

Fourth Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
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HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
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SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
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SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
<i>Vacant</i>	Fort Whyte	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 1, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Crocus Investment Fund

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Government was made aware of serious problems involving the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

As a direct result of the government ignoring the red flags back in 2001, over 33 000 Crocus investors lost over \$60 million.

Manitoba's provincial auditor stated "We believe the department was aware of the red flags at Crocus and failed to follow up on those in a timely way."

The relationship between some union leaders, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP seems to be the primary reason as for why the government ignored the red flags.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider the need to seek clarification on why the government did not act on fixing the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

Signed by Joseph Yuen, Carolynne Yuen, Alcide Bouchard and many, many others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following report: the Second Quarter Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the six months ending September 30, 2005.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the following nil report pursuant to section 13 of The Trade Practices Inquiry Act.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2004-2005 Annual Report for the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission, copies of which have been distributed.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

World AIDS Day

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Today, December 1, is World AIDS Day, a day that is set aside for us to remember those lost to this terrible epidemic, to honour those living with HIV and to recognize the accomplishments and challenges we still face.

This year the theme for World AIDS Day is "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise." Throughout our province, our country and our world, governments are being urged to keep their commitments to contain the HIV-AIDS epidemic. Manitoba is recognized as a world leader in HIV-AIDS research. We are proud to be the home base for such world-renowned HIV-AIDS researchers as Dr. Frank Plummer, Dr. Allan Ronald and both their teams at the University of Manitoba.

* (13:35)

Since coming into office, our government has taken the task of addressing HIV and AIDS very seriously. We have been engaged through various partnerships in a co-ordinated approach. AIDS does not discriminate, and it touches the lives of men, women and children, of mothers, fathers, sons and daughters.

Manitoba's provincial AIDS strategy utilizes culturally relevant approaches and emphasizes community engagement, harm reduction and prevention. From our Aboriginal strategy on HIV-AIDS to the HIV clinic at Nine Circles Community Health Centre and from the peer education initiative delivered by the Teen Talk program to the

community HIV-AIDS committee in Flin Flon, Manitobans are engaged in the fight against AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that today, World AIDS Day, we in Manitoba honour and remember the more than 20 million who have died from AIDS around the world and the 40 million people who personally fight the daily battle with HIV and AIDS.

I would ask that the House do so with a moment of silence.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): I rise today to recognize this as AIDS Awareness Week in Canada, and, in particular, today as World AIDS Day. AIDS does not discriminate. It affects men and women of all sexual orientations. Worldwide, it is a disease that has reached pandemic levels. In Africa alone, there are over 30 million cases.

To the average individual, making a real difference in the fight against AIDS might seem impossible. However, many individuals have truly made a real difference, and I would like to pay tribute to those individuals today, Mr. Speaker.

Last night, three remarkable individuals were honoured at a gala dinner for their efforts in the fight against this disease with the St. Boniface Hospital and Research Foundation's International Award. I would like to recognize the U.N. Special Envoy for HIV-AIDS in Africa, Stephen Lewis, and two Manitoba doctors, Dr. Allan Ronald and Dr. Frank Plummer. All of these men have spent time in Africa conducting research, raising awareness, promoting prevention, and, last night, they were honoured for their efforts. I am sure all members will join me in celebrating the achievements of these individuals and thanking them for their hard work.

I would also like to recognize the work of three Winnipeg high school students who are also contributing to the global fight against AIDS. Gabrielle Antaya, Kylie Esteves and Dean Ferley comprise the AIDS Awareness Committee at Collège Béliveau. Today they are raising money to sponsor a child in Africa who is living with AIDS. They have also compiled a presentation to raise awareness among their fellow students about the spread of AIDS. The actions of these students, so simple and yet so effective, should inspire all Manitobans to educate themselves about this disease and to contribute to fighting this global epidemic because AIDS affects all of us. The efforts of these individuals demonstrate Manitobans' commitment to fighting HIV and AIDS worldwide.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing their achievements and supporting their future work on the challenges that remain. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues in the Legislature in remembering and putting emphasis on HIV-AIDS this week, and particularly this day, International AIDS Day.

It has certainly been quite an achievement, the work that has been done here in Manitoba by Dr. Allan Ronald, Dr. Frank Plummer and the many others, indeed, Dr. Joanne Embree, who have worked back and forth between here and Africa to do what they can to improve the situation in Africa but also to bring back a much better understanding of HIV-AIDS so that, in fact, we can use that understanding here in Manitoba to prevent the spread of the disease here at home.

It is a condition which we need to be continually vigilant about, and it is clear that we need to make sure that we do not have any spread of HIV-AIDS, and that this disease, which has done so much devastation worldwide, we want to continue to do everything we can to bring awareness here and to make sure that we are doing, throughout Manitoba, everything that can be done to prevent this disease from spreading.

So I join the others here in saluting not only Dr. Ronald and Dr. Plummer but Stephen Lewis, the three award winners last night, and all those who have been engaged in this battle against AIDS and the effort to prevent HIV-AIDS.

Mr. Speaker: Could we rise for a moment of silence?

A moment of silence was observed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Water Protection Act Proposed Regulations

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Premier and his NDP government have continually turned their backs on Manitoba's agricultural producers. Draft regulations

under the Manitoba water protection act are the latest attack on the hardworking farmers in our province. The Keystone Agricultural Producers, along with many other provincial stakeholders, have voiced their strong concerns with the proposed regulations. They have clearly said that the provincial government is targeting agriculture, while accomplishing little to protect water quality.

My question is to the Premier. Why, Mr. Speaker, did he fail to consult with KAP agriculture producers and other stakeholders before drafting the regulations?

* (13:40)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, the consultation process is ongoing and it is existing right now, Mr. Speaker. The regulations are, as the member just pointed out, in draft form. They are in draft form to be an exercise in consultation. There are no final recommendations yet to Cabinet, and there are no final determinations in Cabinet. These regulations flow from an act that attempts to get balance between producers and the sustainability of water, this law that was passed by all parties in this Legislature, including members opposite, requires regulations.

Members opposite, we did not pass regulations in the dark. They are now in the process of being consulted. The advice we received from all Manitobans, including our farmers and our agriculture producers, will be taken into consideration prior to any final decision.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the Premier said he is going to listen to advice. I hope he listens very carefully to the president of KAP, Mr. David Rolfe, who said, and I quote, "We are deeply concerned that this continued focus on agriculture is incorrectly painting farm families as the primary problem when that is simply not true."

We know that this Premier has little regard for our producers' biggest economic driver. It was noted that Manitoba has the lowest GDP in Canada. When that question was raised to this Premier, the Premier was quick to say, "Well, Manitoba's GDP would be above the national average if you take agriculture out." Those are the words of this Premier. That speaks volumes of this Premier and his NDP government's feelings towards agriculture.

These water regulations have the potential to cripple the future of our agriculture industry. I ask the Premier will he withdraw the regulations and

redraft them in consultation with agriculture producers and other stakeholders, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, there are so many factual errors in the member's preamble, including—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (13:45)

Mr. Doer: Yes, Mr. Speaker, in the statement on the GDP, the lowest in Canada is factually incorrect. There are a number of other factual errors in the member's preamble. The fundamental point, the issue of dealing with improving our water quality and standards in Manitoba is a responsibility that all of us, and I emphasize all of us, in Manitoba have assumed with the unanimous passage of the water act.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the public hearing into the second shift of Maple Leaf requires now increased nutrient removal to protect the water in the Assiniboine River which affects other producers who utilize that water.

The increased standards that were put in place for Portage la Prairie, that were not in place before with members opposite, improved water quality out of the Simplot plant and improved water quality for the R.M. of Portage and for the city of Portage. The increased requirements, now under the City of Winnipeg jurisdiction, have a long-term plan to remove raw sewage from going directly into the rivers, another example.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to improving water quality standards all across Manitoba and, yes, we are committed to listening to farmers and producers before any regulations will be recommended by the ministers to Cabinet.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, they are committed, but it is at the expense of the agriculture community. That is what is flawed with what this NDP government is proposing.

In KAP's response to the regulations, they state amongst other things, and I will quote from their response, "It is imperative that the Province gets the regulation right the first time and not force producers into uncertainty. We do not want to hold up normally accepted and beneficial management practices to wait an onerous, costly and time-consuming appeal mechanism to disprove what we already know is inaccurate and not workable." Mr. Speaker, they

want it done right the first time and it is right here in the response.

I would like to table this in case the Premier has not had a chance to read it, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask, on the very serious issues that are raised by KAP, other agricultural producers and stakeholders in the province of Manitoba over these regulations, is he going to withdraw these regulations and redraft them or is he simply going to ignore concerns of Manitoba's agriculture producers' community and push through these flawed regulations.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we actually believe you can act to improve the quality of water and listen to the advice you have from all Manitobans to deal with water quality. When we say we listen, I mean, we listen. The agricultural organizations have met with our Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) and they have met with the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). We agreed to set up a technical committee.

I would point out that when there were concerns about our original water act and people in the agricultural community, when people in the agricultural community said we want amendments to the water act, we amended it. We listened. It is something I know that is novel to Conservatives, but we are a government that listens and then we act, Mr. Speaker.

Water Protection Act Proposed Regulations

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): The regulations under The Water Protection Act are a death sentence for agriculture in this province, especially the livestock industry. Yesterday, the Minister of Agriculture told this House that her department was involved in the preparation of these draft regulations, but that is the first time we heard that.

Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Agriculture had, in fact, been consulted then why did she approve the regulations that sell out the agricultural community?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the members opposite are having such difficulty with the fact that regulations were drafted and then put out to the industry for consultation. I do not know why they are having such a difficult time with this. We have consulted with the industry.

In fact, just recently there was a meeting between AMM, Manitoba Pork, KAP and others, as

recently as November 15, and that was the time when their comments were reviewed with them. It was agreed to set up a technical working group with them. We are in consultation with the industry, and we will work with them to lead to the final regulation that will be brought forward.

Mr. Penner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the document she refers to was not even available in her offices, in her GO offices, anywhere in this province of Manitoba that I have been able to determine.

The Keystone Agricultural Producers have summed up these regulations perfectly. They target agriculture without protecting water quality. Keystone's response to these regulations is supported by every major agriculture commodity group in Manitoba. They are undeniably clear about their position regarding the proposed regulations.

Mr. Speaker, if this Minister of Agriculture had an input at all into the drafting of these regulations, why did she not do something to prevent this attack on the agricultural community?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I think we are seeing that, even though the Conservatives voted for The Water Protection Act, they have no interest in moving ahead to protect Manitoba's water because the first reaction on a consultation for the water quality management zones from the Conservatives is to put forth their position, which they held for more than 11 years in office, which is to do nothing.

Let us remember, Mr. Speaker, that agriculture is already part of the solution, and we, as a government, have in part working with agriculture as part of the solution. The manure and mortality regulations brought in by this government have strengthened water protection and have not had the kind of devastating impacts on the agricultural community that members opposite like to put forward with their doom-and-gloom positions.

When KAP came forward representing the agricultural community on The Water Protection Act, and the Member for Portage (Mr. Faurshou) was the critic at the time, we listened, and we brought in changes to the act. We will listen on the amendments as well.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, obviously this minister has a very short memory. We brought forward 10 amendments to the bill, on this side of the House, to

make the bill even workable in the slightest way. Therefore, we supported this bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has failed to stick up for Manitoba farmers and I want to know why. When she saw the regulations, did she see them for what they are and choose to look the other way, or did she really have no idea that they would provoke the agricultural industry in the manner as they have?

* (13:50)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Here we have an example of work that is going on all across Manitoba, including with municipalities, with private companies, under The Water Protection Act, which is supported by all parties. We have demonstrated that we can balance, with the producers, the requirements for improving water quality. We have demonstrated it by the fact that we listened to Manitobans and amended The Water Protection Act in a number of places, based on the advice we received from farmers. Mr. Speaker, I think this is a Minister of Agriculture that listens to the producers and that is Exhibit A.

National CAIS Committee Report Recommendations

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, farmers have been hit hard in recent years, and the CAIS program has completely failed them. Why has this Minister of Agriculture appointed two people to the national committee that was established to review the program last spring?

I ask the Minister of Agriculture: When was this review completed and what were the findings? Will she table a copy of that report today in the House, Mr. Speaker?

An Honourable Member: Finally, we are getting some ag questions, that is good.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Well, I am very pleased—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would encourage farmers to come to the Legislature more often because now we are finally getting a lead question on an agriculture issue.

Mr. Speaker, on one hand we have people saying how terrible they feel about what is happening in the agriculture community and the pressures that they recognize, but we are not getting the questions here in the House. With respect to the CAIS program, I can assure the member that there is a review committee, and that report will be out shortly when it is—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: Obviously, this First Minister (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Agriculture do not know agriculture questions when they come their way.

Water is an important part of our questions, Mr. Speaker. This committee was charged with making recommendations to improve the CAIS program, which we know is seriously flawed. This committee was formed last spring and we have yet to see any recommendations. How many recommendations has the committee come up with and what are those recommendations?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that the member is not paying attention, because after the Ag ministers' meeting we did announce changes that were going to be made to CAIS. That is why producers do not have a deposit any more, they have a fee. The member should be aware that change was made. That is why we made a change that the cash in there would be a cash advance out of CAIS. That was an initiative out of Manitoba, and we have now got that cash advance going to 75 percent.

Mr. Speaker, there are other changes that have been proposed, such as inventory evaluation and issues on negative margins and those are still being reviewed. Thank you.

* (13:55)

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that our farmers should not be holding their breath waiting for changes to be made to the CAIS program even though they are desperately needed. The minister recently told a press conference, forging links between the CAIS production insurance and the CAIS insurance program.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture at least tell us whether the merger of crop insurance and the CAIS program is one of the committee's recommendations?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is talking income for farmers. I want to point out that, in terms of holding your

breath, that nobody, nobody, should listen to a Conservative swaggering into a coffee shop talking about how they cared for farmers. This Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has lowered the education tax on property for farmers by 60 percent, saving farmers, in 2006, over \$550 a farm. That is not holding your breath. That is delivering.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Morris has the floor.

