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DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 15, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Good morning, colleagues. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Are we ready to proceed with Bill 203?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Are we ready to proceed with Bill 204?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Are we ready to proceed with Bill 206?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Are we ready to proceed with Bill 207? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 207—The Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call Bill 207, The Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I move, seconded by the MLA from Steinbach, that Bill 207, The Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act; Loi sur le règlement des différends internationaux relatifs aux investissements, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Helwer: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this particular bill, which would ratify an

international treaty that Canada has become a part of, and under our Constitution it is necessary that each particular province also pass legislation of this type in order that Canadian citizens should have full access to this dispute mechanism.

It is become even more important, Mr. Speaker, that Manitoba pass legislation such as this one. We see circumstances such as the Ukraine, a formerly stable country that, through actions of other governments, has become somewhat unstable, indeed, in Crimea one would say on the verge of civil war. And it is very necessary when countries of that stability—most of us thought that the Ukraine was a very stable country and would have no difficulty proceeding in commerce and in other areas of the world today, but suddenly we see now that it is a country that is in the throes of possible civil war, and I believe it's very important that we ratify such treaties as this in order that Canadians are protected in countries such as that when they are operating as a business.

And we do see, Mr. Speaker, that Canadians are often looking for other areas of the world to expand their businesses in, to do businesses with other governments. And, indeed, Ukraine is something that—is a country that has been very popular with Canadians as we have a great heritage here of Ukrainian descent and of their population. So that is one additional feature there that we can look at in this regard.

The Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act is something that the federal government has been working on for a number of years. And when we look at the act itself, it was first discussed, I believe, in 1965 with the World Bank, and things moved along from there. It came into force, I believe, in Canada around 2006, and would not come into effect in Canada until every jurisdiction in Canada has passed similar implementing legislation. And all that this does is allows Manitoba to join the rest of the country in implementing this particular act.

It seems pretty simple on the surface, Mr. Speaker. I know there is—it is a large document, a, perhaps, complex act, but we want to make sure that we are doing all the right things in regard to how Manitobans have access to this particular act. And I

encourage the minister to review it to make sure that they would be comfortable with everything in there so that Manitobans, indeed, do access this type of a dispute mechanism.

So many other provinces have ratified, and they are moving along with this, Mr. Speaker. And it—there was some concern, perhaps, that Canada could do this on their own, but I don't believe that we've changed the Constitution. So we still have that ability in Manitoba constitutionally to enact legislation of this type that would help Manitobans and would protect them along the way.

Businesses, as I'm sure you know, Mr. Speaker, drive our economy. Small business is the backbone of Canadian—the Canadian economy. The government has said so themselves, even though sometimes we know that they have difficulty in recognizing the impact of small business. And this act would enable them—this act would enable these businesses to make sure that they can compete on the world stage and that they have a dispute mechanism should they ever come into conflict with any other business or another government.

So we need, I think, to ratify this particular act, and it's something that, as I said, looks pretty simple on the surface. Just why can't we do it? We've had support from various people around Manitoba to do so, and it would give us access to an international organization that would help facilitate this dispute resolution between an investor and a host nation; even more critical as we see more conflict in the world, Mr. Speaker.

So Canada's ratification of the convention would, indeed, mean that a Manitoba company that has an investment abroad and perhaps a dispute with that particular investment, they could rely on this independent arbitrator to hear the case instead of a potentially volatile and unpredictable judiciary in that country.

Could you imagine, Mr. Speaker, if you were in business in Crimea at this point and you had a dispute with—well, who is the entity now? Who is the entity there? Is it the Ukraine? Is it a new government in Crimea? Is it the Russian state? Where do you apply to if you have a problem with the government? Who is the government in that regard?

This would give businesses an opportunity to access that independent arbitrator on the world stage, and then we could do a lot—away with a lot of that,

you know, uncomfortable ability in—when you're doing business in a foreign country and especially in a country that is entertaining that type of a conflict. So we would have an added confidence and security to help these Manitoba companies to be successful internationally. And if they are successful on the world stage, it certainly enhances their ability to do business, not only in Manitoba but in the rest of Canada.

* (10:10)

The export basis is something that Canada is very proud of, Mr. Speaker. We've seen problems moving grain recently but that is one of our signature exports and, indeed, not something that we want to tie up in disputes or in conflicts. So I think if we look at this type of a particular legislation, it can only help Manitoba businesses and individuals so that they will be comfortable doing business in other countries. And I would encourage the government to examine the legislation, to see if there is any area that they would choose to amend, to make sure that we would fulfill Manitoba laws and make sure that it is not in conflict with anything else in Manitoba—I don't believe it is at this point but that is certainly something that I would encourage the government to review. It is, as I said, a long and detailed document and we want to make sure that it is done correctly so that Manitobans have access to this particular dispute mechanism, and something that we can see would be useful.

I'm just sometime—somewhat mystified, Mr. Speaker, that it's just not an automatic, that this would've been done several years ago. We do know that the federal government, I believe in December of 2013, went through their ratification but still we are awaiting the other—the provinces to move legislation of this type, so that all of Canada would be united and able to access this and, indeed, that the Canadian ratification would be legal under Canadian law because we, obviously, have different—a different set-up than many other countries with our Constitution.

I'm curious, indeed, if the minister from the government has ever had any communication with the federal government on—in this regard. It's something that looks pretty simple to me, Mr. Speaker, and something, again, that just makes sense. So it's something that we want to make sure that Manitoba and Manitoba businesses can continue to be strong. They drive our economy and they often take risks in countries, as I said, such as the Ukraine.

And can you imagine doing business with a company in the Ukraine or a government and suddenly you are in the throes of, well, virtually civil war or civil unrest, anyway—and wondering what's happened to your investment there, how you can make sure that you continue to not only do business but make sure that you can get a return and that your employees are safe. And we want to make sure that Manitobans especially would have access to this particular type of dispute mechanism. So I would encourage the government to review it and to make sure that it all fits with other legislation in Manitoba, that we can be similar to other provinces in Canada and assist the federal government in ratifying this internationally so that we can make sure that not only Canadians but all Manitobans would have access to this particular dispute resolution issue.

So with that, I know there are others that would wish to speak to it, and we—I'll be interested to hear what they say.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to get up and speak—another private members' morning—and it is amazing, actually, as we sit through private members' mornings, to hear members of Manitoba's Progressive Conservative Party speak. You know, of course, when they said aim higher, every time they get up and speak, they aim higher, in terms of being more and more unaccountable and more and more inconsistency—more and more inconsistent, day to day and week to week.

And, of course, here's the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) who gets up—and it was just last week that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) had a resolution in this House, calling on this Legislature to speak as one, to express to the federal government our concern about cuts to veteran services in western Manitoba. And despite the fact that we'd worked with the Progressive Conservatives on a resolution dealing with driver's licences for military personnel, despite the fact that a specialized licence plate appears to have been one of the top priorities for the Progressive Conservatives, when this member from Brandon East brought forward a very, very positive resolution that was non-partisan, that would have been very helpful, the member for Brandon West not only spoke against it, he described that as a tawdry little resolution, which was one of the most disgusting things that I have heard in this House, but, unfortunately, it just seems to be the theme.

And today, as we talk about trade and Manitoba's role in the international community, we see again the Progressive Conservatives being exposed for their hypocrisy, their inconsistency and their unaccountability. It gets stronger and stronger as the days go by, and the trade policy from this Progressive Conservative opposition is no exception.

Manitoba is a trading and export province. That is a fact. That has been the history of Manitoba, but trading not just with the three western provinces, which is the way that you would see the world working, I suppose, if you were a Manitoba Progressive Conservative. Yes, we trade with western provinces. We trade with the other provinces across Canada. We look to the north, to our friends in Nunavut, as we look for ways to expand and assist them with some of the tremendous developments. We look to our southern neighbour, Canada's largest trading partner, but, as Manitobans, we also look to the rest of the world, and it is a little known fact that Manitoba actually has a higher proportion of trade with the rest of the world than any other Canadian province. And when you look at the map, that is actually quite amazing. When you look at where Manitoba is located, right in the centre of North America, we still find ways to use our ingenuity and our innovation and our diversity at finding ways to look for new markets all around the world.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, these Progressive Conservatives, they will tell you, you know, on the macro level they will tell you they are the biggest free traders in the entire world. But when it comes to the micro level of actually supporting industry, of actually supporting communities, they are charter members of the John Birch Society, and they would retreat into their own little enclave. That is their micro view of the world of trade.

And how do we know this? Well, by the things they say and, sometimes, Mr. Speaker, by the things they don't say. What is one of Manitoba's largest exports? It's wheat, grain, cereals. That is one of Manitoba's major exports, has been since this province was settled, and unfortunately, not a single member of the Progressive Conservative caucus lifted a finger, got out of their seat, made a phone call to oppose the dismantling of the Canadian Wheat Board, a company which, of course, served farmers across western Canada, certainly within Manitoba, and was also headquartered right here in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and they would not stand up. I guess they were under strict orders from their federal overlords not to raise any trouble as thousands of

jobs were lost, and farmers, their crops were put at risk.

