, Jack Penner, a former member of the Legislature, was involved in discussions with Winnipeg Airports Authority and others around this area as critic for Transportation. I look forward to continuing to work on this as we have been for the last few years.

I know that the minister wants to move forward on this but I know that, if the government had taken the initiative on it, I would have encouraged them to have moved forward somewhat earlier. This bill has come in in the fall of '08, September '08 session. It's been ongoing and known for some years now that there were going to be changes and that this type of an industry or development of a potential industry would have a great opportunity to be based here in Winnipeg.

We've even seen, before the last election in '07, announcements by—the federal government and the Province combined to put some \$60 million into Inkster Boulevard for the development and process of it, to extend it out to the Perimeter Highway, so that there could be access to what would be a future inland port around the James Richardson International Airport that we have here in Winnipeg.

So with that in mind—also money was announced for the overpass on the Yellowhead Highway and connection of No. 1 highway and the overhead passage of No. 16 highway over the railroad track,

out just north of that intersection west of Portage la Prairie, Madam Acting Speaker. So it's no secret to anyone that there have been discussions going on about this type of a formation of a group and a structure for a good amount of time, nearly two years since the initial announcements.

That is why felt we felt it important to put a resolution like this forward, to urge the government to consider making it a priority to take a leadership role, co-ordinating efforts of industry, the City of Winnipeg, the Rural Municipality of Rosser, the Winnipeg Airports Authority and potential investors to develop and advance a proposal to locate Canada's inland port in Manitoba, establishing our province as a gateway to the world.

Now CentrePort Canada has the opportunity to do that in Bill 47 but, as the speaker down at the university that I had the opportunity of going in and hearing—a U.S.-Canada trade expert, Dr. Stephen Blank, spoke so highly of the opportunity to have an inland port—a very recognized individual speaking on trade and the development of inland ports had the opportunity to say the other day that just because you put a bill in place or just because you put a vision out there, doesn't mean that it will happen.

I think there's an article in today's *Free Press* written by—the author was Mr. Cash. I'm just going to quote that, Madam Acting Speaker. Mr. Blank said: What you need to make this happen—pardon me, he indicated that there are other things needed besides just a vision. And the quote is: What you need is entrepreneurial vision and a business plan, and a business plan begins with a customer. You can talk about inland ports, but the business is someone who wants to use the facility to bring in goods. You have to know who is pooling the goods, where they're going, and where they are coming from, end quote. I think that's very important, Madam Acting Speaker.

You can't just build it and they'll come in this particular instance. So that's why it's so important to move this bill forward as quickly as you can. Why this resolution has been brought forward is because the government didn't bring this type of a bill forward not just in the June session when it ended, like they did with some others. But they didn't bring it forward at the beginning of last April's session, wasn't in their budget either, Madam Acting Speaker. Didn't have it in the Throne Speech a year ago either. So, we were encouraged by the fact that CentrePort bill, Bill 47, has come forward, but concerned

enough that we felt we should put a resolution forward to make sure that the government knows where we're coming from on this, that we're urging them to move forward, that they have delayed—I mean, this bill could have come in, as I said, a year-and-a-half ago, because there were comments it could have been an election platform if it was this important to them. But they didn't bring it in prior to the '07 election. When the announcements were made they took the credit for those. But they needed to move forward. Now maybe they didn't have the structure designed the way they wanted it, and caution needs to be taken to make sure that these issues are done properly.

So, Madam Acting Speaker, that's why I say that it was even rushed at this late stage to bring this bill forward the way the government has because in section 10(1) they had the six groups that were named to take the nominations for the initial board of 11. It could be nine to 15, but there are 11 groups that will be represented in the CentrePort bill, and they left out the R.M. of Rosser. So, I know the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) brought this to the attention of the minister, as well as I have, and I appreciate the fact that the minister is going to—indications are at least—bring forward an amendment tonight to look at including the R.M. of Rosser in that group. I'm certain that the R.M. of Rosser will be quite supportive of the initiative taken by the Member for Lakeside and the acceptance of bringing that resolution forward by the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux), the Minister of Transportation. At least I would certainly hope that that ends up being discussed as well.

I just want to say that there are other jurisdictions that are out there that, as I said the other day in the House, the CentrePort bill will continue to build on their jurisdictions. This can be a co-operative effort. We need to move forward as—as I said, Winnipeg will not change its geography. We are still in the centre of this fine country, Canada, and one of the advantages we have is that coming in here by air, rail or sea, we are 36 hours from virtually every point in the United States and in North America—to be correct, Madam Acting Speaker. From anywhere in North America about 36 hours by truck will move those goods into those areas.