Rural Manitoba Government Initiatives

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, rural Manitoba is dying under the watch of this NDP government. When farmers suffer unprecedented years of difficulty it soon impacts negatively on small businesses in rural Manitoba. Businesses close and jobs are lost.

Recently, at a farm women's conference, suicide on the farm was one of the things mentioned by the keynote speaker because of stress related to not having enough money to support families. Why is this Minister of Agriculture ignoring the struggles of rural Manitoba families instead of providing leadership and support?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, indeed, I had the opportunity to visit with many women at the farm women's conference, and we did talk about some of the challenges that are facing the farm community.

I want to ask the member if she remembers when the Conservatives were in power, they cancelled the farm and rural stress line and they cancelled supports for farmers. Let her not be holier than thou and say that she cares about farm families. It was their government that cancelled the farm and rural stress line, took away supports for farmers. We have acted differently. We have put those supports in, and we will continue to work with the farm community.

Grow Bonds Program Reinstatement

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, this minister has been on record as saying that her idea of rural development is for farmers to go get a job on the floodway expansion program. Rural businesses are closing because this government refuses to assist them through the difficult times. They have

eliminated things like the Grow Bonds program which enhanced value-added processing.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) today told farmers that we need more value-added processing. If he stands by what he said will he reinstate the Grow Bonds program which specifically helped the value-added industry?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I will stand behind our record of what we have done in rural development for economic development; Simplot, a hemp plant that is going up, wind energy, ethanol, biodiesel. The members opposite are talking about the grow bond and the issue of not having a grow bond. I hope she will recognize that we have put in place a CED Tax Credit Program that is working for producers and we will continue to see economic development.

The changes that we have made in our GO offices, Mr. Speaker, the number of extra people who are working with producers in the small communities on economic activity has grown tremendously. I can tell you that we will see growth in many areas.

* (14:00)

Transportation Infrastructure Funding

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, as if being neglected by other government departments is not enough of an insult, farmers in rural Manitoba must also struggle to keep their families viable by hauling their grain, livestock and processed goods over Manitoba's crumbling road system.

If the Minister of Transportation really understands the seriousness of the condition of our rural roads, will he replace the \$56.4 million earmarked for road construction that his department returned to general revenue?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I will not talk about moving his birdbath out of the way, but I will tell him to move his easy chair out of his backyard now because we are building that No. 1 highway to Saskatchewan if he likes it or not.

You know, we have heard members opposite talk about this often and, yet, we increase our budget by \$16 million last year and guess what? Who votes against it? The members opposite. Now, Mr. Speaker, we understand that there are a lot of

challenges in Manitoba. We realize that transportation is an economic enabler. We are working very, very hard to look after those roads that were run down for 11 years under members opposite.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, when you do not spend it, that is why we voted against it. What will it take to make this government and this minister understand that our transportation infrastructure is vital to the sustainability of rural development and to our agricultural sector?

Mr. Speaker, the roadways are crumbling. Farmers have to detour hundreds of extra kilometres on substandard roads. Spring road restrictions are now being imposed all year long.

I ask the minister again: When will he realize the important connection between roads and the agricultural sector? When will this minister stop penalizing rural Manitobans and start fixing the roads that move these farmers' products to market?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, members opposite, as I mentioned, there has been a lot of discussion with regard to transportation recently and I am glad to see they are interested. Finally, after six years, they show some interest in transportation. They showed no interest for 10 years during the 1990s. I am pleased to see they are showing some interest.

Mr. Speaker, let me just refer to a document that takes a look at, in 1996, a budget of \$100 million and they only spent \$96 million. In 1997, they budgeted \$97 million, they only spent \$90 million. In 1998, they budgeted \$105 million, they only spent \$104 million. So members opposite, we have spent—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lemieux: You know, Mr. Speaker, we have budgeted and spent more than \$15 million more in our last five years than they spent in their last five years.

Young Farmers Government Incentives

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's young farmers are being forced out of business because this government is forcing upon them legislation and regulation that makes it too costly for them to farm. All these regulations are driving the best and the brightest of our farmers out of business. Even though she tells them to stop at the floodway and take a job, they are not staying in

Manitoba. They are heading right out to the oil fields in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, this minister, when is she going to stand up for young farmers here in Manitoba and tell her Cabinet colleagues when they come forward with the logical regulations to stop it and send it back to the bureaucracy and defend our farmers?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work to create economic growth that will give new opportunities for our farmers. How many young farmers in his area have the opportunity to grow potatoes now for Simplot? I would like to ask the member that question. How many young farmers across the province will have the opportunity to use their canola in biodiesel plants? How many young farmers will have the opportunity to put ethanol into the ethanol plant and then use that feed for further processing and feeding of cattle and hogs.

I could tell you, Mr. Speaker, we are working with young people. We have made changes to the agriculture credit programs so young people get a rebate, and we will continue to work with them.

Mr. Faurchou: Mr. Speaker, I have heard nothing new from this minister. The rebate program was in existence when the Conservatives were in government and the then-Agriculture Minister, Harry Enns, put it in place for the young farmers.

Recently, an Ontario couple was recognized as Canada's outstanding young farm couple for their prowess in agriculture. They had innovated a new biogas plant which serves to eliminate manure spreading and provide for 700 homes in London, Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, that particular innovation would not even have been allowed here in Manitoba because of this government's rules, regulations and legislation. When is this minister going to stand up for young farmers and allow them to continue to farm in this province?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, if one considers what Ontario's Conservative and Liberal governments have done to the energy field and done to Ontario hydro, and the fact that they need 25 000 megawatts of power, it is no wonder that they have to go to great lengths to get any kind of power in Ontario.

I welcome the fact that, in Manitoba, we have expanded ethanol to be 150 million litres under this minister and this government, that we are going to have pilot projects and projects through biodiesel under this Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), that people have wind turbines on their farms paying money to diversification to agriculture producers under this government. Not only do we have it now, we are going to have more into the future. There is a future economy that we are helping to build. We are not in the dark ages of the Tory era years.

Winter Heating Cost Control Act Justification

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, this government is, in fact, being very dishonest with Manitobans. They indeed have a hidden agenda when it comes to Manitoba Hydro, and I would ask for the Premier to listen very carefully. The NDP yesterday accused me of wanting to, and I quote, "To create a stampede of people over to electricity."

In fact, the MLA from Elmwood, and again I quote, "If you have a rush of people from gas going over to electrical heat, what you are going to do is you are going to cut into our exports." This bizarre public scam that they are prevailing over Manitobans about a rebate system that is fundamentally flawed, that is taking advantage of our farmers and needs to be addressed.

Will this Premier be honest and tell Manitobans why have they brought forward Bill 11? What are they doing to all Manitobans? This is an unfair, unjust piece of legislation—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:10)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, again I find it shocking after we had the tears at the farmer appreciation day from the Leader of the Opposition. He would not ask one lead question on agriculture in this session.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I challenge the Premier why it is that he would even say something like that when his own minister did not even have the courage to give a political statement, a ministerial statement, on this particular issue, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is way off base and he should answer—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. For the information of the House, points of order are to be brought to the attention of the Speaker when there is a breach of a rule or departure of Manitoba practice. For the information of all honourable members, we allow 45 seconds for questions and answers and that should be enough time, if a member disagrees, to get their preamble in or postamble in, and I ask the honourable members not to use points of order for debates.

The honourable Member for Inkster does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out that this government, because of the great export sales based on Limestone which we built and were criticized and condemned by the Liberals at the time, we have equalized all the hydro rates in Manitoba so a farm family pays the same electrical bill or rate as a family in Winnipeg or as a family in northern Manitoba. That is called treating farmers equitably with other people in Manitoba. This government brought that bill in and I am proud we did.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is on a different planet. How is he helping the farmer that does not use natural gas, that uses alternative heating like electricity? I am going to continue to quote the member from Elmwood in which he states, "If you have a high efficiency gas furnace, in fact, your costs are still lower than if you have an electrical furnace." The heating costs are about roughly \$100 cheaper.

He goes on further to say, "I got a furnace replacement, myself, in July and simply went to a high efficiency model rather than going to electric." This is what the senior New Democrat member of his caucus is saying. Well, we got Manitoba Hydro advertising conversion, Mr. Speaker. There is a hidden agenda here and it has more to do with the exportation of power and the profits there.

Why will the Premier not come clean and tell Manitoba what he is actually doing, and stop trying

to give us some sort of a shaft? At the end of the day, he is not dealing fairly with farmers and rural Manitobans on this issue and many, many others. Shame on him.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am going to ask the co-operation of all honourable members. There were some words being used and I could not hear. I just heard part of it and it was giving the shaft to Manitobans. If it was directed at a personal individual that comment I did not hear, but I will check the records because there was too much disorder in the House. That is why it is very, very important that I hear all the words spoken. That is why decorum in this Chamber is very important, so if there is a breach of a rule it gives me the opportunity to deal with it which I should. So I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, but all I heard was only part of it. I will be checking the record.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, we want to help families lower their future household heating cost by making their homes more energy efficient and fast tracking money. We want to strengthen financial incentives for best-in-class, energy-efficient oil and gas furnaces. That is what we want to do in the bill.

Those comments that I just said came from a Mr. Ralph Goodale, a Mr. David Emerson and a Mr. Joe Fontana, whose recommendations are precisely contained in our bill, Mr. Speaker. The benefits of our bill go to electrical furnaces, gas furnaces. They are designed to do specifically what Mr. Goodale and Mr. Emerson put together in a program that was announced yesterday by Hydro to help people reduce their energy costs by 30 percent. That is why we have the bill and that is why we want a freeze and that is why electrical rates are the lowest in North America.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Emerson.

Order. The honourable Member for Inkster.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words and the member from Elmwood bought a gas furnace. The Premier (Mr. Doer) and this government is shafting the farmers and rural Manitobans that do not have natural gas being delivered to their homes. There is no subsidy going there.

Their system, their bill, is bizarre. It does not make any sense, Mr. Speaker. If this Premier had an ounce of leadership, he would acknowledge he is making a mistake here and he should do what is right. The legislation is fundamentally flawed. You cannot move forward on the subsidy. You are making a disadvantage to our farmers, to our seniors and individuals on fixed income.

Will this minister amend the legislation, Mr. Speaker, so that all Manitobans will benefit through a rebate and not some bizarre subsidy that you schemed up, that you did not even share with the member from Elmwood. Shame on you.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member that the program announced yesterday will reduce people's energy consumption by 30 percent, whether you have a gas or whether you have an electrical furnace, and is available to all Manitobans. It has been subsidized not just by Manitoba Hydro, but by the federal government, and that sanctimonious member ought to recognize that our bill will freeze—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, that bill not only will do that, but it is designed to freeze electrical and natural gas rates for the entire province and we have gas rates that are lowest in the country. In addition, I do not know if the member did, but I think he voted against our bill to lower electrical rates in rural Manitoba. I think he voted against it, and he ought not to turn around and try to turn it into a political issue now.

Alternate Land Use Services Pilot Project

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, our farmers have always played a valuable role in preserving the natural landscape for the benefit of all Manitobans. One of the farming industry's main proponents, Mr. Ian Wishart, the vice-president of KAP, who is in the gallery today, has lobbied tirelessly for a number of years now on the Alternate Land Use Service project and this has now led to concrete results. I, for one, would like to acknowledge his efforts.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives tell us of the recently announced pilot project that recognizes and promotes

the role of agricultural producers as responsible stewards of the land?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to be able to announce the first pilot project in Canada under the Ecological Goods and Services. This pilot project will take place in the R.M. of Blanchard.

I certainly want to thank the Keystone Agricultural Producers for the role that they played in helping to design this pilot and for their work they have done in going to other provinces to let other provinces know how this will work. Mr. Speaker, this pilot project will reward producers for being responsible stewards of the land. The concept is to motivate farmers to preserve and protect natural fragile areas of land that have lower agriculture values but can provide environmental benefits to Manitobans.

**Wally Fox-Decent
Professional Conduct**

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Board a question about Wally Fox-Decent's involvement in a \$4-million WCB investment in CentreStone Ventures. In addition to the \$4 million the WCB invested, CentreStone also received a \$2-million investment from the Crocus Investment Fund. Mr. Fox-Decent also sat on the Crocus board. The Minister responsible for Workers Compensation Board either did not see the conflict of interest or did not want to see the conflict of interest.

My question is again for the minister responsible. Could the minister tell this House if her department ever received any complaints about Mr. Fox-Decent's conflicted roles in Crocus and WCB?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): The answer to that question is no.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, my question again to the minister: Could the minister tell this House if her department ever received any complaints about Mr. Fox-Decent's professional conduct in his role as chair of the WCB?

Ms. Allan: I just want to remind members opposite that Mr. Wally Fox-Decent was appointed to the chair of the WCB by the government opposite. I just want to remind the members opposite, as well, that the Leader of the Opposition has made many

glowing remarks in regard to the work that Wally Fox-Decent has done for his government when the former Premier Filmon was in power.

In regard to his question, none that I am aware of.

* (14:20)

**Bill 200
Closure**

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): We heard the Premier earlier indicate that they are a government that listens and then acts. Well, Mr. Speaker, we saw the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) in true form, who has put closure on a piece of legislation this morning in private members' hour because they do not want to listen to people that come to committee.

Will the Premier stand up today and direct his minister to listen before he acts and allow this bill to go to committee so that members of the public can come forward and make presentation? This bill is a bill that would have allowed for an individual to receive a—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Water Stewardship, on a point of order?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, if members opposite are looking at asking a question, they can do it in terms of matters of policy, in terms of government. It is a well-established parliamentary practice that a matter that has been dealt with by the House is, indeed, dealt with.

