



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

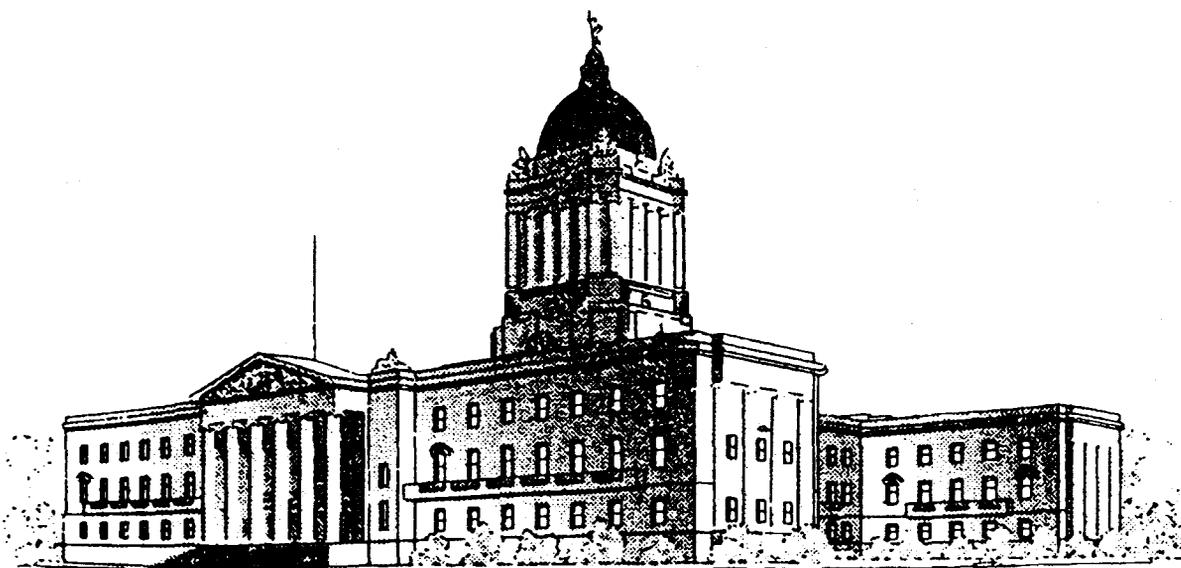
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	St. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	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.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary	Tuxedo	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Joy	Fort Garry	P.C.
SMITH, Scott	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 30, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following reports, copies of which have already been distributed: The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Annual Report 1999; Culture, Heritage and Citizenship Annual Report 1998-1999; Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Annual Report 1998-1999; Manitoba Film and Sound Recording Development Corporation Annual Report 1998-1999; Manitoba Arts Council Annual Report; the Centre culturel franco-manitobain Annual Report; Manitoba Liquor Control Commission Annual Report; Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Annual Report; Manitoba Lotteries Corporation First Quarter Report for the period April to June 1999.

I am also pleased to table the following reports: the Status of Women Annual Report 1998-1999; Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Second Quarter Report for the period April to September 1999.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the report of 1998-99 Annual Report of the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation; 1998-99 Annual Report of the Manitoba Farm Mediation Board; and the 1998-99 Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, all copies of which have been previously distributed.

As well, I am pleased to table the 1998-99 Annual Report of Manitoba Crop Insurance; the 1998 Annual Report of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, the University of Manitoba; and I am also pleased to table the

Report of the Agricultural Credit Corporation Certification Agency.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Public Accounts, Volumes 1 and 2 for 1998-99, which have previously been distributed. As well, I am tabling Public Accounts Volume 3 also for 1998-99.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today twenty-five Grade 9 students from Sisler High under the direction of Mrs. Jo-Ann Kellow. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

Also seated in the public gallery are thirty Grades 2 and 3 students from Prairie Rose Elementary School under the direction of Mrs. Carol Klem. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett).

Also seated in the public gallery are forty-eight Grade 5 students from Linwood Elementary School under the direction of Mr. Ed Hume. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

*(1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

New Democratic Party Fundraising Dinner

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): My question is for the First Minister.

On September 10 this year, Today's NDP issued a news release committing to reforming The Elections Finances Act to ban all donations from all corporate, union and other organizational sources, limiting contributions to those solely given by individuals. In the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, the government said: "The Manitoba government has committed . . . to eliminate corporate and union contributions to political parties." I have here a letter from the Manitoba NDP which announces a business and professional dinner tomorrow evening in which members of the corporate and business community are invited for a \$200-a-plate dinner to raise funds for the New Democratic Party of Manitoba.

So my question is: given the government's stated commitment to eliminating corporate and business contributions to political parties in Manitoba, how can Today's NDP government justify holding a \$200-a-plate fundraising dinner tomorrow night directed specifically at the business and corporate community?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, when we made the announcement in September we basically stated that we would be changing the laws and when we change the laws we would be banning union and corporate donations here in Manitoba. We also said that we would change it at the same time for all political parties at the same time, that we would not—[interjection] Well, if members opposite—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: We need no lectures from members opposite about following the election laws of Manitoba. We follow the laws of Manitoba, we respect the laws of Manitoba, and we will change the laws in Manitoba. When we change the laws in Manitoba for all political parties, we will be glad to see the Conservatives voting with us to ban union and corporate donations at the same time.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, on Friday, of course, the member opposite spoke about hypocrisy. He is now defining it for us by his comments, and that is the problem, the hypocrisy of the

members opposite. In that particular holier-than-thou news release of September 10 that Today's NDP released, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, of course, in trying to ensure that he made his point as to why he was advocating these changes said in reference to people's opinions about politicians: cynicism is high in this province.