And just today, Mr. Speaker, there was a great article in the Free Press called Grains, trains and autocrats, written by a very bright man named Dean Harder—Dean Harder, who's proved that the guy who loses the election can actually do more for farmers than the guy who wins the election. And Dean has a quote and some explanation on the benefits of the Canadian Wheat Board. I just want to quote a little bit from his article today. I know the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) finds the dismantling of the Canadian Wheat Board very, very funny, but thousands of farmers and thousands of people in Winnipeg, in Manitoba, who depended on the Canadian Wheat Board, don't find it funny, so maybe the member for Midland should listen.

"The CWB did more than sell wheat and barley for the benefit of Prairie farmers. It oversaw orderly marketing and grain logistics. If premium, 14 per cent high-protein wheat was required by a buyer in Asia or Europe, it would be sourced from across the Prairies, placed in railcars, shipped to the designated grain terminals at the ports and placed on grain ships in a reasonable time frame. Even if there were rail delays, the single desk would sequence shipments through multiple terminals until a ship of 14 per cent wheat was full. The funds made from early 'dispatch' would go back to farmers."

"Fast forward to 2014. Every extra day a ship sits waiting to get filled costs \$15,000 to \$25,000 per ship. This demurrage is wasteful on all fronts. Moreover, co-ordination of port shipments is not being managed effectively."

Record crop last year, Mr. Speaker; trouble getting that grain exported because of the loss of the power of the Canadian Wheat Board, challenges with the railways, a failure by the railways to co-ordinate port facilities, and ultimately less benefits for farmers. And not a single member of the Progressive Conservative caucus will acknowledge that, will admit that, or apologize to the people of Manitoba for their absolute failure to protect this very, very important export.

Well, what's another very important export for Manitoba? Well, it's hydroelectricity, clean power that we generate here in Manitoba for the benefit of all Manitobans that we export to our friends east, west and south, to Minnesota, to Wisconsin. As we continue to sign more agreements and expand those markets, it is a very positive thing.

* (10:20)

But what would the Progressive Conservatives do with that greatest export? They would put the brakes on. They would stop developing hydro power. They would cut the legs out from under one of Manitoba's most important exports. And how do they word their opposition to hydro? Well, I guess they have Tory-speak events, and I don't know where they hold them. I don't know if they hold them in one of those backrooms at the Manitoba Club, or maybe the hired staff clears out all the cars from their leader's seven-car garage and maybe that they close the doors and that's where they gather and they come up with Tory speak.

If you use innovation and ingenuity in investments to sell products to the United States, you must be Americanizing whatever company is that's selling those products. So I guess if we use Tory speak, they would complain it's StandardAero which is winning contracts around the world, including with American Airlines to refurbish turbines to do work—I guess they've been Americanized. When Magellan Aerospace stands up as one of the top aerospace companies in the world, I suppose by Tory speak they would be Americanized. And I suppose when the children of the President of the United States, when they got to the White House and they needed a play structure, when that play structure was manufactured with plastic parts made right here in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, well, I suppose we could claim that Acrylon Plastics is Americanized because they've been bold enough to be able to sell their products across the United States. I suppose they would fall under Tory speak. And Canada Goose making top-notch products, keeping the Americans safe from the polar vortex, I suppose the fact that Canada Goose uses their ingenuity and their expertise to design products that keep our American friends warm and alive, well, I suppose they're being Americanized, if I was a Conservative. And yet they talk about those things and they're silent on other things.

Of course, we already talked about the Canadian Wheat Board, things like country of origin labelling, we know, has been a tremendous, tremendous problem for producers in Manitoba and across western provinces. And, of course we've been leaders at working with our colleagues in western provinces. We don't have the—we don't have to formally join them and give up our work with other provinces in other areas to work across political lines and work across provincial boundaries to get things done, and

that's important because we work together because agricultural exports are extremely important for Manitoba and we want that to continue.

Now, Manitoba's an exporting province for a number of reasons. Our geographical location, our transport systems are a key advantage in making us a centre for trade. And it was last week, again, in private members' hour, we had a member of the opposition caucus actually get up and complain about the fact that we were next door to Ontario. I had to listen carefully, as I always do when opposition members are speaking. There was a member who—I don't know what his point was, that it was hard being next door to Ontario. I can't understand what would be bad about being next to a market of some 13 million people unless, in your own mind, getting things done on trade meant you had to forsake all others—forsake all others—Mr. Speaker, in order to sign on with Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia.

You know, we see a different way. That's why we have a five-year, \$5.5-billion core infrastructure building plan to invest in our core infrastructure. We believe in trading with everybody. We actually put our words into action, unlike members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Well, that was—I was hoping we would have some debate on this bill of settlement of international disputes, but I would certainly look forward to seeing the minister, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan)—I would like to see his Canadian Wheat Board permit—framed up on his wall. I'm just kind of really amazed that he would be so inclined as to try to bring back the Canadian Wheat Board. CWB exists right now and, in fact, they're building elevators across western Canada, and farmers are quite happy with the situation that's happening in terms of CWB.

But I digress, Mr. Speaker, because what we're talking about here is an international convention on the settlement of international disputes. And from my own limited business experience, back a few years ago, I used to sell a fair number of cattle, both slaughter cattle and feeder cattle, into the US. And a good market—it was a good market. This was pre-BSE and pre-COOL days. We had a good market down there but there was always the aspect of not getting paid because you were dealing in another country and that was something that we were always—we dealt with reputable buyers. We dealt with reputable agents so that we made sure that we

did get paid. And, in fact, I always did get paid. I never did get hung out to dry on not getting paid for cattle, and there was a lot of money involved so it was certainly a relevant point to make sure that you get paid.

So this bill is really—addresses this but on a much larger scale because while we do have good relations with our friends to the south, this is—this would help companies in Manitoba, companies that are dealing around the world, and not all countries are as stable as Canada, the United States. And it allows—this bill would allow a dispute mechanism to settle disputes should they arise, and Canada has signed on to the agreement but all the Canadian provinces also need to sign on.

My understanding is Saskatchewan and Alberta have to date. The other provinces are looking at it but we need—Manitoba could certainly take the lead here and adopt this legislation so that we become help in the larger context of helping Canada, in terms of international—companies doing international business.

And I'm actually quite amazed at this NDP government, who constantly beats about the Agreement on Internal Trade as being the saviour of everything. This is similar to that but it's just much larger. It looks across the world, instead of just across Canada and companies need this security. They need the confidence in security to be able to deal internationally, and they need this. When disputes do settle, do happen, they need to be able to settle this. And this—adopting this bill would allow for Canada's ratification—Canada's ratification, sorry, would allow these companies that want to rely on arbitration through the ICSID facilities to contract into them.

And if they do decide to contract into the dispute resolution mechanisms, they can take full advantage of the benefits of the convention. And neither party, should both parties be in a—unilaterally withdraw. So this does give companies some measure of security. While we are an exporting country and we deal around the world, there's—this helps businesses in Manitoba to be able to do business more confidently in those countries where they just may not be quite as stable. And especially dealing in those political environments that are constantly changing, it is significant to have this mechanism in place.

And I have family who's dealt internationally, also. I have a brother that did some grain handling equipment in Mongolia and, well, the food just about

killed him there on the one time he was there. Just making sure he got paid for his services there, it was significant that he make sure that he's got—was to get paid but at the same time, should something happen, we need to have something like this to be able to ensure that our companies, Manitoba companies, do get paid, should there be some issues that arise.

There is some 158 countries that have signed this, including Canada; 149 of those have ratified, and, you know, some countries that we don't even normally deal with, but who knows where our Manitoba companies—they will go where their business is wanted, and that's around the globe, for sure, so we want to make sure that they have this safety net in place. And while Canada is a signatory, it has not ratified this because these matters fall within provincial jurisdiction. And this is where we need Manitoba to step up, and for the government—if they just think about agreement of internal trade, this is the same, but it's just much larger, it's around the world. And so they need to take this up, support our businesses.

* (10:30)

Mr. Speaker, I see that British Columbia, Ontario, Newfoundland-Labrador, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories have all adopted legislation. I understand Saskatchewan is about to and Alberta's looking at it also. So we need to, all provinces in Manitoba to—all provinces in Canada, rather, to do this. And so the sooner Manitoba steps up, the better—the sooner this agreement can actually come into force.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Bar Association, the International Chamber of Commerce Canada have all called for the ratification of the ISCID. So there are—these are organizations that represent companies, both in Canada and around the world, and they obviously see the benefits of joining a pact like this.

So, Mr. Speaker, I—it would be nice if the NDP would put aside their partisan blinkers for a while and just think about looking after helping—assisting Manitoba companies as they deal around the world. This is one small step. It will—I don't think this is going to cost Manitoba any money to do this. And it would help go a long way to instilling confidence in our companies in Manitoba that do trade around the world.

And you only need to watch the news, the world news, these days to know that there's a lot of

instability around the world. And this is one small way that the province as a whole can get behind companies and give them some security that they will have a mechanism in place should they require it. And, of course, we always hope that they don't, but you must be prepared should there be disputes that arise. This would give a mechanism to settle those.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly encourage the government to take a good look at this. This is a step in the right direction for Manitoba to be a—as we are a player on the international business. And I would certainly recommend that the government take a serious look at this and support this bill brought forward by my colleague from Brandon West.