I would suggest you ask the member to ask the question in terms of any policy areas that she may feel should be discussed, but, in this particular case we did have a vote this morning. Mr. Speaker, it would not be normal parliamentary practice in this particular case to continue what was both the subject of the vote, and also by a separate matter of privilege which you have taken under advisement. I would like you to call the Member for River East to order.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order?

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker.

In this House, we attempt to do our business in a way which does not put closure on matters which are before the House and which can still be fully debated.

Mr. Speaker, earlier today, we saw how this government put closure to a matter which has very serious dealings about a woman who is a disadvantaged person in our society, who is calling out to government to look at allowing her to keep a little bit of money in her pocket rather than government clawing it away.

All this is, Mr. Speaker, is an amendment to an act which would allow the government not to claw back the Canada Pension Plan that was afforded her. That is all it is. This is an amendment to the MPI act, which is somewhat draconian here and which needs to be looked at. Today the government decided to put closure on the matter.

Mr. Speaker, yes, by closing this matter it disallows an individual to come before this government in committee to allow her or people who are in support of her to express their views before government and before legislators in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the member does not have a point of order. The member from River East has full authority and full obligation to ask a question as it relates to a matter that is important to her constituent, that is important to Manitobans and that, indeed, shows a deficiency in an act that we have before this House.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): On the same point of order, it is perfectly in order for the member opposite, the Member for River East, to ask the question on the policy of a certain matter that she disagrees with on behalf of a constituent. The issue of the Legislature voting on a bill is not an issue of time allocations or closure. It is merely the democratic expression of the House pursuant to the rules. I think, Mr. Speaker, you have many precedents on this matter.

Mr. Speaker: On the same point of order, the honourable Member for River East.

Mrs. Mitchelson: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, what happened today in the Legislature merits the question, because in my 20 years here in the Legislature, and the Premier and I were elected on the very same day, and in his tenure here, I do not

believe I have ever seen the kind of punitive activity that was taken on—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: There has never been a piece of legislation that has been shut down at second reading without the ability for the public to have their say on legislation. They put closure before this went to a public process, Mr. Speaker, and the Premier stood in his place and supported that kind of injustice by his Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh).

I have a very specific question to the Premier asking how he could condone that kind of activity on behalf of his government.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), this issue, I took it under advisement this morning, and I have not come back with a ruling. There should be no questions pertaining to this matter until I bring it back to the House once I have made a ruling.

So I will ask the honourable Member for River East, if she has a question I would ask the honourable member to rephrase her question to avoid dealing with the issue that I have taken under advisement.

* * *

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess, I would like to ask the Premier whether he condones behaviour that would reflect closure on a piece of legislation and deny individuals the ability to come before committee to speak. Is that the policy of his government?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is the policy of our government to be democratic.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

*(14:30)

Mr. Doer: Each of us is elected in a competitive race with other candidates running and, ultimately, the public decides who is elected to this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, ultimately the Legislature, each and every one of us, has a responsibility to our constituents to vote in a manner that we feel is in the public interest. Sometimes when bills are passed, it is in the public interest. When bills are defeated, it is the view of the majority of members who are

democratically elected in this House that it is in the public interest, or when bills are amended, it is perceived to be in the democratic interest.

The one good thing about that, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day we are accountable to the people of Manitoba for the actions we take, and I remain committed to be accountable to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mennonite Heritage Village

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform all members of a visit that I recently made to the Mennonite Heritage Village. The Mennonite Heritage Village is located on a 40-acre site just north of the city of Steinbach. It is comprised of some 27 buildings of historical significance and approximately 60 000 historical artifacts.

The museum showcases historical exhibits that examine certain aspects of the Mennonite culture and history. It also showcases the Steinbach windmill, a replica of the windmill that was built in 1877 by Mennonite settler Abraham S. Friesen.

Mr. Speaker, the Mennonite Heritage Village fulfils an important function in our province, teaching present and future generations about the history of Manitoba's Mennonite community. Their mission statement reads: "The mission of Mennonite Heritage Village is to preserve and exhibit for present and future generations the experience and story of the Russian Mennonites and their contribution to Manitoba." But this museum is not just for Mennonites; it is a museum for all Manitobans and all Canadians as it preserves an important part of our shared history.

The museum also serves an important educational function, depicting Mennonite life and pioneer living. Each year over 8000 Manitoba students pass through its gates. They are treated to an interactive experience of history through live demonstrations, historical interpreters and guided tours.

Mr. Speaker, this museum, like so many important institutions in our province, could not operate without the help of its volunteer staff of over 400 people. Their contribution and never-ending support keep the program going. I would like to thank the Mennonite Heritage Village for inviting me

to their recent Village Advisory Council Consultation in November. The meeting gave the council and interested citizens an opportunity to raise issues and discuss several topics. I encourage all members to make a trip out to Steinbach to pay a visit to this interesting and important Manitoba museum. Thank you.

Farmer Appreciation Day

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize an important event celebrated today in the Legislature. The second annual Farmer Appreciation Day, organized by the Keystone Agricultural Producers, better known as KAP. This day addresses something that I feel very strongly about, supporting our farmers.

Today, KAP pointed out that over 50 000 Manitobans, one out of every eleven people, from every profession and across this province, are connected to agriculture somehow. Mr. Speaker, I see this in the great constituency of Carman. We have many industrious family farms, agri businesses and Hutterite colonies. You see in the communities how each business is interconnected and relies on each other. It is no different here in Winnipeg, even if sometimes people forget that their ties are to agriculture. Farming is a cornerstone of our history and vital to our economy. It is over \$3 billion in exports. If we want to be strong and successful players in the world marketplace then we need a thriving agricultural industry.

Mr. Speaker, in May of 2004, I brought forward a resolution concerning Agriculture Awareness Day which was supported by this Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and then ultimately passed unanimously in this House. This day, in conjunction with Farmer Appreciation Day, promotes awareness and understanding of the importance of Manitoba's agricultural sector. But every day we need to remember and honour the principles celebrated today, working in partnership with farmers, agricultural organizations, the business community and young people. We can increase awareness of the contributions that farmers make. Thank you very much.

International Day of Disabled Persons

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, each year on Saturday, December 3, we observe the International Day of Disabled Persons. This day serves to remind us that people with disabilities have a desire and a right to a quality of life ripe with

opportunities for full and equal participation. We reflect on the progress that our society has made in removing barriers that impede the participation of persons with disabilities and on our responsibility to continue to work together in building a more inclusive society.

I am proud of the many accomplishments that our government has made toward its vision of full participation by all of its citizens. We have outlined our commitments in *Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability*. This strategy guide provides a framework for breaking down barriers so that persons with disabilities can gain fair and equal access to services and programs and provide input into public policy decisions.

I am proud to inform members of some of our accomplishments toward our vision of full participation. In 2001, we appointed a minister responsible for persons with disabilities. In 2003, we opened the first ever Disabilities Issues Office, co-ordinating disability policy across government. We made important changes to our Employment and Income Assistance program, introduced an employment strategy for persons with disabilities. Currently, we are hiring a visitable design consultant to strengthen design techniques in building homes to ensure that people with disabilities have equal and affordable access to the life of the community.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to move forward with this process and other important measures as we strive to build a representative and inclusive workforce in this province, and we look forward to celebrating this important day at various community events throughout the weekend.

Sanford Sabres

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce to this House and to the people of Manitoba that the Sanford Collegiate senior boys AAA volleyball team, the Sanford Sabres, has won the provincial championships.

On Saturday, November 26, 2005, in Ile des Chênes, the Sanford team beat out nine other teams from various zones throughout the province to become the provincial champs.

The team players are Cody Maicher, Jamie Korstrom, Daniel Shinkel, James Kort, Tristan Schneider, Jared Bunkowsky, Josh Rogolsky, Brad

Friesen, Richard Reimer, Andreas Zinn and Kyle Babiuk. Cody Maicher was also awarded the most valuable player of the game. These young men were able to achieve this championship title under the very capable coach of the team, Mike Krykewich.

Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure and pride that I congratulate these provincial volleyball champions from Sanford Collegiate along with their coach, Mr. Krykewich, on their achievement, and I wish them well in all their future events. Thank you.

The Holy Month of Ramadan

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Speaker, during the month of Ramadan, I was pleased to attend an Iftar dinner at the Winnipeg Central Mosque on Ellice Avenue. The dinner was attended by 150 people, including His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba John Harvard.

Mr. Speaker, during the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims do not eat or drink from the first light of dawn until sunset. In abstaining from food, Muslims engage in self-purification, one of the five pillars of Islam, and focus on their purposes in life through constant awareness of God's presence. At sunset the fast is broken with a prayer, Taraweeh, and a meal, Iftar.

Mr. Speaker, Muslims who worship at the Winnipeg Central Mosque come from 42 countries across the globe. The Islamic community in Manitoba has a proud history of determination, perseverance and adaptability, maintaining the core beliefs and principles of Islam, yet joining in our province's cultural mosaic.

This annual dinner highlights how fortunate we are to live in a vibrant multicultural community where all Manitobans celebrate their beliefs and holidays. The Islamic community is working hard to make Manitoba an example for the rest of the world as a place where all faiths and ethnicities, races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect. I applaud them for their efforts which have helped to foster cross-cultural respect between Manitobans of various ethnicities, religions and cultures.

I commend the Islamic Social Services Association, the Canadian Muslim Women's Institute and the Winnipeg Central Mosque for organizing this dinner which broadens our horizons and enriches our province. I sincerely hope that all of the prayers made during the month of Ramadan are answered,

and the good deeds of the Islamic community are returned tenfold. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lakeside, on a grievance.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today on a grievance. There are so many problems, challenges and significant issues in regard to the agricultural sector. Farmers and their families are struggling to survive. Rural Manitobans are in dire straits. Without a massive turnaround we will lose our farms and agricultural industries and rural Manitoba will collapse.

* (14:40)

Why do I grieve this government today? Because the Doer government has the resources, power and capacity to change the situation for farmers and they are not doing that. Mr. Speaker, the problems with the CAIS program: the CAIS simply does not work and this government knows it. Yet nothing is being done about it. They are complacent to let flawed programs continue to operate. Under the CAIS program the people who need the money are not getting it. CAIS is a user-paid system. This government has no ideas for programs that are not user-paid.

Mr. Speaker, on the WTO talks, the minister has waited until the eleventh hour to meet with the stakeholder groups. Commodity groups are very concerned about what will happen at the WTO ministerial conference in Hong Kong. They know that the minister needs to take leadership and advocate for our Manitoba farmers. This government would not agree with our MUPI. They wanted to shut down debate on this urgent matter, and the government shut down the debate last week. We were not too concerned with this issue, but today in the Rotunda they were grandstanding for the benefit of the Keystone Ag Producers.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the regulations under the water regulation protected act, this government did not consult with the stakeholder groups before drafting these proposed regulations. These regulations are an attack on rural Manitoba. The government prepared these regulations using maps that were 40 years old. There was nothing scientific about the consultation document. There was no evidence. Who asked for these regulations? Why were they drafted in the first place, unless it

was the government who is determined to wipe out agriculture in our province.

The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) skirted her duties and left our farmers out in the cold. Either she did not think these regulations would impact agriculture or she failed to stand up to the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton). If she is incompetent or she does not understand her portfolio, are other ministers making her decisions for her, or is it both?

Mr. Speaker, increased slaughter capacity is needed in this province so that we do not find ourselves in another situation like the one that took place with the U.S. border first closed in May of 2003. We are still waiting for federally inspected slaughter plants to be built and for an interprovincial meat program that we have been advocating as well. Other provinces, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, B.C., are building processing plants or expanding existing ones. While this NDP government dithers, others are being built.

Some fear that the proposed Ranchers Choice plant will never be built. They claim that the farmers have money to put into it. We on this side of the House know how the farmers indeed are cash-strapped. The U.S. border closed to Canadian cattle two and a half years ago, and the border remains closed to cattle over 30 months and could still be closed for months to come.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the flooding this year, disaster situations were all across this province. Many Manitobans were devastated by flooding this summer because this government did nothing. Some farmers could not even see their lands. Many crops were drowned out. The situation was so bad in some places that there were whitecaps in farmers' fields. Many farmers are still waiting for financial support to deal with their disastrous situation. We have had a number of years with poor conditions for farmers, one year with drought, one year of frost, floods the next, and still no meaningful assistance from this government.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the pork industry, this government does everything it can to restrict the pork industry here in Manitoba. Even members of their own caucus oppose the hog-processing plant in our province. How will the government ensure there are enough hogs to fill the OlyWest plant when it makes it difficult for hog producers to operate?

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the grain prices, commodity prices remain low and grain producers continue to suffer. Farmers used to get \$6 for wheat. Now they get \$2.

This government's handling of the agriculture sector is shameful. They should be embarrassed to abandon our farmers and ignore our farmers. The state of agriculture under this NDP government is truly something to grieve about. Our farmers are suffering and our rural economy is suffering and this government turns its back. I am disappointed and disgusted with the way the NDP government deals with agriculture. They are still snivelling about farmers and our rural economy. They are hindering, not helping. They are killing our agricultural industry in this province.