We have the space. It's been part of that bill. It's been pointed out as 20,000 acres that can be used in that venue and we look forward to the development at some point down the road. I hope it's in my

lifetime that we see businesses flourishing throughout that whole region of northwest Winnipeg and the R.M. of Rosser because a lot of the land will be located in the R.M. of Rosser. I know that they had concerns about expropriation of that land. I know it's in the act that it states that the government can go higher or lower than the 20,000. I know the R.M. is quite concerned that they be dealt with fairly and that is their major concern, I think, that there be arrangements struck with the new board that will come in from CentrePort, that be developed on CentrePort within 90 days of the bill passing that will allow them to work quite rigorously in setting up a business plan, being part and having a great deal of input into that business plan so that the R.M. is dealt with fairly.

As well as the City. I mean, the Province is going to have to work with the City of Winnipeg, the Chambers of Commerce—the Winnipeg and Manitoba chambers—destination tourism of Manitoba, and many other groups, the trucking associations, the railroads, air, sea and water mechanisms that make Winnipeg the natural advantage that Mr. Blank talked about in his presentation on Tuesday morning.

I look forward in the future to more discussions and more opportunities to speak about the importance of having an inland port here in Winnipeg and centre of Manitoba, Madam Acting Speaker.

* (11:50)

So, it's with those few words that I wanted to speak to and take the opportunity to second this resolution on promoting Manitoba as an inland port that we have put forward in the House today, and I very much look forward to the government's support of this amendment as we will be supporting the bill that they have in committee this evening as well. Thank you very much.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Acting Speaker, I'm very happy to put a few words on record regarding the resolution from the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen), and I listened with intent to the Member for Arthur-Virden. I think he makes some very good points.

I like the word "CentrePort." I think it's really an aptly chosen name because we are, after all, the centre of Canada, we're the Keystone Province. But we're also, I believe, the centre of North America, the centre of the continent. So I think it's a very aptly

chosen name. However, we want CentrePort to succeed, all of us, regardless of political stripe. We do not want a rerun of Winnport, absolutely not. Between 1995 and 1998 we had seven press releases on Winnport, but, unfortunately, press releases are not enough. Winnport was launched on November 1, 1998, and 53 days later Winnport was finished. In fact, unfortunately, they lost something like \$6.5 million in those 53 days, which is roughly \$120,000 a day, so it wasn't a good sterling business venture.

Without pointing fingers, we want to make sure the second time around we do it right, and we don't want the negative headlines either. The *Free Press* headline, for example, the Tories' investment in Winnport was labelled as being part of a high profile loser. We want high profile successes. I think, to that end, we have in fact done our homework. Our government is working hard to make sure that it will succeed. We have faith in the business community.

We've introduced The CentrePort Act, which is dealing with a private sector focus corporation that will develop and promote this inland port and continue building on our established transportation networks, which have historically, because we're Canadians, run east-west, but in terms of trade volume tend to run north-south. So we're really trying to strengthen that north-south corridor which, as others have pointed out, goes all the way from Mexico to Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I would like to point out some of the initiatives that our government have taken—only some of them; there were many. In May 2007 we put a \$68-million investment in twinning Inkster Boulevard from Brookside to the Perimeter. In other words, an airport expressway. The Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) pointed that out earlier. We also put in \$55 million in federal-provincial dollars to fund an interchange and rail grade separation where the two Asia-Pacific corridors meet, that is at the junction of Trans-Canada Highway, No. 1, and Highway 16, the Yellowhead. On October 5, 2007, Manitoba and the federal government announced \$68 million together—and I think not only Manitoba and the federal government, but also OmniTRAX—announced \$68 million to improve that 1,300-kilometre rail line to Churchill.

As a northerner, of course, that would concern me greatly, and I'm very happy that we did this. I'm enthusiastic about the enhanced role that we want the

Port of Churchill to play, because not every country in the world has an inland port. We are very fortunate indeed to have that port. It is Canada's only inland port. It has never been fully utilized or developed to the potential of which it's capable. We know that much, much more could happen in Churchill. The boosters of Churchill and the Hudson Bay Railway have been around since the 1920s. There is an organization called the Hudson Bay Route Association of which my wife and I are members and have been for many years, proud members actually. In fact, I should congratulate people like Arnold Grambo and Sue Lambert and many, many others who spend years of their life working to advance the cause of the Hudson Bay Route Association and the Hudson Bay Railway to Churchill, to make the Port of Churchill live up to what it could be.