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): And I appreciate the members opposite bringing this bill forward. I know when I was minister of Consumer Affairs, I actually read the bill, read all the parts of the bill, and I actually made inquiries as to little components of the bill on how they would relate to our province, our businesses, and how they could move forward. So it is, I agree with the member from Brandon, where it is a very, very comprehensive bill. It's about 200 pages. It's very, very complex. In fact, I'd like to state to the Assembly that it's very similar to The International Interests in Mobile Equipment Act, which I presented and was passed in this Legislature, except it's got a few small differences.

I disagree with the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen). If he had have actually read the bill, he would've known that if there's expenditures that are not met, the companies and the countries that sign on to the act actually have to pay for the operations of the entire organization. And that is, by the way, clause 17. And what that means is that there's an organization; each country has people that they present there. There's a group of people that judge it. It can be up to 10 people on a session that judge the issue. What happens is companies actually present to this tribunal. The tribunal, or up to 10 people, are selected. And then what happens is they actually look at the dispute. It's not in just countries that are having troubles in governance, this bill deals with disputes between companies when it's hard to get an enforcement.

Now, as an owner of a company that does business in 16 countries, it's always important to know that you're going to get paid and this—how you're going to get paid and all the conditions that you get paid. And I have to admit, when we started

doing business with Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates and in South Africa, we were kind of a little bit worried about how we would get paid and to make sure that we got paid, because what we were dealing with was intellectual property. It wasn't combines or grain, it was actually new media stuff.

And what's interesting is that this type of act becomes important, but it also becomes important to see how it fits within our own laws. And so I agree with the Attorney General (Mr. Swan) where he said that you have to make sure that you know how this is going to affect your businesses. One of the concerns that we've asked for clarification on is that the tribunal makes an order. When the order is made it is enforced as if it was a Canadian law or a Canadian jurisdiction. There is no right to have appeal. There is no right for Canadian justice take-to take precedent.

And it's interesting that article 21 waives legal immunity from this organization or any of the justices. Article 41 says that the tribunal shall be the judge of its own competence and shall not have any amendments. And it's interesting because even article 52 says either party can request an annulment and there's very few reasons why you can annul it. So there is no right to appeal to a Canadian justice or jurisdiction. There is no right to appeal to our legal system. So I think it's prudent to look, to make sure that this fits within our context, our economics, our business and our way of doing business before we jump in with both feet.

Now, the members opposite are right; this is a very useful tool. Why? Because it creates a playing field. It creates a set of rules. One of the concerns that I had on the bill when I read it was it said that each state shall try to do its best to enforce it. Some states can enforce it stronger than others. Others have ways of making sure that the company actually pays. Others, it's a little bit more anarchy, and because of the anarchy the enforcement mechanism doesn't work as well. So I question whether it would work in a state that—or a country that's experiencing a lot of destabilization because the rule of law doesn't take place. Those are the types of questions that we want to make sure that we have an answer to. I think it's prudent to make sure that we walk forward expeditiously, but cautiously.

And so I think that this is very similar to the international interests of mobile equipment act where we've worked with our businesses. We made sure that they understood all aspects of it. We talked to

the corporate lawyers and the people who are used to doing international businesses. We should be talking to our exporting companies to make sure that they can use this and it's expeditious.

The other question I have is when you submit, what sort of requirement of proof has to be submitted to this organization, what level of detail? Is it just the little-big players that can submit? Is it a huge thing that you need a lawyer to spend years on documenting, or can it be a simple contract that you put in, that can be enforced simply? Is it—have limits? Is it one where you can—you have to wait 'til you have a multimillion-dollar contract, or it is one that, truly, medium and small businesses can actually use as a tool to get paid? And so those are the questions we've asked. As we work through this, I think we will get a good response.

I hope that it's a tool that small, medium and large businesses can use. And I think that if we do have a tool that all those businesses can use, we actually will have something that we can sign on. But I think in international law, in trade, you want to make sure you're sure-footed. So it's not just something where the member opposite reads the title and says, hey, it's a great title, lets sign on. You want to actually get into the details. You want to know what you're doing.

And I know just because another organization that might be a Conservative party says, hey, it's good—I actually took the time to read the document. And when I read the document, I actually understood some of the concerns that might be for our players, for our jurisdiction, for our legal system, because I don't know right now whether there's lots of tools where we can implement something from a foreign jurisdiction immediately into Manitoba and have it served onto the person and have it executed onto that company instantly.

* (10:40)

So there are some questions. I personally was kind of worried about the costs of the organizations and how much it would cost. That whole clause 17, where the expenses of the centre actually went onto the signing jurisdictions, was a concern. Why? Because I didn't know how much that centre's going to cost, whether it's going to be \$10 million, \$5 million, \$100 million. And if you're talking about a centre that has 140 reps or now 150 reps, it's international in scope, people serve on a committee multiple times on the year so they might have to be relocated, et cetera. That might be very, very

expensive. So until all the details are worked out—and it may be very, very expensive for Manitoba to sign on. I'd like to know that detail before I jump into the pool and sign on to the bill.

Finally, I do question—on article 52, it says either party can request an annulment, and there's certain rules on how you can get an annulment. It talks about the systems, but there is no system where there—you can appeal it to a higher body, that's it. This is the organization that decides. It's immediately sent to the jurisdiction. According to the act, it's immediately enforced and delivered by that company's law and there is no right of appeal. I am kind of concerned on that. I could be convinced otherwise, but I think it needs just a little bit more exploration and a little bit more investigation before we jump into that because in our system, generally, all citizens do have a right to be heard but they also have a right to appeal. And because of section 41, where the tribunal shall be the judge of its own competence—article 21, which shall—the judges shall have—in this system has legal immunity, that does concern me a little bit, and because there is no right of appeal.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that this is a great concept. I think it's a good step to make sure that people can get the money for the services they provide. I think it's wonderful as far as the economics and the international nature of Manitoba and the way they do business, but I do think that we have to look at it to make sure that we know what we're getting into before we do that and get all the businesses and organizations understanding all the implications before we jump into the pool with both feet.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated some of the words of the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau). I think they were a bit more coherent than his colleague, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan).

But I'm still disappointed that we have had this debate now going back several months. This isn't the first time the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) has introduced this legislation. He introduced the legislation a number of months ago.

The government, I think, has been briefed by various people within the legal community and those who are interested in this bill in Manitoba over the last couple of years. It's not a surprise to them. So the member for Assiniboia himself acknowledges

he's read the bill previously, when he was still in Cabinet. He brings forward no amendments; he brings forward no suggestions in terms of how to change the bill. So it seems to be this continuous pattern by the NDP where they know that something is positive, they know that something is good, but they refuse to act on it for an unknown reason, Mr. Speaker. And I'm always mystified why the government chooses not to. Although their history would tell us—their ideological history tells us that they've never been in favour of things that deal with free trade or broader trade, that doesn't—we don't have to go back terribly far to see that that's the case.

It's interesting that today the federal minister of trade, Honourable Mr. Fast, is in Winnipeg today to talk about trade and to talk about the new trade deal with Canada and the European Union, a trade deal that the federal colleagues and the provincial colleagues here in Manitoba have had very little positive to say about. Of course, they like to pick around and try to find negatives about the free-trade agreement with the EU. They're a little bit scared to be completely against it, but in their hearts, of course, you can tell that they don't support it because all they do is try to find some things around the edge to complain about and not to actually support the agreement, Mr. Speaker. We see that in Parliament with the NDP, and we see that in the Legislature here as well with the NDP. Now, that doesn't mean that there aren't things that couldn't be

Now, that doesn't mean that there aren't things that couldn't be improved on the trade agreement between Canada and the European Union. Of course, there are things that can always be improved, but to simply be negative on a trade agreement and have nothing good to say about it, Mr. Speaker, I think speaks to how the government actually feels about trade. And there's a long history of that.

I remember—not being here—but I remember the debate even in the provincial election in 1988, where Gary Doer was still speaking against the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, Mr. Speaker. After the agreement had been, I believe, ratified or coming to an agreement, the then-leader of the NDP was against the Free Trade Agreement with the United States. Now I think he's had a bit of a—to use his own words, a bit of a conversion on the road to Damascus, as he used to say in this House. Whether in his heart he's changed his mind, I don't know.

But we know that deep within the caucus of the NDP, they still have a great suspicion, great concern

about free-trade agreements or anything that keeps us from being isolationists, Mr. Speaker. They seem to be more concerned about being on an island and trying to ensure that they don't have to deal with other provinces and they're doing a good job of that. Not only are they rejecting overtures when it—they come forward such as this particular legislation, but they have run the province in such a way that there are other jurisdictions like the New West who don't even want this government to be part of their organization because they've seen how they've run the economy in Manitoba.

In fact, I was in Calgary on the way back from a winter vacation, Mr. Speaker, an abbreviated winter vacation, and we were going through the Calgary airport on a layover and you're coming down the steps and there's a great big sign that says: Welcome to the New West. And it was quite interesting because we're not, of course, part of the New West and, unfortunately, that's to the detriment of Manitoba and to the future of Manitoba.