Well, my question is: does the Premier believe that he is going to lower the cynicism about politicians by, after committing to passing laws to ban corporate donations, holding a \$200-a-plate dinner specifically aimed at fleecing the corporate and business community?

Mr. Doer: This coming from an individual who accepted donations from Crown corporations here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, a party that received \$700,000 from corporations in the last filing. We have not got the latest filing.

We are proud of the fact that we get 80 percent of our money from people, the highest amount. We are proud of the fact that we get the other 20 percent from business and unions, and we are proud of the fact that we live within the existing election laws. It was actually quite interesting because when we made the announcement and we said we would change the laws in the future in government, which we will do, the former Deputy Premier and the co-chair of the Conservative election party said, and I quote: Oh, people will just find a way to get around those laws. Well, we are happy to say that that is the Tory way of running election campaigns. That is not the NDP way.

We have always said that we would live under the existing—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: Yes, if the research person that was sent to follow me at every announcement had taken accurate—and I believe I was taped—notes, I said we would live under the existing laws until we changed the laws. We will be proud to change those laws, and we will look forward to

quick passage by members opposite to ban union corporate donations in Manitoba.

* (1340)

Mr. Filmon: The public knows that is not the impression that he tried to create. Nowhere in this news release does it talk about that. It talks about doing politics better and setting a higher standard. If that hypocrisy is the higher standard, then Manitobans will be sorely disappointed.

This same news release of September 10 says: it is time to renew some faith in our democracy. We will ensure that money and influence do not speak louder than the voices of everyday Manitobans. Yet this letter sent to the corporations says: come to the dinner and share a question and advice session—advice session, Mr. Speaker. Does he expect that these everyday Manitobans that he is talking about can afford \$200 a plate to be able to give some advice to their government?

Mr. Doer: Every year we have two dinners a year, and I believe members opposite have two dinners a year. Unlike the members opposite, we have an open forum of questions and answers, whether in opposition or in government, and we have had those dinners for years. We do know, though, that when we pass the new laws, those dinners will still take place, but there cannot be a donation. I am looking forward to members opposite who have raised—I mean, they have raised over \$700,000 from corporations last year. I think they are close to over a million dollars this year from corporations. We are dealing with the 1999 budget of the NDP. We are dealing with the 1999 election laws, and we are following the laws, unlike members opposite who have already been well documented under the Monnin inquiry in terms of following the election laws of Manitoba.

What I thought was curious, Mr. Speaker, was that when we announced that we would live within the existing laws until the new laws are introduced, which will be in this session of the Legislature, their former Deputy Premier and their co-chair of the campaign said why are they going to ban union, corporate donations, people will just find a way to get around that. We are not going to get around it. When we change the

law, we will live under the law, not like members opposite.

Mr. Filmon: What we are really dealing with, Mr. Speaker, is the 1999 hypocrisy of Today's NDP. In order to eliminate all of this hypocrisy and cynicism that he is creating by on the one hand saying that he is going to change things and on the other hand trying to get under the wire to grab all the money he can before he makes these changes, will the Premier just simply say that he is prepared to take all this money that they are going to raise tomorrow night at \$1,400 a table and donate it to a food bank in this province so that he can really hold his head up high in this province? No cynicism, no hypocrisy.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, this dinner was planned as part of our '99 budget, but in the spirit of co-operation, in the spirit of integrity, we are prepared to make the law that we will be bringing in effective January 1, 2000, no more corporate donations, no more union donations. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to accept that proposition today on this floor.

* (1345)

Education System Diagnostic Testing—Grade 3

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, Today's NDP has brought forth a wonderful guarantee. The guarantee is that every single Grade 3 student in this province will be reading and writing fluently by the end of Grade 3. I think that is awesome.

I would like to ask the honourable Minister of Education: I guess, as Minister of Education, you understand that in order for diagnostic testing to be very relevant it has to be consistent. So I need to know from the Minister of Education: are you going to be designing a province-wide diagnostic test that will be consistent all across the province of Manitoba so, when we are assessing the reading and the writing of Grade 3 children in this province, we know consistently exactly where the child is at and at what grade level they are performing?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I think it is highly amusing that the member opposite would be

prepared to give a lecture on Grade 3 testing when the previous government had a regime that was in place in June which gave no opportunity whatsoever for any outcomes that were going to lead to growth in Grade 3 students.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, this brings me back to the throne speech. There was no answer here. I had another question, but I would like to repeat that question.

Will there be a diagnostic test designed so the parents and the teachers in this province will be able to diagnose very accurately and follow through with the Today's NDP guarantee that every child will be reading and writing by the end of Grade 3? Will you have that diagnostic test in place?