That is what I grieve about today, Mr. Speaker, and we would love to see this government take the real initiative and make meaningful support programs for our province and our producers within the province.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if there will be leave of the House to bring forth the proposed resolution of the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), which is currently on the Notice Paper for notice of motion for Monday next.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to deal with the proposed resolution brought forward by the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food, is there leave? *[Agreed]*

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I want to first of all thank the House for allowing this resolution to go forward, so I move, seconded by the member from the Interlake, that

WHEREAS the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives has been involved in ongoing consultations with the Manitoba agricultural and food industry regarding the upcoming World Trade Organization Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives chaired a WTO Agrifood Industry Workshop on November 21, 2005, where Manitoba agrifood industry leaders clearly outlined

their objectives with respect to the upcoming talks; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives attended a meeting of agriculture ministers on November 24, 2005, to further discuss Canada's position and brief the federal minister on Manitoba's position; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade will represent Manitoba as part of the Canadian contingent attending the Hong Kong negotiations; and

WHEREAS agriculture is a vitally important industry for the province of Manitoba, accounting for five percent of our provincial GDP and one in eleven jobs; and

WHEREAS there are many potential opportunities for Manitoba producers and processors if the WTO talks result in greater access to U.S. and other foreign markets; and

WHEREAS Manitoba producers continue to be negatively affected by trade-distorting subsidies and trade remedy actions inappropriate for agriculture; and

WHEREAS some Manitoba producers have been well served by orderly marketing systems such as the Canadian Wheat Board and supply management.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade to work with the Canadian negotiators to achieve a result that will allow Manitoba producers and processors significantly greater access to foreign markets, the ability to compete fairly and equitably in global markets not distorted by domestic support programs and also maintain the right of producers to use orderly marketing systems such as supply management and the Canadian Wheat Board.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, I said the wrong name, it should be seconded by the member from Lakeside.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food, seconded by the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler),

WHEREAS the Minister of—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Ms. Wowchuk: I am pleased to have this opportunity to put comments on the record with regard to the WTO agriculture negotiations that are taking place and will be discussed at the WTO, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are several issues that these negotiations are focussing on. They are focussing on export subsidies, market access and domestic support. All of these issues are very important and I have had the opportunity over this last period of time to have discussions with all members of the agriculture industry. Just recently, we had a meeting right here in the Legislature, in fact, on the 21st of November, where producers had an opportunity to share their thoughts. As well, this was a subject of a lot of discussion and an update at the ministers meeting.

*(14:50)

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that producers told us very clearly is that Canada not be the first one to step up to the plate to give up anything. If we look at the negotiations that have happened in the past, if you think about the two-price wheat system that was important to western Canadian farmers, that was negotiated away. If you look at the Crow benefit, which was in legislation, and should never have been part of trade talks, that was negotiated away. But those dollars were never invested back into western Canada. In fact, by giving up the Crow, really, the federal government was balancing their budgets on the backs of farmers. Farmers have said very clearly that they expect us and all parts of the Canadian team to take a very strong position, and that we are not the first to the plate to give things up.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say, with regard to these discussions, there are a lot of proposals that are being put forward right now, but none of the proposals will substantially decrease the subsidies that are paid to their farmers, but would significantly impact the level of support that Canada would be able to provide to our farmers. The current proposals from other countries want to eliminate state trading enterprises, like the Canadian Wheat Board. They also target supply management commodities, but will not offer increased market access to other countries, which is important to us, or they will not offer any actual decrease in any other of the high subsidies that other countries are providing.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the proposal put forward by the United States, the United States is saying that they are going to reduce their subsidies, but all they want in their proposal is to shift it into another box, and they will still continue that high level of subsidy.

The most important discussions that have been taking place are with the supply management products. The discussion that we have had with the federal government is that their supply management products have to be protected through the sensitive products lines.

Certainly, other things that Manitoba producers are looking for is, under the tariff rate quotas, to have binding minimum access committed by product, binding rules for administration of those TRQs and elimination of tariffs within TRQs.

One of those issues that is very important is in the area of beef and pork into Europe. There is a certain level that can be imported into Europe, but Europe has lumped all of the red meats into one package, and there is no ability to get pork into that market. If they would take the route of binding minimum access commitments by product that would give us five percent and that would open up a whole new market to producers. So I can say to you that the position that we believe is very important is that we have some of those issues addressed.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to domestic supports, we believe that they be categorized in the green box as non-trade product distortions. I am sorry, I just want to correct that. The issues that we have with domestic supports and market access is that these are very important issues that have to be addressed and really are issues that could make or break moving forward on any kind of an agreement. Even though the U.S. has made some concessions on domestic supports, while the European Union offers market access, these are still not sufficient to meet the demands that producers in Canada are asking for.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Canadian farmers must retain the right to determine their own marketing systems because market empowerment is the only tool we have left to have any influence on our future. When we go to these negotiations, we have to ensure that we are not giving up supports that we have here before, as I said, others make any changes.

There are the issues, Mr. Speaker, that I want to talk briefly about with regard to the Canadian Wheat

Board. If you look at the framework that was signed onto, we were working under three pillars: market access, domestic support and export competition. Under the Doha declaration which stated that state trading enterprises were not to be part of the negotiations, but they were brought into the framework by the E.U. and the U.S. and accepted by all countries including Canada. So I have a great concern with regard to the Wheat Board in that it was not part of the Doha round, and then Canada allowed it to come into the framework agreement that was signed in July. That, I believe, put great pressure on our Wheat Board. I am disappointed that it is in.

I have to say that I am hoping that we can have a united front here, Mr. Speaker. I have concerns that we have a resolution here, and I am hoping that all parties can support it because I just saw a news release that was put out by a federal Conservative member who says that if they take office after this election, they want to take away the monopoly powers of the Wheat Board. So I am quite concerned about that comment because we have a liberal position here from Alberta and a different position from the rest of Canada, but I heard that there was a national position to continue to support the Wheat Board.

Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that the Wheat Board is put under export subsidy because this is really wrong. This is not an export subsidy. It is a decision that we should be able to make a decision about here. Monopoly powers are not trade distorting and should not be under this pillar.

* (15:00)

I want to say that the supply management side of the agriculture industry is very important to us, Mr. Speaker. If you look at the people that are in supply management, those are the people that do not have to come to government for supports. We have to ensure that, again, we do not accept some reductions that will increase the inflow of products without protecting them. Certainly, as I said, I would want to work to have our supply management protected under the sensitive product lines. I would want to see us maintain the 5 percent, the minimus for amber boxes for domestic support. We would certainly advocate changes to green box to allow for inclusion of crop insurance and non-trading distorted income support. There are many important issues here and we can continue to support the issues of supply management and with the state trading.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just reiterate what I said before I allow other people to speak. It is important that Canadians stand together and take a strong position in these negotiations, that we defend supply management and we defend our Canadian Wheat Board because the Canadian Wheat Board is not trade distorting. Supply management is not trade distorting.

I say to the people in this room, I hope that after these discussions we can go away from this Legislature united, saying that we will take a strong position for our producers at these discussions. As producers have said, having no deal is better than having a deal that is flawed and will hurt our producers. I do not want to see Canada offer anything up at the table before other countries make offers. It is other countries who have to reduce their supports. It is other countries that have to take some of the trade barriers down, such as I mentioned with the meat products in Europe. There are steps that other countries should be doing with domestic supports, particularly in the area of export competition. The issue of export credits and food aids have certainly been distorting the markets, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work in those areas so that we do improve market access, but we have the ability to have domestic supports here in our province and look at the issues of export competition and, certainly, do not believe that the Canadian Wheat Board should be included under the export competition.

Mr. Speaker, with those few comments, I will sit down so that others can add their voices to this issue and recognize that some movement will happen if we move forward, but we always have to look at how we can protect our industries, rather than being the first one to the table.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a few items on the record in regard to this resolution as well. This resolution that we have been asking for for a number of days, and I know the minister has been trying to negotiate with her commodity groups and the different stakeholders, and we know on this side of the House it is imperative that we go united with the sectors that are so important to us within our province of Manitoba. Our farmers and producers need to know, and they need to get back to their producers on this very important item we bring forward today.

Last Tuesday, we tried to bring this as a MUPI, to bring this forward and discuss it at a level.

Unfortunately, we were shut down on that particular issue. I know, in consultations with the Wheat Board, with the egg marketing board, the turkey marketing board, the milk producers of the province of Manitoba, and I know that this is important to every producer, not just the marketing boards and the systems that we have, supply management systems, Mr. Speaker. It is imperative that we give direction to the two ministers who are going to be representing us and the people of Manitoba, when it comes to our issues and our needs for our producers within the province of Manitoba, and Canada as a whole.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I know in discussions with the egg marketing board, I think they have made their position very clear, them and the turkey marketing board, the milk producers as well, within the province of Manitoba, want to protect their supply management systems and we concur on this side of the House with that, along with the Canadian Wheat Board.

The minister made reference to a Tory that was in Saskatchewan, that was talking about getting rid of the Canadian Wheat Board. We know that there is a heated debate out there both for and against the Canadian Wheat Board, and we know that there are individuals out there that run for office. What one individual does does not have an impact on all of Canada, but that individual will have to deal with those whenever the electoral vote gets ready to deal with that particular individual.

We on this side of the House definitely support the Wheat Board and we will stand behind that. We know that the milk producers, the turkey producers and the egg producers, we stand behind them as well, where there are supply and management issues. I know that the talks that are going to be taking place within the next 14 days to 16 days, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are imperative because we know that the negotiation process is long and gruelling. We know that we have to have the tools there in order to have those proper discussions.

I am concerned, however, with the federal election at this point in time, whether or not we will have proper representation there at the federal level, and that is a concern that I have, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that the staff will be there, and I hope that Minister Mitchell and Mr. Peterson will be there and their staff. I know in consultation with some of the supply management groups, they will have people there as well. Whether or not they will have the opportunity to get enough input in, we

know that the European and the American people are very good at negotiations, and we can take some lessons from them as they beat us down on the first go-around. We want to make sure that we have all the markets in place, that we are not going to give away something that we cannot live with down the road.

Any changes that we do bring forward, it has to be done in a way that it can be done in a timely manner, in a manner which will not sustain hardship on the producers and the supply management people within our different sectors, be it the egg producers, turkey producers, milk producers or any other producers for that matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is imperative that these changes be done in a way that benefits all of the world, not just Canada, not United States, the European level. I know that the Europeans and the Americans play the game very seriously, and we should take it very seriously. I know that this is an opportunity for us as a province to have representation there.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that the different sectors, the different commodity groups that have come forward and offered the advice to the minister and to her staff, I understand that she is taking two of the staff members with her, and I certainly hope that the message is loud and clear that the staff and the two ministers, Minister of Trade (Mr. Smith) and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), will ensure that these messages and voices are heard loud and clear to represent each of these different sectors and commodity groups within the province of Manitoba.

I know that on the 13th the negotiations will be taking place, wrapping up on the 15th. We on this side of the House would like to be brought up to date as soon as possible on those talks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that with some of the different commodity groups that were not invited on the 21st—I know some of them made contact with me. I have assured those groups that we will get back them and inform them of the decisions as they come forward, and I know that the two ministers will be doing that.

Moving on with the other items that we wanted to talk about before, I will let the rest of the members speak. I know there is a number of people that want to speak on this particular issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I just want to come back to the supply management group. Supply management is a great tool; it is one of the most effective tools that we have had within the different provinces. It is one that

supplies a good product. They do not oversupply. We have a lot to learn in the agricultural sector from that. I know that the free enterprise system as we know it is definitely a good system. We also have to be cognizant of the fact that we have to make a living in the products that we have to supply in a safe and healthy food environment within the different provinces in Canada as a whole.

So, having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would want to let some of our other members speak. I know that the issue of WTO is of utmost importance to each and every one of us, and we on this side of the House will be supporting the resolution later today.

*(15:10)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I would like to thank the Ag critic for his comments and our Ag Minister. It is really important that this House speak with one voice on something that is so important to our producers here in Manitoba. I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that certainly the goal of World Trade Organization discussions, the objective of having a reduction in the subsidies from the taxpayers in many countries, the subsidies that take place in the European Union, the subsidies that take place now under the U.S. farm bill, the reduction of those subsidies and an opportunity not only for Canada's farmers and Canadian farmers to participate on a level playing field with their production and the quality of their products being on a level playing field because we know we will be successful—the goal of eliminating those subsidies is an important one. We support the goal of reductions of subsidies, the international subsidies that work at the detriment of the Canadian producer. We also think that a reduction of, for example, the U.S. farm bill subsidies on pulse crops will be an advantage for the Third World where it is extremely difficult to deal with the power of the U.S. Treasury.

You know, today's subsidy in agricultural sectors against Third World countries can possibly become tomorrow's international dangerous zone because of unrest and concern because there is no legitimate opportunity to compete in a global economy in an effective way.

We also think the World Trade Organization's discussions should include the rule of law for countries like China which are practising dumping at the detriment of many industries in Manitoba and in Canada. We think that is a very important part of the measures we are taking.

I certainly believe that the orderly marketing systems that are in Canada and the supply management systems that we have in this country are not subsidies. They are just a way in which agriculture and farmers have organized themselves to deal with the commodity challenges and competition in the country.

One only has to look at the issue of the Wheat Board. Mr. Speaker, there have been nine decisions in the United States, nine times have states like North Dakota gone to the U.S. trade tribunal bodies and nine times has the Wheat Board been ruled to be not a subsidy, but rather a way in which you market your product. It is very important to recognize that. Just recently, the World Trade Organization said the Wheat Board was not a subsidy. They raised questions about rail caps, but the World Trade Organization said very clearly that this was not a subsidy to producers.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that there are, and I would say this with the greatest respect to my Conservative friends, there is a proposal now to weaken the Wheat Board in western Canada. We would strongly recommend that members opposite talk to their colleagues during this election time to point out that the majority of producers who have been elected in western Canada are pro-Wheat Board producers. They are not anti-Wheat Board producers.

The farmers have spoken in those elections. We should respect their vote and not let the rest of the country decide the fate of the Wheat Board based on a hundred different promises that may or may not be made in this election campaign. We should not let the Gomery inquiry necessarily determine the policies on the Canadian Wheat Board. We should let the farmers determine the policy in the Canadian Wheat Board and the farmers have voted pro-Wheat Board. That is what we should respect, Mr. Speaker, in terms of this House.

I think it is important that we respect our supply management system. It has provided Canadians with good advice on food safety, which I suggest Mr. Speaker, is going to be of paramount concern to every one of those people talking about subsidies at the World Trade Organization. There is going to be a disquiet about food security, food safety and the transference of animal diseases to human beings.

I think that is also, hopefully during the discussions that are taking place on subsidies, we can

also have the discussions take place informally on food safety, animal safety and its impact on consumers and producers. So I salute the Legislature in having an all-party resolution. I want to thank the opposition critic for seconding the resolution that was prepared in consultation with producers here in Manitoba.