So, in many ways, I suppose I'm surprised that the government wouldn't look to ratify this kind of an accord and to sign on when other provinces have, but in many ways I'm not surprised because their history has always been to be negative about free-trade agreement, to try to isolate ourselves. I see the—one of our new members seems to be concerned about that and surprised that the NDP would do—I'd bring her back to the history of 1988 where Gary Doer campaigned against the Free Trade Agreement. I would point her to her own colleagues now and those in Ottawa who are dismissive and negative about the free-trade agreement with the European Union.

Virtually every time there's a free-trade agreement, the NDP get up and try to shoot holes through it because heaven forbid that we'd actually want to trade with other countries or to be connected with other countries, let alone other provinces where this NDP government has rejected the idea of being part of the New West Partnership, Mr. Speaker. This is something, of course, that ultimately would not affect a great number of people but would affect those who are impacted in a great many ways. It's something that would ultimately send the signal that we are going to be part of international agreements, that we're open for business, that we want to have dispute settlements that actually work and that they make sense.

Now some of the dispute settlement mechanisms that we've seen in other trade agreements aren't

perfect and they can be changed. Certainly, we've seen with the discussion around the country of origin labelling, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) mentioned that debate. In fact, I was pleased last summer to be in Kansas City for the National CSG Council of State Governments meeting where we passed—not unanimously—but we passed a resolution about taking away the country of origin labelling in its current form, and we got the support of the majority of the states that were there—that's the national organization, not just the Midwest, Mr. Speaker, so from coast to coast in the United States we had the majority of states agree with us that the country of origin labelling as it currently stands isn't good for trade and that the government in the United States should follow the WTO decision. And I was pleased to represent Manitoba as part of that discussion in Kansas City.

And I think it shows that when you have those discussions with others that, in fact, you can come to some sort of accord. Now that issue is still being debated out; we know that. We know that the dispute resolution with the WTO is still in play when it comes to the country of origin labelling, and I wish in many ways that there was a mechanism that could be more determinative than what we have now in terms of just simply looking at countervailing measures on the country of origin labelling, Mr. Speaker. But I think it speaks to the fact that we need to be part of a broader discussion, that when you speak with other countries often you can bring about positive change and you can bring about an understanding about the issues within your own country. And that was the case in Kansas City when many people thought we wouldn't be able to get that resolution passed because of the various interests across the United States.

* (10:50)

So my hope is that this government will look at amendments to this legislation. They've had the opportunity to read it, to analyze it for a very long time. I commend the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) who essentially has said that it's a good piece of legislation but that he had a couple of concerns. I think that when the minds of this Legislature get together we can overcome a few concerns. And if he has amendments that he wants to bring forward, I know the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) is always open to those discussions and we're willing to entertain those amendments. But we would be disappointed if this legislation just simply dies on the Order Paper again this session, and that it

would send a signal to other provinces and around the world that Manitoba isn't open for business and Manitoba isn't truly dedicated to trade and to free trade with other countries

Because we are a trading country. We are a trading province and we do better when we trade with those who are not only our neighbours geographically, but who are also our friends and allies internationally. And I would encourage this government to not simply shut the door and to say no, we're not going to look at this because we have an ideological concern about free trade dating back many years, Mr. Speaker, but to say it's good. It's good for Manitoba to be able to trade with other provinces and other countries, and this is a small part of ensuring that there's a mechanism to make that trade go smoother and to make that trade happen even when there are disputes so that both sides of a trade can ensure that they have a mechanism to go to and that gives them faith that they could go to something with that for whatever reason the trade or the deal goes awry.

So I certainly hope that the government will look towards the discussion of amendments if they have any and not just simply allow this bill to die on the Order Paper as they have in the past.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity to get a few words on the record about trade and about what Manitoba's doing in our world and how well we're doing, because I really think it's just something we don't get out enough. People in Manitoba are so humble all the time and we should be blowing our horn a little bit more, I think, about how well our province is doing. We're really quite a little province, but we are not little in how well we operate in the world. And our geographic location, of course, and transportation systems obviously give us a key advantage in making us that centre of trade.

Recently, of course, probably everyone in here is aware that we have a five-year, \$5.5-billion core infrastructure plan that will invest in core infrastructure to provide our trade and transportation networks. So we're really working to make sure those trade and transportation networks are at their very best so that we can ensure that Manitoba benefits in the fullest possible way.

We're investing, of course, in CentrePort Canada, and I do want to talk a little bit more about

that. It's very close to my constituency and I will get into that a little bit later. But we're also investing in Highway 75 so that we can, hopefully, be working to get that road always—never closed through the floods, if possible, or only a tiny bit. So I know that that will be a huge benefit to Manitoba, to Morris, but to all of us—to all of us—because it's a huge factor. And Highway 1 and Highway 10, of course, in—or also to ensure that our goods get to market.

We're also working with Manitoba businesses to open new businesses in Canada and abroad, and, actually, this may be something that not a little people are aware of, but Manitoba's total exports increased nearly 12 per cent in 2013. Now, when members opposite are speaking we never hear those kind of facts on the record. Well, we don't hear any facts, period, on the record. Not sure where the myths are coming from, but certainly no facts are going on. But this is a fact: nearly 12 per cent in 2013, the largest increase of any province and three times the Canadian increase of 3.5 per cent. And how often do we hear that in this room from the other side? I—never. It's just doom and gloom, but the doom and gloom true times were back in the '90s. They're not now.

We know that economic growth and social prosperity are, in fact, linked, Mr. Speaker, to our ability to continue to engage effectively in the highly competitive international arena. We are absolutely, 100 per cent aware of that. We're investing all the time in good jobs for Manitoba families and the opportunity for our young people to get the skills and training they need to find those good jobs because we want them all to be able to remain in Manitoba, and we want them to be able to put down their roots in Manitoba. So we are investing all the time in the kinds of skills and training needed in order for that to happen.

People may not be aware, over the past five years Manitoba's average annual economic growth was the second best in Canada, Mr. Speaker—second best in Canada—ahead of Saskatchewan and behind only Alberta. That's pretty incredible for a province our size. Our unemployment rate is the third lowest in Canada and has been either the third or the second lowest since 2008 when the recession that members opposite didn't know existed began. The reason they maybe didn't know it existed because we've done such a good job managing that through the years. I'm not sure. I'm not sure why but that's my only guess on that one.

Last year, while the rest of Canada, Mr. Speaker, were losing manufacturing jobs, what was Manitoba doing?

An Honourable Member: Gaining jobs.

Ms. Wight: Yes, we were in gaining jobs. We saw an increase in manufacturing jobs where the rest of Canada was losing them. We are building all the time for the future, with new airports, with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, with the RBC Convention Centre expansion, with new hotels and condos and downtown, with new schools and health centres. Our manufacturers are expanding their operations, Mr. Speaker: Boeing, New Flyer, Canada Goose, Winpak. So it's a pretty fabulous picture of economic growth and trade that is going on in the Manitoba world.

And I did want to get a little bit on about CentrePort because we established CentrePort of Canada, of course, as Canada's first foreign trade zone, and it provides duty and tax relief that will support Canadian business. So CentrePort Canada builds on our province's already well-established transportation of network of air, rail, trucking and sea routes that connects our businesses, Mr. Speaker, with the entire continent, and it's exciting.

Many years ago, we used to speak about Manitoba one day becoming the Chicago of the North and it didn't really happen then, but I think, Mr. Speaker, that we are truly on the path to becoming the Chicago of the North now with CentrePort.

We've partnered with the federal government to provide \$400,000 in support as well for the Yes! Winnipeg investment attraction initiative also, which is aimed at creating jobs and economic growth by attracting increased international business investments to the city, and we do a lot of work in that area. We are always working to bring in more investments into our province and we're very proud of that, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of all that worry-work that has been done in that area. In fact, Yes! Winnipeg has had 45 successes to date, and they have created 1,208 new, direct jobs created so far. So that is one of obviously our key goals. We want to be always working to make sure that Manitoba benefits, and Manitoba benefits with our youth getting trained and getting into jobs that will be supporting them and we're actually starting that.

I'd like to just mention, Mr. Speaker, by working with our youngest children in our province—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) will have two minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Speaker: The time being 11 a.m., it's time for private member's resolution.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Saran). The title of the resolution is Canada Post Eliminating Door-to-Door Delivery.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 31(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one put forward by the honourable member for The Maples, and the title of the resolution is Canada Post Eliminating Door-to-Door Delivery.