Mr. Caldwell: I am not sure of the question, Mr. Speaker, it is quite rambling. But I will say that the members opposite—we notice their ranks are quite depleted of former ministers of Education. We will be in consultation with parents, educators, trustees and superintendents developing a diagnostic that will be of some value to our students and not be issuing directives from the minister's office, which was the case for the last dozen years.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Fort Garry has the floor.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, with the guarantee that all Grade 3 students will be reading and writing fluently at the Grade 3 level, in light of that guarantee, I can see that teachers across this province will be very concerned that in their classrooms every child can do that. Would the honourable Minister of Education please tell us about the supports that teachers will have to meet that onerous task?

Mr. Caldwell: You know, after a decade of constant attack on the public education system, I think this is just relatively absurd. Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, made a clear choice on September 21. The honourable member's party was wrong on that side of the question, and they were justly punished for it by Manitobans. I think she would do well to remember that.

Post-Secondary Education Tuition Fee Policy

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Education as well. During the election campaign this fall, Today's NDP promised Manitobans that tuition fees at universities and colleges would be cut by 10 percent. Later, however, the member for Wolseley, the now Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), stated that this was not going to be a cut, rather it would be a rebate. My question to the Minister of Education today is: will the minister please assure Manitoba students that in the fall of the year 2000 students who are entering universities and colleges in Manitoba will have their tuition fees cut by 10 percent?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Yes.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the minister for the answer.

Employment Opportunities

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): My second question is to the Minister of Education as well. In light of the fact that this proposal that the New Democrats put forward offers no improvement to education in terms of careers to choose, the appropriate programs to enter so that there are indeed jobs at the end of the day, will the minister now put forward his plan to Manitobans which will ensure that Manitoba students graduating from our universities will have employment in this province?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): I am a little bit incredulous at the audacity of the members opposite, after punishing post-secondary education and public education in this province for the last decade, would even have the nerve—

* (1350)

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I have been very patient with the honourable Minister of Education, but

Beauchesne 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." And that is the key to this point of order that I am bringing forward. All this minister is doing is provoking debate. If he has not got an answer, he has an option. He can sit there and let one of the ministers that does have it give it.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On the point of order, the previous answer, the minister answered yes. Now I suppose that really confused the opposition. I have not heard an answer like that for years. The answer is being given; it is being given in full. That was the information that was requested. It is being offered, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order, all questions should deal with the minister's background and, adhering to Citation 417 in the second question, should deal with the matter that is raised.

* * *

Mr. Caldwell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, I find it quite amusing that the members opposite would have the audacity to proceed with this line of questioning, given the absolute disaster that they left the public school system and the post-secondary education system with. To the people of the province of Manitoba, we believe very strongly in a quality public education and post-secondary education system for this province, and we will, in consultation—which is a large departure from the previous regime—with the stakeholders, build an education system in the province of Manitoba that will be one of excellence.

School Boards Autonomy

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. The Minister of Education has issued a directive that YNN not be allowed in classrooms across Manitoba. The minister says he will not issue directives; in fact, that is the first thing he did as

minister. Is the minister also aware that school boards are duly elected to represent the interests of residents of their respective school divisions and now the minister is removing their autonomy? Is it the minister's intent, then, to take away school board autonomy from the trustees in school divisions across this province, and has he conveyed this to MAST and the school boards in Manitoba that he is stripping them of their autonomy?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): No.

Mr. Schuler: My question to the Minister of Education: is the Minister of Education going to instruct his education commissars to rip all scoreboards from school gyms as they feature Coke and Pepsi advertising? What about team T-shirts and jerseys? Is he going to ask that they be removed if they have advertising? Newspapers used in the classroom, is he going to ask that they be removed? The Internet, which they herald so much, is full of advertising, and is he planning to advise MAST and the school trustees that he is stripping them of their decision-making authority? Is he going to start making these decisions between his office and his department?

Mr. Caldwell: No.

Mr. Schuler: So school boards, Mr. Speaker, have to read about it in the newspaper. That is his idea of communicating with the people of this province. What is the minister's plan to replace—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Again, recognizing that there are many new members in the House and members performing different roles, I do want to make the point that supplementary questions are to be carefully drawn. There is to be no preamble, postamble, midamble, any kind of ambling.

Mr. Speaker: On the same point of order, the Opposition House Leader.

* (1355)

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, our critics did review the tapes from past Question Periods and are only taking the examples from the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer). So, if the honourable member does have a point of order, it has been something that has been occurring on a number of occasions in this House as long as I have been here.

Mr. Speaker: On both points of order, on supplementary questions, there should be no preamble and should come directly to the question, and answers should be short and brief.

Mr. Schuler: The only amble is the amble from across the way.

My last question to the Minister of Education: what is the minister's plan to replace the revenue and the technological resources secured by divisions that have elected to have YNN in their schools, seeing as he has sent out a directive stripping school boards of their autonomy?

Mr. Speaker: The question has been put.

Mr. Schuler: How is he going to replace these resources?

Mr. Caldwell: This government, unlike the previous government, is committed to stable funding for our public school system in consultation with all stakeholders. Thank you.

Education System Special Needs Children

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. I was pleased to have your enthusiastic response to making sure that all children in Grade 3 will be reading and writing. The clear concern will be special needs children, and there is a major report of how special needs

children's needs are to be met if you are going to meet this objective. I would like to know what the minister's plans are for special needs children.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): As the honourable member indicates, special needs is of particular concern to this government. There has been an excellent report presented to me recently. The report is based upon extensive consultations in the public domain. We will be carrying forth those consultations to create the best possible system, one of inclusion, for the youth of Manitoba, and I think that it is a very important issue that we must deal with together as a province.