I think we can achieve a twin objective of reducing subsidies that work to the detriment of producers here in Manitoba and in Canada, reducing those subsidies and, on the other hand, protecting the way in which we have organized ourselves into supply management and the Canadian Wheat Board.

So, with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I support the resolution. Thank you.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today in support of this resolution that has been brought forward by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and seconded by the official opposition critic, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

It is somewhat reassuring to know that the members opposite have been listening to our concerns. I know that my caucus colleague the honourable member for Lakeside has been asking questions in the House on this very topic, and even brought it up as a matter of urgent public importance. It is regrettable that it has taken to the last minute for this government to address this very important issue. Even as the World Trade Organization's ministerial meeting in Hong Kong draws near, we need to know that this government is prepared to go to bat for our farmers, especially after the hardships that they have endured and especially after there having just been called a federal election.

Now, I would hope that the Minister of Agriculture is prepared to, or at least has knowledge of which federal minister, which I believe there to be none, that will be participating in this meeting and that it would probably be a particular senator. I am getting notification that there might be three ministers, but I think if the minister will check her notes, she will probably find that there will more than likely be a particular delegation of senators that will be participating in this event in Hong Kong. This is why I would hope that the minister takes to heart all the concerns that we might have to offer her at this very important meeting because, if ever there was a time that this minister will be front and centre, I believe this will be the time. If we have a particular individual coming from the Senate who might be the individual leading this delegation, I would probably

feel more assured knowing that this minister was going to play a very integral role in these negotiations that are happening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is rather fitting that today we speak to this resolution dealing with Manitoba's future in the world marketplace. Today is Farmer Appreciation Day. We saw farmers with their families, agricultural organization representatives from the different business communities and their supporters gather in appreciation of the agricultural sector with us this morning. This event shows that Manitobans recognize how vital agriculture is to our economy. There are one in 11 jobs in our province that are tied directly to agriculture. That is over 50 000 Manitobans with families reliant on that income. We must defend and strengthen our agricultural sector. I agree that Manitoba producers and processors need greater access to global markets. Our producers struggle against other countries' domestic support programs and deserve the ability to compete fairly. The supply management system promotes stable farm incomes, controls domestic production and provides high quality products at fair prices. This provincial government must investigate and make use of every possible option to safeguard Manitoba's best interest.

We are asking that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Mr. Smith) commit to strongly promote Manitoba's interest with the federal government and/or their representatives at the World Trade Organization's ministerial meeting in Hong Kong. I hope that the members opposite commit today to the promises included within this resolution, not only in principle but in practice. Taking on the World Trade Organization will not be easy. It reminds me of David and Goliath.

* (15:20)

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be one more apropos to tell me what particular section of the Bible that we would find this. But, with persistence and confidence, David did win, as you would know, Sir. We need to seek concrete, beneficial results from these negotiations. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives has admitted to discussions with producers and commodity organizations. She says that she will bring their concerns to the attention of the federal government, but now I am calling on her to do more. I am calling on her to ensure that

Manitoba has the opportunity to become a strong and successful player in the world marketplace.

I want and need family farms and agri-businesses in Manitoba to prosper. My constituency, as well as the constituencies of all honourable members, rely heavily on agriculture to sustain our economy. The negotiations with the World Trade Organization cannot be taken lightly. The outcome will affect the future of our province and our economy.

I trust that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Mr. Smith) will keep this House, the agriculture community and all Manitobans up-to-date on developments at the negotiations. I also hope that following the negotiations, agriculture producers will be assured ample time and support if their operations will be affected by the decisions that will be taken at the World Trade Organization.

In closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask the ministers to remember they are fighting for the futures of real people and not just dollars. I will hope that they will live up to their responsibilities and commitments that are made here today. Godspeed and thank you very much.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak on this very important resolution. I would like to begin my remarks by complimenting all members of the House and members opposite for putting our political differences aside and all pulling together to put forth a united front on this issue which is absolutely critical for our agricultural producers.

Things have been very difficult over the last three or four years, the last three years in particular, but, our farmers as a rule, are very resilient and could normally survive the ups and downs that weather presents to them. The bottom line is that international trade challenges are the primary problem. All types of subsidies and blockages into markets like the European Union with our meat products, all of these things are putting unnatural barriers in place. Hopefully, this next round of the World Trade Organization in Hong Kong will lead to some positive change.

I am a little concerned when I read the paper today. The Premier (Mr. Doer) made reference to it, where it seems that the federal Conservatives are not quite onside in regard to the Canadian Wheat Board.

Apparently, I think it is David Anderson, a Saskatchewan member of Parliament, who has said that they would make changes to it. They would make participation voluntary, and this is absolutely critical, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These words are very damaging. If the monopoly position of the Canadian Wheat Board is compromised, in essence, that will be the death of it. I strongly urge all members of the House to talk to the Conservative Party at the national level to see that their position is clearly defined and the integrity of the CWB remains intact.

I just want to quote Mr. Adrian Measner, who is the CEO of the Canadian Wheat Board, when he says, "The loss of the single desk means the loss of the Canadian Wheat Board and the Americans will have won their wheat war against us." Those are the words of the CEO, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and very telling. Absolutely, this is a critical issue and I hope that the Conservative members in this House will do their best to see that this entity remains intact.

I look back to other critical factors in times past and I think of the loss of the Crow rate which had a huge impact on western Canadian producers and us, in particular, here in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker, given that we are so far away from the ports that are necessary to export our grain abroad. The loss of the Crow rate, I once heard, was worth over \$700 million a year to western Canadian farmers. That is a huge, huge loss to us and has never been made up even closely with all the various programs that we have before us today to address the needs, such as the CAIS program which, frankly, is not working very well for our producers.

I remember the former Member for Lakeside, Harry Enns, sitting in the House here, and he was all in favour of the loss of the Crow. He thought that was just fine and in a sense it did stimulate more secondary production, more value-added production in the form of expansion of livestock, but still I do not think that made up for the loss of that amount of revenue coming into the western provinces. So I would hope that would be a lesson for us and it would focus us as we go into the trade talks very soon now.

I know that a lot of us want to speak on this, so I will close very soon now, but I did want to also make reference to the numerous times that the Canadian Wheat Board has been challenged in the international arena. Nine times already this has been challenged and nine times we have won. It proves that orderly marketing and supply management are acceptable

principles. They have worked for our producers, and this should be our position. I hope that the national government feels likewise.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this resolution and I hope that we have unanimous support of all members. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to put some brief comments on the record in regard to the resolution that is before the House. It is dealing with probably one of the most important issues that has faced the agriculture community in this province and indeed in Canada for at least the last decade.

I want to say that I have been constantly reminded of what good negotiators are and what good negotiators do, what good negotiators can do for Canada, and I believe that the negotiators under the then Brian Mulroney administrations were probably some of the best negotiators that we have ever seen at the WTO, and the negotiators put Manitoba and Canada in a position whereby they were able to maintain and develop the supply management sector, were able to retain the Wheat Board, were able to retain much of the agricultural position that we held at that time. I know that those who were involved in that process know all too well the gains that Canada made during those negotiations.

That was entirely different, Mr. Speaker. Some 10 years later when the new round was started under the then-Liberal administration in Ottawa, not only did we give up the Crow benefit, we gave up much of the support and the financial structure that supported the agricultural community in that round, whereby other countries such as the U.S. increased their value of supports, because they knew what was coming. They had increased their value of supports by some 30-odd percent, and they went from a \$40-billion farm program to a \$90-billion farm program. That stands today, that farm program, whereby we in Canada gave up almost anything that they could lay their hands on in order to demonstrate that we wanted free trade. Well, Mr. Speaker, how naive could we have been during that last round of negotiations.

We are into a new round now.

An Honourable Member: Thank you, Brian.

Mr. Penner: That was not Brian Mulroney. That was under Jean Chrétien's administration, the Liberal administration. If the honourable Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) wants to maintain that the Liberals should be congratulated for negotiating that kind of an agreement, then he should apologize to his farm community in his area for the desecration that has happened under that Liberal administration in Ottawa. I believe it is time that the people in Canada realized what the Liberals in Ottawa have really done to agriculture in Canada.

* (15:30)

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that when I look at this resolution, the preamble in this resolution has largely praised this minister. How can a minister honestly and truthfully go and appear before a negotiating panel with this kind of a resolution that praises the minister for things she has not done? I mean, you have to have honesty and integrity when you appear before panels such as the international trade panels. I have been there, I know. Boy, they look through you pretty quickly, and if you do not know what you are talking about, you had better not go.

I agree with a THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, much of THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the agricultural community is what this should discuss and they support the right of the individual farmer to choose which marketing mechanisms they want to have. I am absolutely in favour of the farmers having chosen to market through the Wheat Board. I mean that is their choice and they should have that right to make that choice.

I am also totally in support of the supply management sectors. The dairy people, they choose to market jointly; the egg producers choose to market jointly; the turkey producers; all the poultry sector chooses to market jointly and limit their production according to domestic requirements. It works well for them, but what does it do for the rest of society? What does it do for the rest of the agriculture community?

There is nothing in here in this resolution that says we have a much broader-based agricultural industry than supply management and those two commodities, barley and wheat, are marketed through the board. What about the bean growers? What about the flax growers? What about the canola growers? What about the livestock industry, the pork producers, the beef producers and the other

commodities, the sheep and the goats? There is nothing in this resolution that gives them any comfort that this Minister of Agriculture has any background or knowledge that she can take to that table to negotiate on their behalf.

That is what concerns me, Mr. Speaker, about this resolution. I say to you that I will support this because it, at least, reflects in part the needs of Manitoba producers and western Canada and is the opportunity for those producers to choose the kind of marketing groups and organizations that they feel comfortable with, but that is all we deal with here. How naive of us to think that the negotiations will be centered and based around the Wheat Board and supply management. Will they be used as pawns this time around? I believe they will, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I truly believe that those two items will be used as pawns for trade and that should never happen. We should not have allowed and we should not allow ourselves to be put into that kind of a box in the negotiating spectrum. I believe that this Liberal government once again has positioned itself around that trade table to be a negative, negative influence in the total overall agreements that will be struck at some point in time in the future.

I truly believe that Hong Kong is an opportunity for us in Canada to turn that around, but I have no confidence, Mr. Speaker, of the people who are going down there to be the negotiators, mainly the federal minister who is now part of the negotiating team. It should never happen. He should have surrounded himself with the best and most professional negotiators that he could lay his hands on and inform those people as to what our positions in Canada are or ought to be.

I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the Minister of Agriculture has indicated. Our Minister of Agriculture here has indicated to the Province of Manitoba and the producers in the province of Manitoba how unsecure and how unprotective she was of her own industry in this province. She did not enter into negotiations until last week with the farm organizations, and these discussions have been going on for two years. It is the first time that I have heard that this minister has sat down with the industries going to be affected by the negotiations that are going on. Now she is pretending that she is going to Hong Kong and negotiating on their behalf when negotiations are, if anything, drawing to a finalization. We should have had our positions out

there months ago, years ago, and we should have sat down with our producers and negotiated and discussed and drafted position papers that we should have long ago had in Ottawa before the negotiators and the federal minister, that they knew what our position in Manitoba was.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand here today as a former farm leader in this province having gone through the negotiations, having experienced the exercises that go on and looked the negotiators straight in the eye and told them what our needs were, but not two weeks before the meetings. It was done a year, up to two years, before the negotiations actually started is when we started to develop our Canadian position. It held, and we had a good one, and 10 years later we gave it all up. Today I am afraid we are going to lose it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): And Trade.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And Trade.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and, certainly, speak on this resolution that our Ag Minister has spent countless hours and many, many months putting into reflecting Manitoba's position strongly, as she normally does, representing our agriculture and farm community in the province of Manitoba, in fact, leading Canada, I would suggest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we look through the WHEREASes, and the member from Emerson blathered on about this minister not representing and not actually consulting with our ag producers, with our industries, I can tell you the member, although he may not leave his own riding, unless it is a one-way path to the Legislature, in fact, I am not sure if he even has a rearview mirror to look back when he leaves and drives in here, but I can tell you one thing, as the last year has progressed, the Minister of Agriculture and I had countless opportunities to spend time in rural Manitoba speaking with her, beside her, to many of our ag producers on some of the up-and-coming trade talks that we would be having, I got a reflection of just how hard this Ag Minister works and knows the industry.

I can tell you when the member opposite for Emerson says he looks people in the eye and he talks about what he is going to say and he is going to get up there and he is going to say, well, maybe he

would have said, "Let the Crow go," as he did before, maybe that is what he would do when he got into negotiations once we get to Hong Kong. I am not so sure that he would not look them in the eye this time and say, "Let the Wheat Board go," Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We have a Minister of Agriculture that is not going to say that. We have a minister in myself in Trade that is not going to say that, but what we are going to do is we are going to bring the knowledge that the Minister of Agriculture has, the knowledge base that I have and, certainly, what the consultations we have done, what the many, many negotiators and marketing experts throughout Manitoba, and I would say the producers are part of that expertise. I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, when we get to Hong Kong, and as the Minister of Agriculture has done with the many other Agriculture ministers across our great nation of Canada in letting them know Manitoba's position—and I think we have had the Premier (Mr. Doer), we have had our Minister of Agriculture and we have had the member from the Interlake respond in what we have before us today in this resolution in saying that certainly, absolutely, we will defend our supply management, make sure that it is protected, make sure that it is maintained and, certainly, that the Canadian Wheat Board is a very crucial and important part of that.

I know we have had many discussions. Members opposite may have a difference of opinion, and that is certainly the way where there are differences in parties, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I read the newspapers and see Tories would change the Wheat Board, well, I tell you. The member opposite wanted to get rid of the Crow; now they are saying the Tories would change the Wheat Board.