Res. 10—Agriculture Awareness Day

Mr. Speaker: Now it's time for private member's resolution, and the resolution we have before us this morning is entitled Agriculture Awareness Day, sponsored by the honourable member for Interlake.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Crothers),

WHEREAS 2014 marks the 10th anniversary of Agriculture Awareness Day in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS agriculture is a key economic driver in Manitoba, creating 30,000 direct jobs, 32,000 indirect jobs and contributing approximately 9 per cent of the provincial gross domestic product; and

WHEREAS the economic benefits of agriculture are widespread, creating spinoff industries such as agricultural machinery, equipment dealerships, restaurants and food retail, financial services and much more; and

WHEREAS the grains, fruits, vegetables and meat produced by Manitoban farmers are absolutely essential to quality of life; and

WHEREAS Manitobans should recognize the need to continue to foster appreciation and awareness of the important role agriculture plays in society through provincial programs and events such as Agriculture in the Classroom, open farm days, farmers' markets and the royal winter fair; and

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba supports primary producers and entrepreneurs by investing in a buy local campaign to connect Manitobans to locally sourced products; and

WHEREAS Manitobans strongly value farming and the rural way of life.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that all members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to support agricultural producers and recognize the benefit they provide for the province both economically and socially; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to support investing in innovation, research and targeted on farm infrastructure, combined with strengthened insurance programs, to help grow the economy and create good jobs in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), seconded by the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Crothers),

WHEREAS 2014—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

The resolution is in order.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Thank you and good morning, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure and honour to rise to sponsor this resolution this morning, the 10th anniversary of Agriculture Awareness Day, and I would like to begin my remarks by acknowledging the woman who created this program a decade ago, the Honourable Rosann Wowchuk, former deputy premier, minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and staunch member of the Swan River constituency, truly a pillar in the agricultural community and a mentor to myself personally, accomplished a great number of deeds across her very noteworthy career, this being just one example of the good work that she has done.

It's also a pleasure to me to rise on this topic because of another Rozanne, my wife—Rosann Wowchuk—who is a farming woman herself. She comes from a ranching family and actually brought me into the farmer industry personally. I was not a farmer as a child growing up; I was a town boy. And, of course, my father did take us into the North, he bought a fishing lodge when I was only eight years old and took us into the bush and taught us how to work and how to survive. And, of course, most of my career was spent in the oil rigs in Alberta.

But when I was elected in 1999, I remember my wife and I bought a small farm in Poplarfield and I was sitting at the kitchen table one day musing how, you know, I represented so many farmers in my constituency and, on that note, perhaps I should consider farming. And, I don't know, I may have had one or too many Seagram's '83s that evening and was musing in such a way, but—and I jest, Mr. Speaker—but I did make mention of that. And I think it was about two weeks later my wife showed up with 10 sheep and said, here you go, son, start farming, which I did. Hey—and I've been building fences and buildings and so on and so forth ever since. And I have to say, this is part of our resolution this morning, the appreciation of rural—the rural lifestyle. And I am living it now and I can say that it was the smartest move that I ever made.

When I do leave the city, the Legislature, and go back home, it gives me great pleasure to drive into the farmyard and to see all the life around me when I arrive, from donkeys braying to sheep baaing to roosters crowing to guinea hens cackling in the trees to dogs and cats. And that's just the domestic wildlife, not to mention all the natural wildlife that shares my farm with me, whether it's wolves or bears or deer or elk or what have you, I'm surrounded by so much life and I'm very happy that I took this course.

Now, when I look at this resolution, I have to ask myself a question. Members opposite who represent so many rural constituencies, I have to ask, why do Conservatives hate farmers? And I have to look at their record. I go back over 15 years in this Legislature. I look back to 1999 when I was first elected, and I won't dwell on it too long, I've mentioned it before, but the fact that when we came into office we had to reconstitute The Water Rights Act, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite had been so lax that a judge in our province actually threw The Water Rights Act out the window because of the fact that the government of the day had failed totally in

their responsibility to maintain the provincial drainage system.

Other examples, they cancelled the rural stress line. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker. Farming is a stressful business. I can attest to that. When winters are long, you're running out of feed, or it's raining and you're dealing with mud or what have you, prices, the diseases. The range of issues that farmers face are beyond comprehension, and the stress levels that they experience as private entrepreneurs, a rural stress line just made total sense. But that was too much for members opposite, for a paltry \$100,000 or whatever it was, which is not a large amount of money in the greater scheme of things, that was too much for members opposite who had to cancel that, something that this government reconstituted.

Another thing, right after we were elected, the practice of farmers in the good old days when they couldn't seed in the spring because of too much rainfall. They would have to come to government hat in hand and quite often ring the building with their tractors, protesting to get government's attention to try and cobble together some type of ad hoc program to address the crisis. Well, this government, one of the first things we did when we came to office was we constituted a program called Excess Moisture Insurance. Now, farmers know—farmers know if they can't seed by a certain time in the beginning of the year that they are covered off. They don't have to panic. They don't have to protest. Something as simple as that members opposite over an entire decade in office neglected to do. I remember talking to the late Harry Enns, and he said, well, that was on our list of things to do. That was the very next thing we were going to do. As soon as we were re-elected in 1999, we're going to reconstitute the—or set up an excess moisture insurance program—never did, too late. Sorry.

Another thing, a very good example, Farmland School Tax Rebate, what a huge thing that this government has done. Started at 33 per cent, we're currently at 80 per cent, which is 80 per cent more than members opposite ever put on the table, that's for sure. So you know, they're criticizing us today, we haven't got to 100 per cent yet. You know, talk about disingenuous, Mr. Speaker, when you have done absolutely nothing in a decade in office, to criticize this government because we've only gone 80 per cent of the way. It boggles the mind, I have to say.

* (11:10)

You know, why do Conservatives hate farmers? I just have to look to the flood of 2011, you know, with the area that I represent around Lake Manitoba and, you know, this government put programs on the table over and above standard disaster financial assistance, which is where the federal Conservatives froze. And when we said that we needed help from the federal government in subsequent years to restore farmland and so on and so forth, what did the federal Minister of Agriculture say? He said farmers want to be compensated twice for the same flood.

Mr. Speaker, what a comprehensive lack of understanding that he displayed or probably not lack of understanding, lack of caring, because, you know, their whole approach to it is, you know, let them sink and swim if they can; I guess because they're really not interested in helping family farms. They're not interested in the generations of farms that have evolved over years. That's not their objective. Their objective is the corporatization of agriculture, is the industrialization of food production. That is the Conservative way of doing things. It's all about big business. The family farm is the last thing they care about.

And I see my time is running out but I do want to make mention of infrastructure—very important. Farmers need drainages, I've mentioned that already. Farmers also need roads, something this government has invested a lot of time and money in over the years and continues. And I'll give you just one example in closing, Mr. Speaker.

Talk about the community of Arborg. I know that the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) has been talking incessantly about this. You know, I have to look to Arborg. There wasn't an unrestricted highway within 10 miles of the town of Arborg when I was elected in 1999. We have put highways—well, Highway 7, as soon as we were elected, built to Arborg, constituted an unrestricted route; Highway 68, right across the Interlake from Highway 8 all the way to No. 5. We built, Mr. Speaker, a massive infrastructure investment that gives people in the Interlake an east-west trade route, not just a north-south route. All roads lead to Winnipeg.

This government has vision beyond that, and trade across the prairies is part of our agenda, as well, which is why we made that investment. We also brought a natural gas pipeline to the town of Arborg. We've gone twice into this community now with federal-provincial infrastructure grants to improve sewer and water. We have put in place

infrastructure to that community, so when the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) babbles on, I'm just somewhat taken aback. Either he completely doesn't understand what's going on, which I think is the case—and my time has run out.

Bottom line: The NDP is for family farms. The members opposite, for the big business corporate approach. I think our way is best for the people of Manitoba. Thank you.

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

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to the resolution put forward by the member from the Interlake, Agriculture Awareness Day, and he goes on at great length to suggest that all members of the Legislative Assembly be urged to support agriculture producers and recognize the benefits they accrue. And I realize that he's doing that for his side of the House because most of them do not have any idea what goes on in agriculture at all. I farmed all my life, actually from the time I got out of high school. I left—and before. We were dairy farmers when I was young, which was always somewhat onerous on the teenager wanting to do other things in the evenings. We had to be out in the barn milking cows at 5:30 in the morning.

So I did leave the farm for about a year, a year and a half, and I guess that got rid of the labour pool that my father had. So he sold the dairy cows. I did come back to farm and I went into hog production and produced hogs on that farm, hogs and grain and oilseeds for about 25 years. And then, eventually, I did go out of the hog business and into the cow-calf and ran a beef operation up until just last year, as a matter of fact, along with grain and oilseeds. .

You know, the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) really goes on and on and on about their so-called record, and I want to refer to a few things in that record that maybe aren't quite as rosy as he's implying. The—many of the things the NDP have done, to me, are not very supportive of agriculture. The hog moratorium—and I listened to him talk about the family farm, and I would really like to know what his definition of a family farm is. I have neighbours, two young brothers farming 15,000 acres of cropland, definitely a family farm. What is the definition of a family farm? Many, many early small farms out there are incorporated now. They're corporate identities. Are they not family farms? It's only the family that's running them. But I've asked

Rosann Wowchuk the same question, define the family farm, and she couldn't do it. And I ask again because I know it's a great catchphrase to throw out there. You can always say, oh, we're supportive of the family farm. But if you can't define a family farm then you're—you don't even know what you're supporting.

You know, the member for the Interlake referred to the flood victims, and I would like to enlighten the members opposite on—you know, many of those flood victims were farmers and ranchers, and I heard him basically blame the federal government for non-support of the flood victims. The federal program, through that—and I have a lengthy background in municipal—and the federal program in that was the disaster financial assistance. And I don't hear any of the flood victims complaining about the disaster financial assistance. What I do hear them complaining about are the programs that were put in as stand-alone programs by the provincial government. And now the provincial government turns around, goes to the federal government and—hat in hand—and says, you should be helping us fund specific programs we put in place.