University of Manitoba Budget

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): A supplementary for the Minister of Education. As one continues through education, you talked about the post-secondary education system. What is your response to the fact that the University of Manitoba is now asking department heads and faculty to reduce budgets by 3 percent? This is the opposite direction from what you have talked about promoting post-secondary education.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): I had the privilege, actually, to spend three hours this morning at the University of Manitoba, meeting with students, faculty, having extensive tours of the university, the engineering building, aboriginal centre, and so forth. I realize that there are significant problems left behind after a decade of neglect and abuse from the members opposite for our post-secondary system. We will be working in accord with the normal budgeting process to resolve these issues.

Post-Secondary Education Tuition Fee Policy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): A supplementary again to the Minister of Education: what are you going to do in terms of reducing tuition fees which crimp universities even further in terms of being able to make sure that

the needs of post-secondary education are going to be met?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, again, unlike the previous government, we have entered into consultations and discussions with post-secondary institutions to create an affordable and accessible post-secondary system for all the people of Manitoba and not only those with the wealth able to afford it.

* (1400)

Education System Advertising Policy

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Advertising in our schools has become an issue in Manitoba. The Minister of Education swept aside school trustees' autonomy and issued a directive banning YNN from Manitoba's classrooms. Today's NDP even put out a news release which stated: while in class, our kids should not be captives of advertisers.

Today's NDP appear motivated by political interests as they selectively remove one aspect of advertising while leaving many others. My question to the minister is: can the Minister of Education explain to Manitobans how YNN advertising is different than the Smith-Jackson School's involvement in the AT&T Virtual Classroom Contest and schools across this province participating in Wal-Mart's adopt-a-school program?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Unlike the members opposite in the previous government, we are not willing to sell our children to the highest bidder.

Mr. Tweed: How can the minister issue a directive banning YNN based on preventing our kids from being captives of advertisers when at McIsaac School in the constituency of Flin Flon, students and parents are collecting UPC symbols off Kellogg's products in exchange for \$10,000?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, the government is not prepared to dedicate curriculum time, classroom contact time to commercial enterprises. That classroom time should be used for

education of the students with the teacher and not be dedicated to a corporation. We are not prepared to go down that road.

Mr. Tweed: Does the minister not see the contradiction, where McIsaac School students do not simply watch advertising and are left free to make a choice on their selection of products but instead must purchase a specific brand? Where is the government's policy concerning the entire issue of advertising in our schools, whether it is the supply of magazines, newspapers, scoreboards, et cetera?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, it is the third time I have said it. We are not going to have curriculum classroom time given over to the highest bidder.

Education System Reading/Writing Standards—Grade 3

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, during the provincial election the NDP stated, and I quote: Every child will be reading and writing fluently in their Grade 3 year. We call this our Grade 3 guarantee.

Since this guarantee is not being made by the front-line staff such as teachers, principals or superintendents, in fact it is being made by the Minister of Education, can the minister tell us what this guarantee really means? Will it be a certificate bearing his name?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Answering the last question, Mr. Speaker, no.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, I know that teachers, superintendents and principals are asking what that guarantee means, asking the minister's staff what it means. They are simply throwing their hands up, and they say they do not know either. The guarantee implies that there is a standard that must be reached or exceeded. Has that standard been articulated? Could he do that for us in the House today?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite raised this point during the election campaign and lost.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, will there be a year-end standardized test so that the minister can ensure these guarantees that he is unable to define? When can students and parents expect to receive these signed guarantees from the Minister of Education?

Mr. Caldwell: In case the members opposite missed it, Mr. Speaker, Grade 3 and YNN were election issues, and the members opposite lost.

Education System Internet Access—Monitoring

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education is well aware that Today's NDP promised to provide every student with an e-mail address. As a former teacher and a parent, I know that any monitoring system can be compromised. I am sure that you are well aware of the concerns all parents have about unsupervised access to the Internet.

Although I possibly know the answer I am going to get to this question, I am going to ask this question: Mr. Speaker, is the minister prepared to follow through with this election campaign promise? If so, how can you guarantee that the access students have to the Internet will be supervised?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, you know, after yesterday's revelation of 600,000 pieces of personal information being thrown in the public domain, I find it somewhat ironic that such a question was broached today.

In response to the member opposite's question, these are e-mail addresses, and we have confidence in our public school system and in our boards to ensure the best quality of education for students.

Internet Access—Resources

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that Today's NDP is prepared to give every child an e-mail address, are they willing to provide students with the necessary resources?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I guess the

members opposite can stay tuned. Unlike the previous regime, we will be providing ongoing funding in accord with economic growth to our public school system and not starving it, and we will be allowing local jurisdictions to make decisions as to how best resources are used within their jurisdiction.

Internet Access—Costs

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Could the minister please let us know the cost of providing e-mail addresses to all students?

An Honourable Member: Less than a billion.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, less than a billion was suggested, and I would suggest that is very accurate. I think that the member opposite knows that most e-mail on—[interjection] In consultation with the local divisions, we will be making that decision.