*(15:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the M.P. from Saskatchewan, Mr. David Anderson, goes on at quite a length, saying how he believes that the Canadian Wheat Board should be voluntary. He goes on in his article saying, "You know, I do not believe a lot of the producers believe in the Wheat Board anymore." Well, I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the producers do care about the Wheat Board. They do care about supply management and they do care about protecting our assets.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no one in this room I do not believe, other than maybe the member from Emerson, who would like to give anything up in shouting, "Let the Wheat Board go." We do believe

that a fair and level playing field and expanded markets are good for our producers. But what we do not believe in is giving anything up at the loss of our producers. I can tell you, our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) on many occasions has supported our producers. She has listened to our producers, the consultations with our producers, and that is something very clear, something that she has articulated over and over and over again, and it is articulated again in this resolution very, very clearly.

The member from Emerson had mentioned that, oh, he does believe in the THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED. Well, the body does reflect that the Minister of Agriculture had met with the other ministers from across Canada. She had consulted and brought our views to the other ministers numerous times across Canada, in fact, again, as early as November 24, as it says in the resolution, to discuss Canada's position and brief the federal ministers on Manitoba's position.

We have a strong Minister of Agriculture in Manitoba reflecting our producers' views. Ontario has learnt a lot, I believe, from listening to the views of western Canada and our western producers through our Minister of Agriculture. I know certainly British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan share a lot of the views of our producers, and certainly our grains producers are an important component of every province, certainly Ontario west.

I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about fair and level playing fields, that is something we all want to head to. But when we look at the subsidies and the subsidy levels that we are seeing in the United States, that we are seeing in the European Union, we do want a fair and level playing field. We do want to see reductions on that end. But it is not to give up anything more from Manitoba at all. It is to strengthen our position for our producers. That it is intended to do and that is reflected in this resolution very, very clearly.

I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when we look at the large players to the south of us, the United States—certainly we see it in some of the agreements that we have seen over the last period of time in NAFTA and others—we need a dispute resolution mechanism when you get into agreements. The member opposite from Emerson is constantly flogging the greatness of the Republicans and the great friendship of the Republicans, on and on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have got the best practices and best producers in North America right

here in our province, and we can compete on a level playing field with anybody around the world and we can win at it. We can win at it because our producers are certainly the best, I believe, anywhere. I have heard that over and over and over again from our producers, saying just set the rules the same for everyone and we can compete. Let us have a level playing field and we can compete with the practices that we have.

I will tell you what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the subsidies that they have to compete against and still win at in many, many, many areas is something that we should be very proud of in our producers. When we go to the WTO, we want to ensure that we do have a level, fair playing field for our producers. We will not give up any advantage for Manitoba whatsoever unless it benefits our producers right here in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell you that as I travel, just in the times that I travelled with our Ag Minister, who does know more than her riding as some other members opposite and the member from Emerson goes on about not consulting with the public in Manitoba, I will tell you, that is just not true. The reflection that we have in this resolution from our Ag Minister respects all producers in our province. It respects certainly the industries in our province and it reflects how important our trade and agriculture is to our province.

You take a look at the 5 percent of our provincial GDP and one in 11 jobs, how critically important that is. This Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) knows that, lives it, breathes it and every day fights for it. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this resolution reflects our Agriculture Minister, it reflects this side of the House and it reflects the strength that we will be going into in the WTO talks for our producers, for Manitobans reflecting and respecting all Manitoba's views, and building a stronger trade and a more diverse trade for our producers.

With that said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud to support this resolution. Thank you very much.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I, too, am pleased to get up and just put a few comments on record has just indicated that both he and the Minister of Agriculture are going, on behalf of all Manitobans, and, of course, as part of the trade delegation on behalf of Canadians, to the WTO, that they will put their knowledge to work at the WTO when they have the talks.

That is great, but that does concern me because the information they will be bringing to the table there is something that farmers, Canadians, Manitobans, are going to have to live with for the rest, well, not the rest of their lives, but for the many years to come, and we will hold them accountable for this. So that is why we need to debate this, but what I find interesting, though, is both the ministers of Agriculture and Industry are so hesitant and so opposed to listening to comments made from the opposition regarding this and that is a concern to me.

Where this should be an opportunity to debate, to listen and to learn, it is more of the opinion like, "We know exactly what we are going to be doing, and do not tell us, do not have any input into this." This is to be a resolution and a recommendation that comes forward, which encompasses and, in fact, endorses the support that there is from rural Manitoba regarding this resolution. If there are some points that we can put on the record which could be helpful, we would like to see them used.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very important issue for Manitobans. For those, whether they are involved in agriculture or in other sectors, I would like to just give you some examples. This had happened a number of years ago, but it was as a result of the negotiations that took place that there was a trade-off. We lost the sugar industry in the province of Manitoba. We lost it. Why? Because it was used as a trade-off in negotiations that were taking place, so we lost that industry completely.

Another industry I would like to mention which took place, or was in our community about 20-25 years ago, was the whole canning industry, where peas, beans and corn were being canned. Now, we can grow them in this province, we can produce them, but, again, I am not going to blame any specific government, but in the trade talks that took place, basically, we gave up that industry for another industry to be able to import into this country.

These trade negotiations that are taking place are extremely important. They impact on the lives of not only agricultural people, they impact the lives of all sectors of society within our economy. I guess, I just find it maybe discouraging, but I will say somewhat interesting, the fact that both the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Agriculture have gotten up, have spoken, and have criticized the comments that have come from the opposition, whereas they should be taking the comments from the opposition, and at least, in some way, trying to incorporate, if they are

good comments, into the equation. Ultimately, it is going to affect all of Manitobans, and as I said before, we are going to hold them accountable. They are going out there and we will find out what they will, in fact, give up.

Now, the Minister of Industry indicated that the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) had said that he was totally opposed to the Canadian Wheat Board. No one on this side of the House has ever said that they are totally opposed to the Wheat Board, not at all. I want to point out that what the member for Saskatchewan, the M.P., indicated was he was not opposed to the Wheat Board. He said that there should be an option as well, that dual marketing should be an option.

* (15:50)

Now, I tell you, as free enterprises, what is wrong with free marketing? I am not opposed to the Canadian Wheat Board, but, on the other hand, if I should want to be able to mill my wheat within the province of Manitoba, I should be allowed to do that. *[interjection]*

The minister of highways said that I should not be able to be allowed to mill my own wheat within the province. So he is opposed to value-added industry. *[interjection]*

Oh, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) says, "You can do it, yes, but you have to pay a premium to the board just for the right to do that." *[interjection]* Oh, yes, you do.

Now, you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the concern that we have on this side of the House is that members opposite do not understand, have no idea what they are even negotiating. That is the problem. They have no idea what they are doing. That is the concern that we have, that they are going to be going to the WTO talks, that they are going to be at the table, supposedly, and we hope, we trust, that they will be lobbying and fighting on behalf of Manitobans. But it is a real concern what we are just hearing now, the knowledge that they bring to the table, that, in fact, they will be giving up many of these rights. That is a concern.

Again, I say this to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk): We will hold you accountable for the things that you are doing.

The other part I just want to briefly mention is the whole area of subsidies from other countries. Again, may I just give you a classic example. Right

now, corn is being brought into Manitoba. Now, the cost of production of corn is much, much higher in Manitoba than the corn that is coming in from the U.S. Now, I understand all sides of this picture, it depends which hat you wear, but if I look at the side of the producer who is being impacted by highly subsidized corn from the U.S., he says, "I cannot survive. I cannot survive under those commodity prices." Then, if I look at the person, and I put the other hat on, the one who is, in fact, utilizing the feed in the raising of livestock, he is saying, "I need to be able to get my feed grain as cheaply as possible." I understand that as well. But the problem that we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the subsidies that are in place on the U.S. side.

I know for a fact that today in Minnesota you can pick up corn off the field at \$1.75 a bushel. Now, you cannot raise it for that, and they cannot raise it for that. But it really does not matter because what they do is, at the end of the day, they take their little ticket, they take it to the government office, and then they get that differential price. We in this province cannot compete with that. So that is just an example of some of the unfair subsidies that are taking place.

Now, if the minister can, in fact, negotiate a deal where these subsidies are really cut down, that we can compete, and I will assure the minister, and the Minister of Industry that as Manitobans, provided that the playing field is level, we can compete. We can compete with anyone in the world. However, the playing field has to be level, and we cannot subsidize unfairly products coming into this country.

It is not only a matter of agricultural products. I know that there are other products that are involved. Manufacturing is involved in this. It is a multitude of different aspects that are involved in the trade negotiations. So we trust you that you are going to be going, on behalf of Manitobans, and that you are going to come back with a better deal than what we have because right now we know that it is not working the way it should. So we are implicitly trusting you that you will do that. But I would also suggest, though, that if there are some points that we make on this side of the House that are valuable, that you would take those to the table and that you would use them.

With those few words, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I do not know where to start. I was going to start by saying we have here a

resolution that we can all agree upon and unanimously support. But I am choked up, quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the derogatory remarks I hear from members opposite slung at our Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Mr. Smith) and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) are really quite not becoming of this resolution.

You know, somehow, members opposite state that we are going to be giving something up. We are not giving anything up. We are going to be negotiating a great deal for Manitobans and Manitoba producers. I have to tell you that even though all international trade negotiations are the responsibility of the feds, the federal government, we understand this. Members opposite keep saying, "Well, how can we trust that minister or the other minister who are going?" The point is that both ministers, not only are they competent in their own respect, but they have consulted with Manitoba producers and the public of Manitoba, all Manitobans, and had input into the negotiations and into their points of view that they are going to raise at the WTO.

When you take a look at the resolution itself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it talks about the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives having chaired a WTO Agrifood Industry Workshop on November 21, 2005, where Manitoba agriculture food industry leaders clearly outlined their objectives with respect to the upcoming talks. They, the producers, clearly outlined their objectives and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives heard them loud and clear and was listening to them.

We also know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how vital agriculture is. I mean, when I take a look at the southeast corner of the province that I represent, a small portion of that, and members opposite who are in the Chamber today who are also from there know what marketing boards are all about and how important they are. The point is that the producers choose to market jointly, whether it is eggs, turkey, milk and so on. I have to tell you, Manitobans should be proud when they go to Safeway, SuperValu, Co-op, IGA, the Marketplace, any particular store that they go to and they get milk, eggs, turkey, chickens. We raise the best and our producers are the best, the best in the world at what they do. What they want to do and what they would like is to be able to operate on a level playing field, and let me use the hockey analogy, if I might, or a sport analogy.

No one wants to be playing a hockey team with either one hand tied behind your back or playing with one skate on, and that is what is happening to our producers now. We have people who because they are being highly subsidized in Europe and in the United States, even though, yes, people in the United States, south of the 49th, are our friends, but the industry down there, they are being so highly subsidized as well as our European counterparts that our producers feel like their hands are tied or one arm is tied behind their back and they are skating around with one skate on. It is very difficult to play unless you are playing on a level playing field.

Our two ministers who have been charged by this Chamber to be going to the WTO have consulted with the public, and they have consulted with the industry, and they are going there with all that knowledge in mind. Even though members opposite, and I will not get into personal comments, but we have had some people, members opposite making commentary that certainly I do not believe is within the spirit of what this resolution is all about. When you take a look at the "THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the Ministers of Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade to work with the Canadian negotiators to achieve a result that allows Manitoba producers and processors significantly greater access to foreign markets, the ability to compete fairly and equitably in global markets not distorted by domestic support programs, and also maintains the right of producers to use orderly marketing systems such as supply management and the Canadian Wheat Board," we are all going to agree to this. Yet we hear some comments like the member from Pembina says, "Well, yeah, we support the Wheat Board, but we should have a choice." The member from Pembina and others are starting to lean like, oh well, maybe we support the Wheat Board, maybe we do not.

Then you hear comments from a Conservative member in Saskatchewan, a Member of Parliament running in an election, and I understand that these are heated debates, I am not a farmer and I am not a producer, yet we understand the very basics behind the Wheat Board and also our marketing boards and how important they are to our producers. I have had an opportunity to talk to many members of my constituency who do still reside on the farm and still try to make a living at farming.

* (16:00)

I do not pretend to know, nor do I pretend to tell members of this Chamber that I know, all the difficulties that members of the farming community face day-in, day-out trying to pay their bills and trying to make a living. It is tough enough, but if this Chamber truly supports this resolution, which I believe we all do, we must support them through the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Mr. Smith), because they are going to be our representatives over there and we cannot be taking cheap shots at them. They are going to do the best job they possibly can, they are going to be working with the federal negotiators; and they are going to get the best deal they possibly can for our Manitoba producers.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have heard a number of different speakers, including the Premier (Mr. Doer), coming out in support of our producers and all the consultation that has taken place prior to these WTO meetings. We know how important it is to our producers. As was mentioned repeatedly, one out of every 11 jobs in this province is dependent on agriculture. We know how important agriculture is to Manitoba and to our economy.

So where do we go from here? I believe that, yes, they should be unanimous, and, yes, we should support the Wheat Board, and, yes, we should support our marketing boards and we should support our two ministers that are going to be our representatives going over there. Do they have all the answers? No. But they have listened to the producers. The producers have had their input. As I mentioned previously, there have been a number of different meetings, November 21, '05, which is fairly recently, that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives attended, listening, again, to the producers and how important that is.

The industry's direction is that it is important for Canadian producers to have access to world markets, and for unfair subsidies and tariffs that other countries be removed. However, the WTO agreement should not eliminate the ability of farmers to choose their own marketing systems, like the Wheat Board, and supply management. I believe this is truly important because many of our producers are really dependent on just that, whether it is eggs, milk, turkey and a number of others that depend on our marketing system, our marketing boards.

I just want to, in conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just to say that I whole-heartedly support

this resolution, the World Trade Organization resolution. I implore and ask that all members unanimously support this resolution, and I believe it will be, and that we get behind the two ministers that are going to be going there working with our federal negotiators and working very, very hard on behalf of our producers, not comments like, "We will be watching you with a big magnifying glass, watching every little mistake you make, and we will remind you of it."