Now, the disaster financial assistance, as I said, worked very well. It's the provincial programs that didn't work well, and we've heard false information put on the record. I've heard a couple of people from that side say the average payout to farmers and ranchers was \$300,000. By the minister's own figures in Estimates the other day the average payout was around 27 or 28 thousand dollars. The claim amounts and the number of claims works out—so they put false figures on the record and try and deceive the general public of Manitoba and say, oh, we did these wonderful things for these flood victims, but, oh, the feds just didn't help us. That's just a bunch of malarkey.

You know, they go on and on about their understanding, and I encourage them to be aware of agriculture. But one of the—just a little bit of a silly program that—being put in place here in Manitoba was the fertilizer application rules that use calendar dates. November the 15th you can't put fertilizer on land, after November the 15th and before April the 15th. Now, just in the last year, November the 15th we had an open fall, farmers were still able to apply fertilizer, the ground wasn't frozen. And so the whole gist of this, mostly, is to keep farmers from putting fertilizer on frozen ground because of the chance of runoff and things like that. So last fall, they could've kept putting fertilizer on.

This spring, April 15th, the ground's frozen, but they could put fertilizer on as of April the 15th. It's just stupid. Use a different parameter on it that really addresses the conditions that are out there.

* (11:20)

You know, the way this provincial government actually attacks agriculture is with—they put in place legislation like the hog barn moratorium, and we hear from the mayor of Brandon that Maple Leaf is now just running a shift and a half rather than two shifts because they can't access hogs. Hog barns have a lifespan. It might be 20 years, it might be 25 years, but they become obsolete. Right now, no one can build a new barn, and you can't expand the existing operations.

So, obviously, we're going to have a shortage of hogs both at Maple Leaf in Brandon and at HyLife in my own town, Neepawa, and we're doing nothing to address that. Companies like Maple Leaf, if they can't source the product, they'll go elsewhere. There's other jurisdictions where they will be able to source a product, and that would have a devastating effect on the city of Brandon.

The cattle industry, you know, we finally have some decent prices on cattle but our cattle herd has dropped to about two thirds of what it was 10 years ago and continues to drop. There continues to be a real drop in it.

Young farmers aren't interested in getting into the business because it's been so difficult for the last few years. And many of the older cattle ranchers, after the BSE hit in 2003, and finally they've made it through that, are now getting rid of their herds and getting out of the business. And I remember saying to Rosann Wowchuk one time in Estimates that this would happen. We'd see a million acres of pasture and hay land tore up in the next few years. And this government over here that likes to claim they're environmentally friendly, well, those hay lands of pasture are a carbon sink, and I said to her, you know, if you're environmentally friendly, address this issue somehow. And her response was, well, I hope you're wrong, and that's the only response I got out of it.

You know, we've seen this government also talk about enhancing after the BSE hit, enhancing slaughter facilities in Manitoba, and that just shows—their success at that just shows their dedication to agriculture in this province. They—the minister, actually in Estimates the other day, we used the

figure \$7 million lost on the Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council and he corrected us. He corrected us with a figure of something like 5 and a half million lost so it wasn't near as bad as we thought. But that's 5 and a half million dollars down the drain that could've been used somewhere else in agriculture.

I see my time is growing short and others want to speak to this. But I do want to mention that this whole resolution is based on misleading the public that this government actually cares about agriculture.

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

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): I would like to thank the member from the Interlake for bringing forward this private member's resolution for Agriculture Awareness Day on its 10th anniversary.

So I represent an urban constituency, as you know, but it is a constituency that I certainly have a growing sense is changing, and there's a greater interest in being able to purchase local foods. And I think the reason that interest is changing is because I have a changing demographic. I still have many seniors who are very mindful of their health. I have more young professionals that want to support local producers. And I have more and more young families in the constituency, and they're interested in both finding economical options but they're also very engaged in how the food that they feed their children is produced, how it's harvested, how it's grown, and I certainly respect all of those reasons for wanting to have access to local foods. In fact, I share those views.

But I also have a bit of a soft spot for rural life, as I grew up in a rural community. I've mentioned this before in the past. At my house, when I was a child, my job was to collect the eggs and feed the chickens and the ducks and to clean out the chicken coop. We didn't have a very large one, but that was my job. And, you know, I wish I could offer that experience to my children because it's—it made a very deep impression for me.

My best friend who lived across the swamp road, as we called it, lived also on a small farm and had goats and peacocks and geese and sheep. And that was my first experience with goat milk, because her mom was dedicated to making sure that whatever she fed her kids came from their farm, whenever possible. And they also made their own maple syrup. And so I get a little bit romantic about that lifestyle,

but I'm very aware of how hard it is; it's very hard work. My grandparents also were farmers so I have some sense of what they went through.

I do have some interesting memories about growing up on the—on a small farm. We had some ducks and these ducks were pretty angry ducks. They would often wait for me at the bottom of our—we lived on top of a hill with a long laneway, and they would wait for me at the bottom of the hill for when the school bus came. And when I got off the bus, I would have to hike as fast as I could up the hill because they were chasing me, and I was quite petite as a child. They would clasp their claws onto the back of my rubber boots and peck my bottom as I was trying to run up the hill. So, despite that, I still like rural life.

But one of the traditions that we had in my home was visiting the local farmers' market, and this was a weekly tradition. We would travel early Saturday morning to the larger community that was about 25 minutes away from where we lived and I would have the opportunity to see some of the farmers that I knew there with their produce, whether that was fresh fruits and vegetables or jams, pies, sweets. There were folks that had their meat for sale, and there were musicians—local musicians—so it really was a cultural experience that I shared with many other community members. And I had a lot of fun as a child there, but also, as I grew into an adult, it was a tradition that I carried on.

And when I moved to Manitoba, I was looking for that same kind of experience that I could give to my children. And I was very happy to discover St. Norbert's market and some of the other smaller markets that are in the area.

But I wanted to have something even more close to home, and I invited the Harvest Moon Society to St. James to have a drop-off there. And many of the constituents I've mentioned already, such as the seniors, the professionals and the young families, I see them there when I go to collect my products that I order from them. And it's always a delight for me to be able to talk to the producers that are making the delivery that week. And it's always a different producer, so I've had the chance to meet the fellow that makes the honey, those that have made the jam, those that have made the—or grown the fruits and vegetables that I've ordered, and I think that's a very meaningful experience that more and more Manitobans want to have themselves.

I'm very proud that this government works towards making local products an issue of discussion and that we're—we've actually moved to make it easier for both producers and consumers to engage directly with one another.

And the important thing—I know there have been some issues previously, but the important thing is that we want to make sure that food is created—produced safely and that it's possible for people to access that food and that the food is completely safe, and the—we're moving forward with producers to do that.

We're committed to ensuring that this food, as I said, is produced in a safe and sustainable way. And some of the ways that we are working on that is the Buy Manitoba campaign, the Food Development Centre that we invest in, as well as ensuring that there are supports for farmers' markets across Manitoba. And, in terms of the safe and local food, our Buy Manitoba campaign supports primary producers and entrepreneurs by making those kinds of connections, so that other constituents that I live amongst, as well as I, can access these locally sourced products.

* (11:30)

It also provides a valuable method to educate consumers, and I think more and more people very conscious of where their food comes from and who is making it. And that is something that you don't see on the price tag of an item, but it's something that has a value for more and more Manitobans. And, Mr. Speaker, this program, our Buy Manitoba campaign, it ultimately strengthens Manitoba's economy because it's supporting local jobs and local producers.

The Food Development Centre works with small and large food processors to add value to Manitoba-grown products and to make sure that more made-in-Manitoba products are available on the shelves. We invested in the Food Development Centre's recent expansion, and that includes new specialized equipment and the space to accommodate more clients so those entrepreneurs that want to have a product available to Manitobans will be able to move their product through that testing system more quickly.

And in terms of farmers' markets, we believe in supporting farmers' markets across Manitoba. Every year we publish an up-to-date guide on where Manitobans can find fresh local food at

farmers' markets, U-picks and community-supported agricultural sites across the province. And we've established new guidelines in 2009 that give Manitobans more opportunities to support local farmers and food processors. This guideline expanded the number of days a market can be open and clearly outline the responsibility and rules that operators must follow, including proper food safety practices.

I think that having this close to home is the most important thing. I like going to St. Norbert's market. I think it's great, but it's also crazy busy because the demand is so great. I'd like to see more farmers' markets in smaller areas that local people can walk to, for example. And I think that that cultural experience, it's not just about the food, it's also about the community members that want to go to a farmers' market. This is very significant, it helps create identity for people in communities. And I think in my case, where I grew up, having not just the food producers but, as I mentioned before, the musicians and the people that sell baking—all of those people have a part in this, and that's what helps people understand that there are people in rural areas that do this for a living. It's wonderful, the products that they make, and we should have access to that.