Education System Standards Testing—Grade 6

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a yes and no question, so it will not be that difficult.

We have a problem in the province because parents and teachers have wanted academic excellence throughout the school system. The previous government put in a testing procedure because parents at open forums and teachers said: we want to know how our children are progressing. When a child goes to Grade 6 in the North, when a child continues to move and go to a different part of the province, they want to know how their child is doing academically, at what grade level they are working, so when the next teacher receives that student they are able to start in a program that is suitable.

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Mrs. Smith: Could the honourable minister let us know: will he be eliminating the Grade 6 Senior 1 and Senior 4 tests, yes or no?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, as the members

opposite know, the Grades 6 and 9 testing is under review. A decision was made by the previous government.

* (1410)

School Boards Autonomy

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, my question goes to the Minister of Education as well today.

I have heard in this House two very, very distinct answers today from the Minister of Education, one stating that he is not stripping the autonomy of school boards, very much clear and on the record. Also, he has stated that he is not going to issue any directives to any school boards. Again, a very distinct no. So, therefore, the school division of Morris-Macdonald which has in fact a contract with YNN, they then can count on continuing with that contract, and I am very happy to hear that from the minister here today. So, therefore—

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

An Honourable Member: Members' Statements.

Mr. Faurchou: No, I have not run out of my minute preamble.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Again, Mr. Speaker, Members' Statements come after Oral Questions. Beauchesne Citation 409 says: "A question must be brief. A preamble need not exceed one carefully drawn sentence." I would ask you if you would draw the member to order.

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

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): The honourable member is correct on the quotation that he is making. The one aspect that he misses is he was not following where the periods were in the member's statement. I do believe that given the opportunity, the question

was just about there, Mr. Speaker, and given the opportunity, I think he was about to put it forward.

Mr. Speaker: On both points of order, all questions require a short preamble and then put the question.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Would the member please put the question?

Mr. Faurchou: So, therefore, Mr. Speaker, will the minister be communicating to the school divisions to which he has issued directives, cancelling his initial directive?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, no.

Mr. Faurchou: Mr. Speaker, this is a clear contradiction. Which "no" is the public supposed to believe? The one "no" that he will not be issuing a directive, or "no" he will not be cancelling his directive?

Mr. Caldwell: The curriculum is the responsibility of the Province of Manitoba. We will not give over curriculum time, classroom contact time, to corporations or commercial enterprises.

Education System Standards Testing

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, just think of the hypocrisy here. Look at the hypocrisy here today. The Minister of Education comes to this House and on an issue like YNN says, no, I will issue a directive. The first thing he did as Minister of Education. Then he says when it comes to ensuring that our children are meeting standards of excellence: well, I do not want to do anything about that. He says that is up to the school divisions and the teachers' union in reality.

So my question again to him is: when is he going to start being a Minister of Education for the students of this province and take some responsibility to ensure that there are standards in our schools?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, the public spoke

quite clearly on September 21 as to the members opposite's policies on public education. They were selling our children to the highest bidder. They were giving standards tests in Grade 3 to children, many of whom still believe in Santa Claus, with no opportunity for diagnostics, no opportunity for outcomes, no opportunity for personal goals for those students throughout the academic year. This government is dedicated to excellence in education in this province, and we will remain so.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, for a very short question.

Youth News Network Consultations

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Again, listen to the wiggle room and double-talk. I ask the minister: if he is committed to standards and excellence in education, why did he not answer the question from the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith) and tell us when you will be setting the criteria to meet the goal that you campaigned on, which is to ensure every one of our children in this province is literate by the end of Grade 3?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Unlike the previous government, we began working with parents, teachers, trustees, superintendents and students the day we were elected into office.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, a very short question.

Education System Diagnostic Testing—Grade 3

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Again the flip-flop. Did the minister or did the former critic or did anyone in the New Democratic Party go and talk to the parents, the teachers, the administrators in those school divisions who made a choice to accept YNN? Did they exercise the same kind of concern they show here today on that particular issue, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): As a matter of fact, I was at East Kildonan the morning of the open house, spoke with Mr. McDonald, the president of, I

suppose, YNN, and had an interesting tour of the facility. The mandate that was given to us from the people of Manitoba was to restore educational excellence in this province, and that is what we intend to do.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Seniors Mall-Walking Program

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to bring to the House's attention an important grassroots project that is occurring in the constituency of Fort Garry.

During the '99 election, I had opportunity to go to over 6,500 homes in my constituency. When I went to these homes, I found that a lot of the seniors were shut in. A lot of the people could not get out during the winter months. As a result, a group of individuals, including myself, developed a weekly mall-walking program where seniors are picked up right at their doors, taken to the mall once a week. They go, they have a cup of coffee, they talk to each other, they socialize. We pick them up and take them back to their residences.

I would like to really applaud B.J. and Bill Langdan from King Transportation. They supplied the bus. We have Gerry Little from Midtown Ford and Ike Vicar from Pembina Dodge Chrysler who donated vans. The Kiwanis group in Fort Garry got together to drive the vans, and these seniors are having a whole new kind of life. It is wonderful.

The project occurred because of volunteer efforts, and I want to give a special quick sincere thank you to Smokey, who is also a senior who drives the bus. His quick wit and humour have really helped the seniors in Fort Garry. Thank you.