Churchill is a huge asset for us in Manitoba, and Churchill can accommodate all kinds of freight. I'm thinking that not too terribly long ago we backhauled some copper or copper concentrate from Spain. This copper concentrate was destined for Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting in Flin Flon. I believe we've hauled other stuff from Australia to bring it south into the smelter in Flin Flon, and perhaps there might have even been some backhauling to Churchill or to Thompson. I'm not sure. So it's not just a one-way trip bringing the material to Churchill and then out, but also bringing the stuff back is vitally important. Backhaul is quite possible. Churchill in fact could do at least a million tonnes of grain a year.

Now, we've never really lived up to that potential, Mr. Speaker, but a million tonnes is quite conceivable and quite possible. Of course, we do need a strong Canadian Wheat Board for that because we want to make sure that those grain cars keep running north, and that's not just my idea. That's certainly the idea of the Mayor of Churchill, Mayor Mike Spence. I had a discussion with him a few days ago and he very much links the future of Churchill to a strong Canadian Wheat Board.

As well, the season in the Churchill port could be lengthened. We know that, with global warming, it is quite possible that a much-longer season will ensue in the future. Of course, with the aid of icebreakers, we can definitely lengthen the season, if not make it an all-year season. That's, of course, way in the distance.

Now we do have some icebreakers. If we had a No. 1 class icebreaker that some of the Russians use,

we could certainly keep the Churchill port open a long portion of the year.

The port is a huge asset. CentrePort is a wonderful idea. I think all members should be aware that it would create great economic spin-offs in the province of Manitoba. We do need an inland port. We need to be sure that we support The CentrePort Canada Act legislation that's coming forward. I'm hoping that all members opposite will indeed support that legislation. With these few words, Mr. Speaker, I will stop speaking.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): My comments are going to be brief, because I would like to see this resolution voted on. Much like we had supported the bill for CentrePort, believing ultimately that it's in Manitoba's best interest to advance good ideas, we see this resolution as a good idea.

I want to pick up on that particular point. Anyone can come up with a wonderful idea. That's how I see CentrePort, as a wonderful idea. Now we have legislation that's before us, just like we have a resolution that is before us. It's important that we have the follow-through, so the government has an idea that has the support amongst a wide variety of stakeholders. One might question whether it was the government's idea who first brought it up or another stakeholder's idea that first brought it up. To me, that doesn't really matter. What matters is that it's an opportunity.

We know other jurisdictions, other provinces, are looking at doing something. I'm looking to the government to do the follow-up that's necessary, for the many different departments to do what's necessary in order to make the project work.

The idea is wonderful and has the support of all members of this Legislature. It's going to be the follow-up that's going to make sure that all of us get to see this thing through. I look forward to seeing what the ministers themselves do as a result of the support that this Chamber is giving CentrePort.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): I'm pleased to have a very few moments here to put my voice on the record because the James Armstrong Richardson International Airport is in my constituency. I'm very proud of watching and going to many, many ribbon cuttings and ground-breaking events. It's undergoing further expansion, operates unrestricted 24 hours a day and is first in Canada in the number of dedicated cargo freighters operating through it.

Winnipeg's inland port is a priority for Manitoba's business community. Private sector business leaders and the Province have partnered to develop a solid, inland-port development strategy. Recent announcements that Standard Aero, Greyhound Canada and Canada Post are relocating and expanding their operations at the newly expanded Richardson International Airport are also strong indications that the private sector is confident in Winnipeg's inland port capabilities.

Most recently, Jack Levit, CEO, Lakeview Management Inc., announced that he would build a \$20-million hotel at the airport. Barry Rempel, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Winnipeg Airports Authority, said we are pleased the inland port is being developed in conjunction with

airport lands. Manitobans support this vision. Now we must press from the federal candidates their commitment that they will turn this vision into national reality.

Winnipeg is the only location between the west coast and central Ontario where the key lines of Canada's two major railways, CN and CPR, intersect. Both railways remain extensive intermodal yards, maintained in Winnipeg. CN, CPR and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad provide—

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 25, 2008

CONTENTS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS		Resolutions	
Second Readings–Public Bills		Res. 21–Promoting Manitoba as an Inland Port	
Bill 230–The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act		Pedersen	3501
		Lemieux	3503
Taillieu	3491	Briese	3505
Rondeau	3493	Swan	3506
Pedersen	3494	Maguire	3508
Swan	3496	Jennissen	3510
Faurschou	3498	Lamoureux	3511
Dewar	3499	Korzeniowski	3511

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