So I would just like to say that we're working to help producers and provide more ways for Manitobans to access these products. By making these investments, we are ensuring that family farms remain viable, we're giving young farmers opportunities to stay on the farm and raise families, and I certainly believe that that's what more and more Manitobans want.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Speaking to the resolution, Agriculture Awareness Day, there is no doubt all members in this Chamber have some semblance of respect for agriculture, are somewhat aware of agriculture. The difference is on that side of the House it's lip service to agriculture; on this side it's a passion for agriculture, and I can speak from that—from experience.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am reminded at home in my office I have a picture up on my office wall, and it's of my youngest son. At the time he was eight years old, not old enough to be in 4-H; you had to be nine years old at that time. Now they've lowered the age, but at that time he was not old enough to be in 4-H. But that picture is of him holding his sister's 4-H steer, and on his grubby T-shirt—it shows up in

the picture—and the reason I have it framed on my wall, in the wall of my office, is because on his grubby T-shirt it says, on the farm, every day is Earth Day. And that is true. That speaks to the passion of agriculture.

We don't need to be told from someone else that we respect the land, that we look after the land; farmers know that. They don't need a government telling them that—what they should or shouldn't be doing, on how they should look after their land, because they have that passion in them to do that. *[interjection]* And I know the member from Burrows wants to speak to this resolution, and I'm sure she'll get her chance. But these—you know, why—while everyone supports agriculture, the difference is in how you support it or how you work against agriculture. And we have to realize within agriculture there are many different sizes and many different scales.

And I know I've heard a couple of the members speaking about the Old MacDonald's attitude towards farms with the sheep and the pigs and the goats and the chickens and the guinea hens and all the rest, and that's good. I certainly encourage that because that does give you a sense of agriculture.

But it does not give you the right to speak against other farmers who may have large grain, hog, cattle operations, who run a very efficient operation, who run a very large operation. All these operations have a place in Manitoba, and you should not be penalizing one or picking on one at the expense of the other because that is not what the farm industry does.

The member from Minto, standing up this morning, calling for the reinstatement of the Canadian Wheat Board. Get with the times, people. It is gone. Whether you like it or not, the farm community out there is moving ahead. The CWB, as it's called now, is still in existence. In fact, they're building elevators. They're buying grain. They're moving grain. *[interjection]* Well, I—if the members opposite actually had any connections with the farm industry, they would know that there has been grain moving this winter, albeit slowly, albeit some certain commodities have not been moving. There's been a lot of truck movement of grain. If you understood the grain industry, you would see that.

I was amused. The Minister of Agriculture, always good for an amusing comment, stands up in front of the hog producers in the Brandon winter fair, talks about how to move grain—how we're going—

how this government is going to move grain. And Karl Kynoch from the Manitoba Pork stands up after him and says, Mr. Minister, if you would allow the hog industry to survive and grow, we could consume a lot of grain in Manitoba.

The minister goes—speaks to the canola growers downstairs, and he starts talking about flax. You're talking about canola. Why are you talking about flax? Like, do you not understand agriculture? Do you not understand what's going on?

Like, that's the difference. It's lip service versus passion, and we have the passion for agriculture. We understand agriculture. And if you understood agriculture, as a government, if you understood agriculture, you would not be closing Ag offices, Conservation offices, Hydro offices across the province, because that decimates those communities.

If you understood agriculture, you would not be imposing moratoriums on agriculture based on political gain, not on science. If you understood agriculture, you would not be imposing more and more burdensome and confusing regulations, having the farm community spending more time doing paperwork than doing farming.

If you understood agriculture—and I give credit to the member from the Interlake. He's got a wonderful highway on Highway 68, beautiful highway for running motorcycles on. There's no traffic on it, and it's nice and smooth.

Come down to Highway 34. We can't even get a permit to move seed potatoes on Highway 34 right now. If you understood agriculture, you would realize that you have to have infrastructure in order to move products.

If you understood agriculture, if you understood the industry, you would be able to supply hydroelectricity to farmyards. Instead, we have farmers putting in aeration and drying units and installing generators because Manitoba Hydro cannot supply the hydro to them.

And, of course, if you understood agriculture, you would not build Bipole III through the most productive farmland in southern Manitoba. If you understood agriculture at—in the least, you would realize the impediment that that hydro line will cause across that agricultural land. If you understood it, you wouldn't be doing it.

* (11:40)

If you understood agriculture—and the member for St. James (Ms. Crothers) talks about buying local food—if you understood agriculture, you wouldn't impose confusing and contradictory regulations on local food producers. If you talked to the local food producers, you would understand—possibly you would understand the impediments that you're putting on their production.

If you understood agriculture, why do you place a cap on the farmland education tax rebate? What that has done—what the Minister of Agriculture himself recognizes is that that will increase the school taxes on the local community, on the local farmland, as the local communities are forced—the local school divisions are forced to raise taxes—that has a direct impact on the local landowners. If you adequately funded public schools, you may not have to increase taxes.

If you didn't—if you understood agriculture, you wouldn't force municipalities to amalgamate; you would work with them. And there was municipalities that would work together, but you forced municipalities to work together. You have totally decimated the goodwill that was built up between some of these communities by your imposing the amalgamation on them.

And then this government discontinues funding to the regional development corporations but they have a better plan. Their better plan is to put their bureaucrats in place to decide how regional development should happen. What happened to the local connection? This government is so out of touch with local people across this land. You wouldn't have lost a flax processing plant to South Dakota, jobs out of the Interlake, heading to the US.

If you understood agriculture, if you understood rural life instead of just paying lip service to it—if you had that passion, you would understand how you've decimated the agricultural industry in Manitoba. And it does thrive despite this NDP government, and that speaks a lot to agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

I support agriculture. Our side always support agriculture; it's because we have that passion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): I really enjoyed the commentary that the member from Midland brought forward and seemed like he's the godfather of agriculture and yet this side, I guess he realizes is not.

And I guess, you know, I can relate to a number of commentaries that the member from Midland brought forward. And let's get into the heart and soul of his commentary. If he felt so strong when they were in power about school tax rebate, why were they at zero and then we got into government and we went to 80 per cent? So let's—for the record, let's get this straightened out right off the bat. If they were so good and so conscientious about the importance of school tax savings for the farmers out there, why were they not the party that chose to make that decision right off the bat?

And let's be honest about the situation. They're promoting agriculture in the rural areas and so am I, by all means, and we talk about the added value of industry that's developed. In fact 62,000 jobs indirectly and directly are related to agriculture and I appreciate the agriculture industry where it's at. But you know one thing that's missing, as we talk about the transition of agriculture what it was 25, 30 years ago and what it is today, what they are saying is pay back the farmers and, you know what, the other component about the agriculture or the education component is, maybe they're telling us, maybe consider closing some schools in the areas where they have a low population base and that would be the demise of the small rural communities, Mr. Speaker.

We have the Education Minister saying we are not closing schools because we believe in rural diversification, yet the members opposite feel—let's go to 80, 90 per cent, and let's mainly consider closing some schools because that's exactly where the financial picture is drawing, yet they will not admit to that way of thinking. And that's a sad reality when they talk about—they know things about rural—I'm sorry to say that I don't totally believe what they're talking about.

I want to talk about the great things this government has done in the last little while. We talked about the various things, and I was surprised to hear that the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), a couple of weeks ago, say, finally, in his vocabulary, he brought up the CWB. They were silent for the last couple of years. They didn't even know what CW mean—meant anymore when there was a discussion about getting rid of the single desk.

But I do have to indicate to the member from Midland, what does bother me is that he always feels that they're the ones that know everything about agriculture. But I do have to say, I have a concern

where the elevator capacity for the grain farmers that had millions and millions of dollars sitting in their bins at a 116 per cent of elevator capacity and they're not—he's not sticking up for the producers in the province of Manitoba. Saskatchewan was sitting at 86 per cent elevator capacity; Alberta was sitting at 87 per cent elevator, what's wrong with Manitoba farmers? Were they not the godfathers of agriculture? Why were they not speaking out about the fact there was 116 per cent grain capacity on their elevators? Where are they? Where were they talking to the federal ag—where were they talking to the Conservatives in Ottawa? Where were they talking about it?

It took the minister from MIT and the minister with Agriculture, minister with Jobs and the Economy to put forward a task force team to get the message across that we had done that. You know, the sad thing is we've had the best crop in the province of Manitoba in historical scenarios, without a doubt, 30 per cent greater production than ever before, an opportunity for producers to benefit of \$6 a wheat. Today they're lucky if they're going to get \$4.50 a wheat because there's already a system that is ineffective. Let's be realistic. Let's pick out a branch of the Canadian Wheat Board tree. At least at the end of the day when the CWB—there was a co-ordinated effort between the rail companies and the grain companies, and we do not see it. Simply put, when we're looking at a million dollars a week of demurrage charges of vessels waiting, who do you think is going to land up paying for that. At the end of the day, who is going to land up paying for those costs that the producers had an opportunity to enhance millions of dollars out of their bins, but today they are struggled with the fact that somebody's going to have pay that.

And it's a sad reality that if the members opposite figure that's the perfect scenario, I beg to differ with them on that kind of an approach. And I'm very proud to have met with a number of organizations, stakeholder group organizations to reinforce the importance of the grain logistics movements in the province of Manitoba, because we are, truly, a province that can provide services to Churchill. We can go to Thunder Bay, we can go to the West Coast, but, obviously, the preference is to have other provinces move grain to the west, and Manitoba has traditionally been moving grain to Thunder Bay. Sixty-four per cent of Manitoba's grain production has always gone to Thunder Bay, and today we are struggling to find out why the reduction

of grain movement to Thunder Bay happened in the elevator capacity. And the fact is that the members opposite know what they're talking about farming—well, I wish they would have made some phone calls to the federal government and said, help out our grain farmers. Did they? I never heard anything about that, so it's truly unfortunate.