* (1420)

Christmas Cheer Board

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): I recently had the pleasure to represent the Premier (Mr. Doer) at the opening of the Christmas Cheer

Board warehouses located at Leila Avenue. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we are heading into a season of giving and sharing, and for many this is a particularly hard time because they feel they have so little to give and share.

It is groups like the Christmas Cheer Board whose members and general volunteers work so hard to ensure all the people feel the joy of the season. For many years now, the people of the Cheer Board have collected, purchased and distributed packages to the destitute and the needy of our community. I urge the members of the House to join me in recognizing the work, the kind spirit and the dedication of people at the Winnipeg Christmas Cheer Board as they begin the season with the same theme: Christmas should happen for everyone. Thank you.

Most Giving Towns

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Today I am very pleased to once again have the privilege of rising in this House to acknowledge the generosity of my constituents. For the second year in a row, two Pembina Valley towns have been named among the province's most generous communities. The kind hearts of residents in the towns of Winkler and Morden have put these two communities in the company of the top four giving towns in Manitoba.

This is certainly a fact that they should be very proud of and something I am very proud of. How is it that these two can, year after year, give so much back to our society? Well, there are two very important reasons. First, the Pembina Valley area has experienced fantastic economic growth and continues to do well. These people are industrious and hardworking and have realized the fruits of their labour. Fortunately, many others have been able to benefit from their success as a result of their generosity. The second reason for the gracious giving of these two towns is the strong faith that is prevalent in this region of the province. We are our brothers' keepers is the attitude held by the people in the area. This belief is not only preached but practised, as is evidenced by their continuing generosity.

The Mennonites are a strong people who are confident in their faith and take responsibility for

their actions. Manitoba took them in when they came as refugees from Europe. Here they were blessed with prosperity. They have not hesitated to share their wealth with the province that gave them a home. Indeed, the Mennonites' generosity extends beyond this province to those in need around the globe. Through internationally recognized organizations like the Mennonite Central Committee, their contributions have been able to benefit many worldwide.

I would like to commend the people of Pembina for their selfless efforts. I know they will continue to give in the future. I am very proud to represent these most generous communities. Thank you.

Radisson Community Organizations

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, it is my first opportunity to rise in the House as part of a new government. I want to begin by thanking all the constituents in the new Radisson for their support, mention a few of the community organizations that I have had the good fortune to work with since the election and recognize some of the accomplishments of these community organizations.

I want to start off by recognizing the Winakwa Community club for the wonderful programming that they have, everything from a play-and-stay program for moms and kids in preschool to a youth drop-in on Wednesday nights, going to attend a lunch with Santa, and I have heard they have one of the best craft sales and Christmas teas anywhere.

I also want to recognize, on October 20 the opening of the St. Boniface Arts and Technology Centre at the former Pierre Radisson school. This is a wonderful asset of vocational technology and arts education to that part of the city in the St. Boniface area.

I also want to pay tribute to the good work of the Transcona Seniors Council, as well as the Transcona Retired Citizens Centre, which has been working hard on behalf of seniors in the Transcona area and providing wonderful services such as a transportation program to

assist residents in making attendance at their various appointments with the help of a buddy or a big sister or big brother kind of thing for seniors in the Transcona area.

Finally I want to recognize the Transcona Nationals football team, which has over 200 children and youth playing football in Transcona and particular congratulations to this year's provincial champions, the 11- and 12-year-old team, that won the football championships this fall.

Congratulations to all these groups, and I look forward to continuing to work with them.

North End YM-YWCA

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, ensuring that Manitobans have adequate community resources is important to the health of our city. For a wide variety of reasons, the North End YM-YWCA had to close its doors, taking away an important resource from north end residents.

I am very pleased that a grassroots group of motivated community residents and service providers are working on a plan that would see the North End Y reopen. This plan outlines the importance of providing family support to those in need, both young and old. The plan also recognizes the benefit of providing recreational activities for Winnipeggers. The need for a community resource such as this is clearer than ever, given the ongoing arson problem our city is facing right now. Such a centre will provide hope and opportunity for youth and families in the north end as well as cementing community spirit that is driving this project.

Over the weekend we heard the good news about the financial surplus the Pan Am Games achieved for Manitoba. I cannot think of a better Pan Am legacy to leave Winnipeggers than to reopen the North End Y. There is no question about the immense value that such a centre provides for a community. It will take involvement from the private sector, all three levels of government and the community as a whole to ensure that this plan gets off the ground and becomes a reality. I sincerely hope this can be achieved. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTION

Manitoba Farm Crisis

Mr. Speaker: To resume interrupted debate on the resolution proposed yesterday by the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk) regarding the farm crisis in Manitoba and the proposed motion of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) amended thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Morris, who has 32 minutes remaining.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I think when I finished some of my comments yesterday I was referencing some of the historical ad hoc programs that had been put in place every decade since the '50s. What this demonstrates is that a crisis in agriculture is not only a today event but might very well have been the topic on emergency debates over and over again for the last four or five decades.