Our Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade understand this. They understand this and they have consulted with many of the producers. They understand this. They know it. Yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, in conclusion, we have had a number of very, very good comments put forward today. I look forward to hearing others being very, very supportive of this resolution. As a Manitoban, and as a rural Manitoban, I am very, very supportive of not only our producers, but also supportive of our two ministers that are going to be going over there and negotiating and assisting the negotiations on our behalf because they have consulted thoroughly with many of the industry leaders and know exactly where people are coming from on many of these different issues. Thank you.

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Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to announce that next Thursday the resolution that we would like to be debating in private members' hour will be the Interfacility Ambulance Transfers Resolution.

I guess I am supposed to say I would like to announce that the Interfacility Ambulance Transfers Resolution will be considered next Thursday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: For the record, the Interfacility Ambulance Transfers shall be the resolution that will be considered next Thursday.

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Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise this afternoon and debate the resolution before us which was brought with the co-operation of all members of the House to the floor of the Assembly today.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

It is discussing the WTO talks that are going to be starting in mid-December in Hong Kong, and these talks are going to have a significant impact upon agriculture not only in Canada but very specifically here in Manitoba, as we are a jurisdiction which is gratis from salt water which we all recognize as being the most economical way of conveyance of agriculture or for that matter any commodity traded between continents and countries.

Mr. Speaker, it is a topic which I am very familiar with, agricultural food, and production of agricultural products in a value-added industry, as well, is something which I have espoused myself for my entire working career.

Mr. Speaker, with this resolution, I look to all members of the House for their support later in the day when it comes to a vote. It is a topic that is of the utmost importance to not only the agricultural producers but to all of those engaged in direct and indirect support industry to agriculture and as our province's history does hold very dear to the heart of all Manitobans the place that agriculture plays in it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I will say that the programs that are in place in our jurisdiction are ones that have indeed benefited many of us in the agricultural industry. It is something that we are quite pleased to have evolved over quite a number of years and under the guise of many different administrations and different party origin, but all governments in Manitoba have recognized the importance of agriculture and want to put in place legislation and regulation that will enhance agriculture rather than detract from it.

Although we do debate in the House at times now some current topics, I am led to believe that maybe the understanding of agriculture on the current government's side of the House is perhaps not as complete as what I would hope. Perhaps they will listen to members on this side of the House for information, so that they would be able to augment their current understanding of agriculture and that ultimately they will see that perhaps what we speak of from the opposition benches is indeed a position which they will support as legislation and regulation comes to the Assembly.

*(16:10)

Now, Mr. Speaker, the recognition of agriculture and the importance of agriculture here in Manitoba is displayed throughout this resolution. I do want to,

though, place upon the record, concern in regard to representation from Manitoba that is going to Hong Kong in the very near future. I have just recently had the opportunity to visit Nova Scotia and speak with the Nova Scotia Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Chris d'Entremont, and he had expressed to me that the very nature of negotiation is one that is sometimes unpredictable. That is why you must have with you persons who are stakeholders, persons who completely understand the repercussions of any particular negotiated position, and that is why he is taking with him members of the agricultural community who have a direct relationship and are engaged in agriculture.

Even though we have civil servants who are well schooled in different areas of agriculture, until you rely upon the agricultural activity for your livelihood, for your next meal, if you will say, you do not get the true importance of a position in agriculture. If you are a civil servant, even if you do not get the position that you want, the paycheque will still continue, unlike the stakeholders, whether you be a dairy producer or egg or chicken or other marketed supply managed commodities, that has a direct input into your income and whether, indeed, you do have that meal the next day.

So I believe that it is fundamental that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) look to a delegation to accompany her that will provide her with that expertise to accommodate the very nature of the negotiations that change moment by moment so she will have that expertise available to her that will be able to put forward a position that will maintain the best interest of all producers here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I do have a wife who has relatives in the United States who farm and farm in a fashion that is very aggressive. Persons who are aggressive in nature, they expand and take advantage, if you will, of programs afforded them by government. In the United States, the programs that agriculture is supported by do, indeed, provide significant support. I will say that it dismays me, on this side of the border, that all the efforts that I do to keep up with the American cousins, it is a challenge and almost impossible for me to do under the current support mechanisms afforded me here as a producer in Canada.

I have watched on the American side of the border, down in Ohio, cousins who did not have

trucks, for instance. They had a line of equipment that was not as new as the one that I had. They had an operation that, I will say, was lagging in a lot of respects. But I have watched that operation over the course of the last 10 to 15 years leap ahead of my own operation. I do not believe today that I lack any less enthusiasm or initiative or will to work, and it has only been because of the change in the level of government support out of Washington versus my American cousins and me in Canada here from Ottawa to Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

I want to say that it is vitally important that we are successful in negotiations because we are dealing with perishable food products, and our supply management system is vital to preserve and make certain no waste takes place with the marketing of perishable products. We, here in Canada, believe in free trade. We are honourable traders, and we support fair trade.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to participate in the debate regarding the resolution that I encourage all persons to support.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the joint resolution which is being put forward and makes an important statement with regard to the Manitoba position at the World Trade Organization meetings and negotiations which are coming up soon.

I would like to speak to (1) the Canadian Wheat Board, (2) supply management and (3) the need to open up markets. The Canadian Wheat Board over the last number of years has been moved to a position where it has now a majority farmer-elected board so that farmers are making the decisions. It has been tested numerous times by threats or challenges from the United States as to whether this is interfering with marketing or altering marketing practices and is found not to be providing unfair subsidies.

Indeed, it is quite clear that the Wheat Board is operating for Canadian farmers within a global market and doing an excellent job. We should be supporting the Canadian Wheat Board. In this resolution, we very clearly support the Canadian Wheat Board as the critical marketing agent for Canadian wheat and for Canadian barley, not feed barley sold locally, but this is a very important force.

The second component is the supply management. The supply management system that

we have in Canada has served Canadian farmers well. It has, in essence, said that what we want to do is to work within the Canadian market for this segment of the agricultural producers and that they will have within Canada, the market, the Canadian market allocated as we have done by the supply management boards which are involved here.

This system has been demonstrated to work very well both in terms of farmers providing consistency, security and, in terms, of consumers in providing high quality products. This is clearly a substantive Canadian approach to a segment of the agricultural market. It is proven to work well and we should continue this.

At the moment, it is supported by what is, in essence, a high tariff wall. Although it would be better if it were put and framed as a component which was acceptable in the WTO for countries to decide on a certain component or proportion of their agricultural industry, they would choose to have this working within their own country and it makes sense for, certainly, products like milk which are perishable and are difficult to transport huge long distances for a variety of reasons in any case.

The third component is the ability for the majority of our agricultural industry to open it up to a world trade system that is fair without distorting subsidies and that allows our producers to compete on a level playing field and compete well, because, as we know, the Manitoba and Canadian producers are very productive and very efficient given the fair markets.

* (16:20)

That is certainly something that we should support and we would charge our negotiators at the World Trade Organization with continuing to work to get open markets for the large majority of agricultural products. There may be those who see some contradiction in terms of open markets and supply management, but the reality, Mr. Speaker, is that it is not unreasonable for a country to have a segment of their agricultural market solely an internal market using supply management approach.

It is a process which has been demonstrated to work for farmers, producers and consumers. We would suggest that the World Trade negotiators go and describe to other countries the benefits of this sort of a supply manage system and urge them to try it for segments of their market in the same way as we have done here. So long as the vast majority of the

agricultural markets are open, without these trade-distorting subsidies, then that really is not a problem in the overall context.

The reason that we are gathered here is to provide a very clear message to the WTO negotiators, federal and provincial, politicians and civil servants, and it is important that we have a strong delegation that goes to these negotiations and that we have a delegation which stands up and speaks strongly in favour of the Canadian system, and what we need to have, a fair system for us here and for agricultural producers and consumers around the world.

What I would say is that it is rather unfortunate, the timing of the vote by the NDP and Conservative Party federally, that they have decided to topple the government and have an election right when these critical negotiations are going on. Clearly, it will make it harder for politicians of any stripe to be fully engaged. You know, it is too bad that Jack Layton and the NDP chose this moment to cause an election, because one of the results of this is the single focus that would normally be there from politicians going abroad is going to be more uncertain. It is too bad because one of the problems here is that the negotiators from other countries will look around and say, "Well, you are in the middle of an election there." You know, what if the Conservative government were elected federally, then, you know, they might negotiate with us, negotiate away some of the valued things that we need for Canadian farmers. So our opponents are in a position where they can take advantage of this and it will be tougher for us to negotiate.

But, clearly, what we have to do is to have as strong as possible a negotiating team, that we have to send that negotiating team as clear a message from Manitoba and other parts of Canada as we possibly can, and we have to be united, as united as possible, in presenting that message. So it is too bad that the NDP and the Conservatives have done these things that will make it a little bit more difficult internationally but, you know, we are determined to do the very best we can as that it is as clear and as forcefully presented as it Liberals to make sure that the message is there and possibly can be.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Thank you to the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) to recognize someone on this side of the House to address this motion.

I want to talk about a couple of issues that I think have been unfairly batted back and forth across the floor. The government seems to have taken the position that to, in any way, comment in a negative aspect during debate on this resolution, that somehow that is undermining the position of our negotiators or somehow is a reflection on the people that we feel we represent on this side of the House, which is, to a large extent, the rural agronomic part of Manitoba. I think the government and, to some extent, the Leader of the Liberal Party need to recognize that this is an opportunity not just to give advice to the government but to discuss what it is that we see may have been a weakness in how we got to where we are today.

I understand that my colleagues may have been chastising the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Mr. Smith) and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) about whether or not they, in fact, will be able to adequately carry the freight at the—oh, I think I am in trouble, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]*

Well, the Minister of Trade feels that I have not insulted him yet and I will try not to insult him, but I want to put on the record that they should not be insulted by those of us who are probably very close to the issue, whether we want to be or not some days, who want to have some assurance from the government that they will adequately represent what is the single most important aspect of the economy, certainly in the area that I represent and the member from Russell, all the members from the areas south of Highway 16, where our mainstay is agriculture even in the larger communities such as Brandon and Portage la Prairie. They would be the first to say that their mainstay is agriculture and its importance supersedes an awful lot of other aspects of our lives and our income.

But I do not think it is unreasonable to suggest that in the first WHEREAS, when the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) says that she has been involved in ongoing consultations with Manitoba agriculture and agrifood industry, and I understand from the stakeholders in the industry that, yes, indeed, they have been consulted, what has been bothering us on this side was that for the longest time, all summer, there did not seem to be any particular consultation on this. We saw the consultation, or not, in terms of what was happening with regulations around the water stewardship initiative, and then we are uneasy about whether or not this government is

communicating and getting information from the affected bodies in the agricultural industry. We would not be representing our people properly if we did not put our foot down and raise the question about whether or not they were getting input and whether or not they were being heard.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to address that, and I wanted to say, too, that in terms of the spirit of the discussion of this motion, of course we have said that given that we seconded this motion, that we will in the end be supporting it because we want a unanimous position to go forward from this Legislature. That is the important aspect. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED in this resolution is important and one that is supportable.

I also want to put another couple of comments on the record that I did not clear with my House Leader, but perhaps it will help characterize why we on this side of the House are uneasy. It might also give the current government some cause for pause in terms of whether or not they have not only consulted with the impacted people in the industry but whether or not they have in fact—[interjection] Mr. Speaker, my colleagues are getting kind of noisy behind me here, and you are not going to do anything about it, are you?

Mr. Speaker, what I wanted to put on the record is that there was a Minister of Agriculture in Canada by the name of Joe Green which I bet almost no one in this Legislature remembers. But Joe Green, to the best of my knowledge, was a lawyer from southern Ontario and not one deeply involved in agriculture, but he came from an agricultural community. The thing that made him in his short lifespan as Minister of Agriculture a good minister, in my opinion, was that he approached the questions with an open mind and not a lot of preconceived baggage or, if you will, philosophical baggage that influenced his decision making on behalf of the agricultural industry.

*(16:30)

I would just like to encourage the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and her colleague the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Mr. Smith) to approach these negotiations armed with the best possible information that they can get, which gives us some pause for concern because it appears that the expertise will be coming from somewhere else than within Manitoba. But it puts all the more onus on them to have a good understanding

and a clear willingness to put on the record what it is that is important for the agricultural community in Manitoba.

It does not so much matter what the agricultural community in Nova Scotia thinks about wheat marketing, but the way these things work there is always the potential for one product to be traded off against another. That is what, I think, causes so much angst on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that people can be lulled into a sense of calm and the greater good.

Ultimately, in negotiations, you have to do some give and take, I understand that. But when we see that because of the desire of people on this end of the North American market to be willing to be free traders and to have as open borders as possible, we have situations that still continue to nag at us where it is cheaper to finish Manitoba hogs in Iowa than it is to finish them in Manitoba. That is something that we are hoping to reverse, of course, with the Olymel announcement that the government has just participated in. But it is something that comes right down to the core of how we will represent this part of the world at worldwide negotiations because it is cheaper to feed Manitoba hogs in Iowa because they can put the corn two miles down the road into those hogs at a price that is subsidized internally.

Ultimately, my colleague spoke about the corn coming north. It also extends into the movement of the corn to come up here to offset distillers' costs and so on. So it does set, not a floor price, but a maximum price in the North American market. Those are all moving legally. Those products are moving legally, Mr. Speaker. We have to be forever vigilant, in terms of how we approach the world trade. We all know that farmers are the most independent group of entrepreneurs that you will find anywhere. We are neighbours, we are friends, but we compete with each other and we compete hard. As my colleague from Portage la Prairie said, "In the end, if we do not look after ourselves, we know that nobody else is going to do it for us."

So, Mr. Speaker, the basic tenets of this motion we support, but I want it on the record that we expect those from Manitoba who will be representing us to have done their homework before they go and to make sure that they know what they are talking about when they are advising the federal negotiators on a position that would protect the opportunity within Manitoba. We are so far from export markets, that we need every advantage, particularly every

advantage in value-added. If they take that message and look after it, then they will be looking after our producers.