But let's talk about the other programs that our government has brought forward. Obviously, the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), I believe, was a feedlot operator and is quite familiar with BSE scenario that we all encountered. I personally encountered it and struggled through that as well and I fought very hard for that. But one of the things that we've come back with, and I'm very proud to say as the Ag Minister and all the members that sit on this side of the House felt that we were very improved, proactive in bringing back programs such as the Forage Insurance program that was never, ever-improved forage program—that they never even considered when they were in government.

We've also brought back community pastures. To the member from Neepawa area, brought forward a commentary about community pastures. Where was there a message that come across from the members opposite saying community pastures are important. Please, Mr. Ritz, reconsider demising of the community pasture. I did not see any kind of transmission whatsoever. But today—today—we've found \$1 million to help put together a team to make it viable for a three-year pilot project because we sensed the importance and we know the importance of that. And yet the members opposite said, we're supporting agriculture.

* (11:50)

Well, let me tell you, we've definitely become more proactive and we will continue to be proactive for the young beef producers in the province of Manitoba and other industries in the province of Manitoba. Whether they believe that or not, that is exactly where we're going. We're talking about TB testing in the province of Manitoba. We're talking about so many things that we've done, but the member from Portage obviously doesn't want to hear about it.

You know, the member from Portage should be very faithful that we have the Food Development Centre. We talk about value added that we've done in the province of Manitoba. We're talking about the new programs that are being brought forward through Growing Forward 2. Yet, you know, we hear

the members opposite always saying, well, maybe we shouldn't take any federal dollars because that's a bad sign of faith and working together. Well, I'm very sorry to hear that members opposite feel that we shouldn't be in partnership with the federal government, to use some of their dollars, because they figure that we shouldn't be taking out handouts. Well, I tend to disagree with them because it's truly a partnership that should exist.

And let's go back on the memory lane. Mr. Speaker, 1999 is when the members opposite were in power. They heard about excess moisture. It was a cry, it was a plea from the grain producers for them to bring forward a program. Did they not? No. In 2000, it took this government the opportunity to provide excess moisture program for the Manitoba producers. And, to this day, it is still being used and it's still accredited as one of the best programs that Manitoba crop insurance offers.

And they talk about being the godfathers of agriculture and they put deaf ears, when they were in power, to the grain producers. I think that's a true sign of their not choosing to listen to the grain producers in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, let me go back to my earlier comment when the PCs turned their backs on Manitoba agriculture industry by calling Growing Forward 2 the next provincial-federal-territorial agreement non-essential, quote unquote. This, along with their demands to cut \$550 million indiscriminately across the board, would put Manitoba growth and jobs in a risk in the rural Manitoba, without a doubt. And I really wonder why a discussion like that would even be considered.

And they talk about the fact that we have the great things we've done in this year to help out the grain farmers. We've taken the weight restrictions off to move that 116 per cent of grain to the elevator so they can be shipped so the farmers, at the end of the day, can get enough dollars to have money available in their pockets. As we know, the spring seeding is upon them. They're going to have to park their seed drills, they're going to have to park their agriculture equipment to haul grain and, to me, that is a sad reality if the members opposite feel that's the way the new modern way of farming is. I tend to disagree with their philosophy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a privilege, and I could definitely take more time to talk about it. Thank you so much.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a real pleasure to rise to talk about agriculture and the agricultural industry that I have been part of 38 years, so the minister has still has a few things and a few years to go to catch up to my mark in the industry.

And, yes, I was a cow-calf producer. I was also a potato grower and exporter and processor. I also did a lot of value-added processing, some of which was sold on the farmers' market that the member for St. James (Ms. Crothers) actually enjoys to going to at St. Norbert. This is actually a few years ago when the market was much smaller and less successful than it is now. But, certainly, I was involved in the early days in getting that one off the ground.

But there's just been so much misinformation put forward by that side of the House. This side of the House has a passion for agriculture. Many of us have spent our entire life in the industry, growing up with it, watched it develop, in fact, worked to make it develop, unlike many of the members over there.

And I did want to touch a little bit on some of the issues I heard earlier and, in particular, the concept of an Ag Awareness Day that the member for the Interlake attributed to Rosann. I just hate to correct a few facts on that particular issue. Keystone Agricultural Producers actually created that day and had it running for actually eight years before the minister discovered that it was probably a good idea and that she could borrow that idea. And we were happy to see the idea spread, because the more people that recognize the value of the industry, the greater the impact of the intent of that day, to have people recognize that we're major contributors in the economy of Manitoba—9 per cent of the GST, 62,000 jobs direct and indirect. We're huge employers, even side-inside the city of Winnipeg.

I remember working on one of our Ag Awareness Days, where we actually made the point of what dollars and what jobs were in some of the constituencies inside the city of Winnipeg, and we invited the members to come forward and we brought people in from the industries in those constituencies. And it was a shock to the members that how many people were employed inside their own constituency that worked in the agricultural industry. They simply were not aware that these businesses provided so many jobs and such high technology inside the city of Winnipeg. So I'm glad that they've actually learned a little bit, because they certainly could stand to learn a little bit. But they

keep trying to rewrite history. And I'm sorry, I like history as it should be, not as it suits you. And I think that's what we're hearing an awful lot from across the floor when it comes to the agricultural industry.

And I did want to touch, in the limited time that's left, in particular, on the issue of nutrient management regulations that's come into to the province. And I remember very well, because I was involved with Keystone Ag Producers and several commodity groups at the time, when they first set of nutrient management regulations were proposed by the minister for Thompson, who was then the minister for water—the member from Thompson, who was then the Minister of Water Stewardship, and the regulations were based on a set of aerial photos that were 60 years old and reflected none of what was actually going on in the countryside. But frankly, he didn't know. And had we moved forward with that set of regulations, fully a third of the hog producers in the province would have been forced out of the industry simply because they happened to live in a region that at one time had not been developed and properly drained, so the—it showed as flooded land or prone-to-flooding land. And about 60 per cent of the cattle industry would have been forced out of business because they were on class 4, 5 and 6 land, which, according to the member and the minister at the time, was not farmable land for any purposes, really should just go back to natural prairie. And maybe there would have been room for a couple buffalo and a few deer on it, but, clearly, we couldn't raise cattle on it.

So we finally had to sit down with him, after quite a series of confrontational meetings in the rural countryside, and sit down with the minister and say, what it is you really want? Do you know what you really want? And he could outline at least a few facts. He wanted to reduce the amount of nutrients that were lost from farmland. He had no evidence that there actually was any nutrients lost from farmland, but he thought that, okay, maybe we can reduce that. So we proposed to him—Keystone Ag Producers, not the minister's department—proposed the set of regulations that actually have come into place with some very minor modifications. And he promised us that those would be made to work, that they would be available. Because from our point of view, why would we go to all this extra paperwork? And it is a substantial amount of extra paperwork. I know when I was in the potato industry, we'd spend at least one day a week just doing paperwork, partly for the potato industry and partly on the nutrient

management regulation, a substantial amount of extra work.

And so we set a system in place that would actually work. And those regulations and those records would be available to us to help us prove our point that we are not part of the problem on Lake Winnipeg, that we can actually show where our nutrients go, and that they're retained on the farm and grown in the crop and removed by the crop. We have numbers to prove that. And we would have access to those numbers through the ministry.

Well, I happened to make that call the other day because one of the businesses in my community had changed ownership, and they would like—they wanted access to their old records. The new owners wanted access to the old records, because with the industry they got that, and they hadn't been kept locally, and so they were supposed to be available through the Province. Province was very quick to get back to them, we have them, but you can't get them. No one ever looks at them, but they're there, they're our property, you have no right of access, even though they were filled out. Now, we're filing for that, so that they have some information. But clearly, the minister's promise at the time, that these records would be available and in use and of value in terms

of dealing nutrient management issues, was just a promise, not actually in place.

Now, there are so many places we would like to go on this issue. I talked about the impact had they actually moved forward with that set of regulations. And by the way, that's a really good example of the red tape problem that the members were talking about the other day. It's an area where we're doing far more paperwork than the City of Winnipeg or all the towns do when they dump their nutrient loads; after they process it, they dump their nutrient loads right back into the river. We dump ours in a very controlled manner onto the farmland, and the crop actually removes it, and so that there's really no loss. We recycle it one more time. Actually, farmers are the original recyclers and, I would argue, are the best environmentalists you could get out there, far greater than any of the urbanites. But we do more paperwork than the city—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) will have three minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 15, 2014

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY		Resolutions	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS		Res. 10–Agriculture Awareness Day	
Second Readings–Public Bills		Nevakshonoff	1923
Bill 207–The Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act		Briese	1926
Helwer	1913	Crothers	1927
Swan	1915	Pedersen	1929
Pedersen	1917	Kostyshyn	1930
Rondeau	1918	Wishart	1933
Goertzen	1920		
Wight	1922		

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