Is this crisis going to be solved with the \$300-million bridge finance package? Not likely. Is it going to be solved at the World Trade Organization talks that are taking place in Seattle? Probably not. Why not? The reality is that food is produced in abundance in some countries and very limited in other countries. The countries that have an abundance want to sell it to countries without food that often cannot afford to buy it. Food distribution in the world is the single most important factor that skews the whole food system. This would tend to lend credence to the comments of the member from River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) that it is time for perhaps a global food bank.

Another very important reason that we are in the situation we are in today is that countries within the EEC during the great wars and after the wars and particularly World War II did not have enough food and many of the citizens starved or were very undernourished. The leaders of the day vowed that never again would their citizens starve and thus started incentives that would encourage high production. This was later carried on by the European Economic Community as a general policy for all its

members. Once there was sufficient production for their own people, then the excess was placed into the world market at prices well below those of competing countries and the producers were subsidized accordingly.

* (1430)

At one time the European Economic Community subsidy was more than twice the value of a tonne of barley that was exported out of Canada, which translates into a much lower net dollar value to the Canadian producer. So our producers could not compete. When the World Trade Organization was established and we had an agreement with some 125 to 134 countries that subsidies would be removed, our Canadian farmers felt that they could compete with anybody when the playing field was level, and they did, but not for long, as the EEC totally disregarded the rules and the U.S. followed suit and entered into another trade war with food as the pawn.

Over the years in Canada the whole support for agriculture has gone through an offloading of what was historically a federal responsibility to shared federal-provincial type programs and in some cases tripartite programs with the producers. In the European Union and the U.S. not one province or state has any agriculture programs or cost-shares any agricultural programs with the federal state. Is there something wrong with this picture when we look at Canada? I think so.

There are in my opinion only two ways to go to address the current agricultural crisis. One, all subsidies are removed so that our farmers can compete on a level playing field. This will be most likely talked about at the World Trade Organization talks in Seattle this coming week. The likelihood of that happening? Well, perhaps we would have better luck getting struck by lightning, but I do have and hold that faith that those talks will result in the reduction of subsidies, and the total elimination of subsidies would be the ultimate goal. The federal government of Canada, the second option, should at the very least keep us competitive with our U.S. neighbours. In the 1999 calendar year, the U.S. wheat producer will receive approximately \$33 billion in subsidy, an increase

of almost 200 percent in two years. This translates into a subsidy of \$2.94 Canadian on a bushel of wheat. These payments are made through a number of different programs, such as a loan deficiency payment or emergencies assistance and thus are able to be tracked under the WTO.

Therefore, we should be demanding from our federal Liberal government a subsidy level equivalent to that of the United States. In contrast, the European Union direct subsidy spending is estimated at even a higher value of \$56 billion Canadian. When you talk about those huge numbers of \$33 billion and \$56 billion from the EU and the U.S., the Canadian farmer indeed does have a great deal of difficulty competing. These subsidies insulate the European Union and the U.S. producers. It gives them the wrong market signals and decisions are distorted, and therefore they create a terribly uneven playing field and are extremely detrimental to producers in other countries where there is a relatively small degree of government support.

When the Uruguay Round was signed, Mr. Speaker, and Canada started to ratchet down its subsidies, such as the Crow benefit, our P.C. government at that time encouraged diversification and value-adding as a way to adjust to the so-called international marketplace. Our government at that time pursued an open marketplace for hogs to allow for a free and open transition to livestock to utilize our cheap feed. We instituted loan diversification guarantees. We instituted the diversification loan programs. We brought in legislation that allowed the creation of new generation co-ops. We put in place a REDI program to work with producers and groups to look at market feasibility study. We had the Grow Bonds programs which were used for ventures wanting to add value to their product.

There were new livestock opportunities created with our PC government, Mr. Speaker. The production and raising of ostrich, emu, bison, or elk, just to name a few. Their beef industry has expanded to the point where we have the largest beef herd this province has ever seen. We are also now getting into the realm of more and more promotion of the sheep industry

in this province, which I personally feel is a livestock area that we have not paid as much attention to as we should.

These are just a few programs, policies, and promotions our PC government put into place over the last 10 years. By and large, our producers have done very well as compared to some of our neighbouring provinces. We diversified; they did not. However, it does not solve the dilemma we are in today due to low commodity prices. So I hope I have outlined to some degree why a resolution asking for bridge financing and a short-term fix is not the solution to the present ag crisis. Otherwise, we will be debating another crisis next year or two years from now or maybe even five years from now. We have to have a long-term solution. Therefore, we must have the federal government take a strong leadership role and start supporting agriculture so that we are at least, at the very minimum, competitive with our U.S. neighbours. The federal government would likely respond with their fix of the ag situation: that they have given us AIDA.

If I could, I would like to quote from an article in Agriweek which sums up the feelings for AIDA quite well by the author Morris Dorosh, and I quote: AIDA is a classic welfare scheme for farmers just as urban welfare schemes do. It attempts to channel aid to the needy, not the worthy. It literally rewards failure. Farmers who do not qualify do not qualify because they made smart management choices. They kept their operating margins from collapsing. The ones who are getting AIDA money are those who did not prepare, foresee or plan for a cyclical dive in commodity prices. To the extent that it pays at all, AIDA pays the wrong people for the wrong reasons in the wrong way. The real problem is the global crash in commodity prices. American and European subsidy programs address this by supplementing prices. The Canadian way, the AIDA way, is to supplement incomes.