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to put a few remarks in supports of this resolution.

We have been talking about the World Trade Organization. Let me talk a little bit about what the World Trade Organization is. The World Trade Organization is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations, more commonly known as WTO. At its heart are the WTO agreements negotiated and signed by the bulk of the world's trading nations and ratified in their parliaments. The goal is to help producers of goods and services, exporters and importers conduct business.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The WTO agreement provides the legal ground rules for international commerce. They are essential contracts binding government to keep their trade policies within agreed limits. Although negotiated and signed by government, the goal is to help producers of goods and services, exporters and importers conduct their business while allowing governments to meet social and environmental objectives.

This resolution before us today is empowering our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) and our Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Mr. Smith) to speak strongly on behalf of our producers and processors in Manitoba to make sure that our position is articulated during the negotiations, the position of Manitoba is articulated properly during these negotiations.

We all know that all international trade negotiations are the responsibility of the federal government. However, we recognize how important these talks are for the Manitoba producers and all citizens, so our government has taken an active role, ensuring that the input of Manitobans is heard and considered by the federal negotiators. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade will be representing Manitoba at the upcoming WTO ministerial conference in Hong Kong.

The members opposite are incorrect in saying we have only now started to talk to the industry about WTO. We have consulted extremely with Manitoba's industry in formulating a Manitoba position for the Government of Canada. The federal government has consulted Manitoba and other provinces on a regular basis throughout the WTO negotiations.

Last week, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives chaired the WTO agrifood industry workshop to hear Manitoba's agrifood industry's thoughts on the negotiations to date and what issues must be addressed by the federal government in the negotiations. The industry's direction was that it is important for Canadian producers to have access to world markets and for unfair subsidies and tariffs in other countries to be removed. However, the WTO agreement should not eliminate the ability of farmers to choose their own marketing system. We are hopeful that WTO will continue to make progress in the agricultural negotiations as draft acts are circulated leading up to the Hong Kong ministerial conference. These negotiations hold promise for a new deal that will result in Manitoba farmers not having to compete directly against foreign treasuries.

Manitoba is concerned that the monopoly powers of state trading enterprises remain subject to further negotiations, potentially threatening the survival of the Canadian Wheat Board. The operations of the Canadian Wheat Board, including its monopoly powers, are not part of the mandate for this round of negotiations. And so I join all members of the Chamber to support the resolution, and I would like to ask everyone to support the resolution as presented to this Chamber. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): I just wanted to put some words on the record on this resolution. It is a very important resolution, I think, for all of Manitoba agriculture producers. We have seen over this past week, actually, the Manitoba Cattle Producers hosted all of the members of the Legislature for a lunch, very much appreciated, and, today, I am not sure if it is the exact term, but Farmer Appreciation Day. There were a number of industries here today in the Legislature, again bringing their issues forward.

*(16:40)

I would simply say this, that we on this side of the House have tremendous respect and admiration for all of our ag producers in the province of

Manitoba. Despite the shortcomings of the current NDP government, we know on this side of the House because, frankly, Madam Deputy Chair, a lot of our members live, eat and breathe this livelihood, they have in the past, some of them still currently do, so the understanding of the members in our caucus, frankly, is something that I have a tremendous amount of respect for.

So, for that reason, we are very concerned when we hear that the minister does not have or does not seem to have a full grasp on some of the issues, in terms of the consultation process, when it took place, why was it left, perhaps, some time, to the eleventh hour. This is a very important initiative and I know, Madam Deputy Chair, that from our perspective we hope that as Manitobans go in this process, that is, Manitobans are part of a bigger delegation, obviously, Canada at the federal level is going to probably take the lead, I would assume, but we have got some strong members that I believe will be travelling from industry, accompanying the minister, and I think that is a good thing. I think it is a good thing that those people are there.

But I would just ask, whenever the minister has a chance in these negotiations, that the pressure that may come to bear upon Manitoba or other provinces or from Canada, she—and it is a very important role and I believe that she knows that—but I believe it is important for her as the minister to stand solid with our many, many Manitoba ag producers in these very, very important talks because they will have a ramification on the future of agriculture in the province of Manitoba.

So I would say that the resolution, which I have read, is one that I think is a very good resolution, Madam Deputy Chair. I know that we on this side of the House can speak, I believe, with a tremendous amount of knowledge on this issue, just because of the history that we see in our caucus and some of our members and some of the groups that have spoken to us. We are simply echoing some of their concerns, as we did in Question Period today when we asked the First Minister and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) on these issues.

So this is a very important initiative for our ag producers. We hope that they are strengthened, that our Manitoba ag producers are strengthened and, in fact, if I could just take a step back for Canada, we hope that Canada's agriculture producers are strengthened because I believe that in Canada, we have the best agriculture producers. I know that we

often talk about here in Manitoba having the best agriculture producers in the world, I believe we do. I hope they have the opportunity and I hope that the talks go in the same way that we would like them to go, in the sense that Manitoba is strengthened, not weakened, in the future of these WTO talks.

So on that I conclude my comments. I know other colleagues want to speak to this very important resolution. I thank the honourable members for allowing me to put a few words on the record.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is very much a pleasure to rise on this resolution and congratulate our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives for moving this initiative, and also to thank and recognize the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) for seconding this motion. I want to acknowledge the role that he does play in the agricultural community here in Manitoba.

When I mention the agricultural community here in Manitoba, I want all people to understand how important that community is to our very fine province of Manitoba. We who live in agricultural areas understand the connection from the land and the products produced from the land to our communities and to our provincial economy. Sometimes, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is unfortunate the words that we choose, because I know the Leader of the Official Opposition who spoke just ahead of me, I do not think really intended to say that our minister does not have a grasp of the issues. For one thing, I do not believe the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) believes that our minister does not grasp these issues, and I do not think for one minute that the Member for Kirkfield Park would compare his vast knowledge and experience in farming with our minister's knowledge and vast experience of farming.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I do not think the Official Opposition Leader intended to imply that our minister does not have a grasp of her portfolio. Our minister has put a lot of time, up and down the fields, our minister has put a lot of time and energy over the years living on a farm, living in a small community. I understand that the member opposite is from Punnichy, Saskatchewan. I know his background—[interjection] And he cheers for the right hockey team and all that, but I do not think he intended to say that our minister does not have a grasp of the issues.

I think what we have to recognize at a time like this, when we come together and move and second together a motion of unity in this House, that we need to be honourable in what we say, and we need to make sure that we, not only are perceived to be all paddling our canoe in the same direction on behalf of Manitoba farmers but that we actually do paddle our canoes in the same direction on behalf of the Manitoba farmer.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I do have the utmost confidence in the team of people that will be representing Manitoba at these meetings. I want to be clear that this team will, I believe, pressure the Canadian government who are negotiating in this round on behalf—[interjection] We will have team Manitoba there to put the pressure on team Canada to make sure that they negotiate the best possible circumstances for our Manitoba farmers.

Let us be clear what these negotiations are all about. These negotiations are about increasing access for our products on the world market. That is what this is about. It is also about protecting the things in this province that have worked well, things like orderly marketing, supply management, the Canadian Wheat Board. And I have got to say, Mr. Speaker, that is one area where I get a little nervous when I see one Conservative member across the way after another standing up and proclaiming their undying love for the Wheat Board. It reminds me a little bit of that story that I used to be told. You have got to watch. There is a shepherd watching over the flock of sheep, and there were some in there that looked a little suspicious, and they were actually wolves with sheepskins over top of them.

The question is not whether members opposite support the Wheat Board or not. The question is do they support the single-desk selling advantage that the Wheat Board has. There is an important distinction that I have just made there. I do not support the traditional view of the Conservative Party that would treat the Wheat Board simply as a marketing club. I support single-desk selling, the advantage of single-desk selling that the Wheat Board has on behalf of Manitoba farmers, many of whom are my constituents.

I want to point out that a Saskatchewan member of Parliament by the name of David Anderson, a Conservative member of Parliament in Saskatchewan, has made it very clear, has made it very, very clear what the Conservative Party stand is when it comes to single-desk selling. He says, and I

quote, "We believe the Canadian Wheat Board should be voluntary." Voluntary. The Canadian Wheat Board should be voluntary, according to the Saskatchewan Conservative MP, David Anderson.

* (16:50)

So here we have the Conservative Party in our Legislature here today talking about how they support the Wheat Board. Last election, they had their federal leader saying one thing, the member of Parliament for Dauphin-Swan River saying another. In the last election, Stephen Harper said, "We support dual marketing."

You know what? In the spirit of unity in this Legislature here today, I am going to take my friends from across the way at their word. I am going to assume that they are actually supportive of the Wheat Board and single-desk selling so that we could move forward together on this issue. We can move forward, not like we did in the past when Brian Mulroney, and I know that will bring back a few good memories for members opposite, when we were heading into a round of negotiations that offered up the dual-pricing system for wheat, something that was a benefit for farmers. He offered it up even before he got to the negotiations. I know, thinking of my Liberal colleagues across the way, that they regret the decision their party made to ditch the Crow and hurt farmers.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to conclude by saying that I support this resolution and I commend our team, our team Manitoba, in its trip to Hong Kong to represent our Manitoba farmers. Thank you very much.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, it is an extreme pleasure to be able to stand today to speak to this resolution. I feel that once in a while, in this Legislature, we do put our heads together as a government and opposition. We do put aside our political partisanship and look at what is good for Manitoba and for our people. In this case, it has to do with our ag producers.

I want to say to the minister that I commend her for bringing the resolution to the Chamber today because for a long time, we questioned whether or not the minister had even consulted with the interest groups, our ag groups who were out there working very hard consulting with the farmers, the grass roots people, on what our position should be with regard to the World Trade Organization talks that are coming up in Hong Kong next week.

Mr. Speaker, I know the minister is going to Hong Kong, and I think we want to send our best wishes with her as she represents Manitoba at these very, very crucial talks that are going to determine the future direction that agriculture takes in our province. I do not care how nebulous we think that these talks might be, they are going to have a very significant impact on ag producers and on what we can gain from the marketplace.

I think all of us understand that for too long, our agriculture producers have not received their fair share out of the international marketplace. I think that is a well known fact and, Mr. Speaker, it is time that our producers were on a level playing field with other producers in other parts of the world.

Now, in other parts of the world, whether it is the United States or whether it is in Europe, producers have the support of their governments. Producers have the support of their federal governments, their provincial or state governments, Mr. Speaker, and, unfortunately, back in the early days of the World Trade Organization talks, Canada tried to do its part and we reduced our subsidies before we went to the World Trade Organization talks. In essence, that hurt us because other countries ramped their subsidies up and Canada bumped its subsidies down, but those were the benchmarks that were established for how much subsidy each country could deliver to its ag producers.

Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, in Canada, we are nearing the top, the cap, if you like, of subsidies that can be afforded to our producers. Otherwise, we are in contravention of the agreements that were reached in the first round of World Trade Organization talks. I think that is a flaw and I think that is an argument that Canada should be making to the World Trade Organization. I think that we were short-changed in those discussions and our producers suffered.

Our producers cannot go out there and fight the subsidies of other nations. Our producers alone cannot fight the huge treasuries of the United States, of Germany and of other European countries, so, therefore, we need the help of our governments to do that.

Now, someone sometimes says that our federal government and our provincial government cannot afford to subsidize our producers to the levels that other countries are. I say that we cannot afford to ignore this problem and we have to find some creative solutions to allow our people who produce

the world's best quality, highest quality and most abundant source of food to be able to compete with other producers in other parts of the world.

Mr. Speaker, our farmers in Canada and in Manitoba feed the world. They feed our cities. They feed all of us, and although we can echo some good words, whether it is in the rotunda, in this Chamber or at public functions, the reality exists that we have to put dollars behind our words, but I understand that there are limitations, but we must work with our producers to find creative solutions. Is it the supply managed system? Is that what we should be going at? Well, it has worked for the small sector in eggs and in poultry but that is not how the world operates and this whole World Trade Organization operates on the premise that there are no subsidies and if there are no subsidies to anybody, then everybody is on a level playing field.

Well, we have never achieved that goal and so we are sending our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) to the World Trade Organization talks to encourage and, of course our intergovernmental minister, we are sending them to the World Trade Organization talks to encourage the representatives who are going to be at the negotiations table to make sure that the trade subsidies in other countries, like the United States, like the European countries, are ratcheted down. We cannot ratchet ours down any further and I hope that that is the message that the minister will take with her to the tables, Mr. Speaker, because we as a country, we as a Province cannot lower our subsidies because even as it stands today, our subsidies do not come anywhere close to where the floor prices of the United States are, where the subsidies in Europe are, they do not come anywhere close to where those countries are in terms of their subsidies.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that we want to all stand and support this resolution today, to give our best wishes to the ministers as they lead us off into the World Trade Organization talks and, to that end, I say good luck to the minister and I hope that she takes our comments seriously as she represents Manitoba in the World Trade Organization talks in Hong Kong next week. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any other speakers? Seeing none, is the House—[interjection] Well, I have a speaker, the honourable member—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I do want to wish the minister well as she goes towards the WTO trade negotiations in Hong Kong. Certainly, I know there were some difficulties coming out of the Doha negotiations that happened several years ago, some problems for producers, and as they go into this new round of trade negotiations, I hope that she will fight hard for the supply management system that has served my constituency very well over the last number of years and has served all the constituents well.

I hope she will fight hard for the Canada Wheat Board as well. I know that there will be pressures on her to move away from certain tariffication levels, and I hope that she will continue to fight hard for that and I wish her well as she goes on her trip, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any other speakers? Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the resolution moved by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), seconded by the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

Is it the members' wish to have the resolution read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The question before the House is the resolution.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Is it the will of the House to call it unanimous, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call the vote unanimous? *[Agreed]* The vote will be unanimous.

Is it the will of the House to call it five o'clock?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the hour being five o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 1, 2005

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