So, Mr. Speaker, in summary, we must support farmers in Manitoba in their quest to have equal treatment with their competitors in the EU and in the U.S. The World Trade Organization should be encouraged to tackle the issues of unfair subsidies with passion and, as

well, once they are agreed to, to put a mechanism into place whereby they can enforce them and maintain those agreements.

Today's NDP government should be lobbying strongly for the above at every opportunity and not just be asking for a band-aid treatment that they are in right now, because I have heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) say on many occasions that this NDP government is looking for long-term solutions. This is a long-term solution which we are advocating with our resolution. So supporting this resolution as amended will do just that.

To finish, Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from a presentation by KAP to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Food. Their question to the federal Liberal government is simple, and I quote: Are you committed to ensuring that agriculture is a viable industry on the Canadian prairies today and into the next millennium? We need an answer to that question immediately.

If the Government of Canada has a commitment to the industry, we must shape the vision of how that industry will move forward in the next decade. We must move very quickly to put the systems in place to enable it to do so. If on the other hand this government truly believes in the tough love philosophy of cutting the industry loose to fend for itself, we as farmers need to know that as well. We can then begin to plan for our futures outside of agriculture and leave government to decide how to most effectively introduce tall grass prairie and buffalo back onto millions of acres in western Canada. That is the feeling of the Keystone Agricultural Producers to this entire situation that the Canadian farmer is in right now and particularly Manitoba farmers.

So I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, that today our resolution as amended gets the unanimous support of this House. I thank you for the opportunity.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Just further to the consent to deal with this matter and

allow a mechanism to dispose of the questions today and for your assistance, I am wondering if there is leave for you to intervene at 5:30 p.m. to dispose of all the questions and that the House sit until all the questions are disposed of.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for the Speaker to intervene at 5:30 p.m. and put the questions? [agreed]

* * *

* (1440)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate.

Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak on the issue before us here today. It is an issue that is of great concern to myself, Brandon residents, and in fact the rural and urban Manitobans alike from my area, in fact all of Manitoba. In my introductory speech last week, I emphasized the importance that agriculture has to the western part of this province and southwestern Manitoba in particular, an area that I am very, very familiar with.

The greatest economic driver in Brandon and in Brandon's surrounding economy is certainly that of agriculture. You get a feeling of that when you belong to a few organizations within the community where you see the same people over and over again who are agricultural producers, who are members of the business community, who are people from all walks of life in areas like the Brandon Economic Development Board where I spent considerable time, or the Chamber of Commerce. The president personally is in the farming community right now and went on a mission with members opposite and the Premier and Agriculture minister to Ottawa some time ago. I can tell you that the effects of agriculture in the city of Winnipeg, the city of Brandon, Thompson, Portage and everywhere else in this province are going to be felt and felt very strongly in the next while. The communities, the industries, the businesses in the communities, the car dealerships, the furniture stores and everywhere else are dependent on our agriculture in this province.

Mr. Speaker, contrary to certain members opposite who would like to have people believe, both in the statements in yesterday's debate and a little bit in today's debate and in the Brandon Sun and a few other editorials, that many on this side of the House do not understand agriculture, I can attest to you that is certainly not the case. The backgrounds of people on this side and the certain broad-based knowledge that comes from this side, certainly from our Minister of Agriculture, are quite varied, coming from a farm background and knowing the issues well.

The speakers yesterday who were up were from Dauphin-Roblin, who also comes from a farm background, know the farm community, know the rural community, and, as well, the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), who spoke yesterday, knows the issues and knows his community as well.

Mr. Speaker, not unlike yourself, my father's family was a very large family. My father had 14 brothers and sisters, and mother and father made 17 in his family. My mother's family was small in comparison and had only five, but I can tell you that the large majority of these people are in farming. They are in the rural economies of Manitoba, in agriculture. They surround Brandon. They are in Emerson, in Morris. They are in Deloraine and up in the Dauphin area. Out of the 22 brothers and sisters my father and mother had, the large majority of them are in farming.

So, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that, around our house come holiday time and Christmastime, the point does come up on farming quite often. We understand it quite well coming from the background. I can tell you, as well, that an uncle of mine from Cornwallis just celebrated his 113th year in the Cornwallis municipality as a grain farmer, and he has done quite well in spite of the federal government's efforts we have seen here lately.

During my terms on City Council, Mr. Speaker, I was involved in the Keystone board and met quite often with the Keystone agricultural group and many, many other groups that are involved in the Keystone Centre. As many people in this House know, Brandon is a host community. It hosts a lot of rural events.

Without those rural events going on in our Keystone Centre, which is an area of approximately 450,000 square feet that the Keystone board and the city do quite well in filling with agricultural issues, we would be in desperate trouble and not only the Keystone Centre but the businesses within our community, the restaurants, the hotels and the industry that is based on agriculture in this province that we have a number of in Brandon. Simplot is a major one and produces fertilizer for a lot of the province's needs here and exports to a lot of different areas in North America.

These industries are dependent on agriculture. The jobs are dependent on agriculture, and the good high-paying jobs that they produce are very, very important to our community. I can tell you that the agricultural crisis that we are facing now is of grave concern to those people, to all people in the urban centres and the rural centres. As a member on the Chamber of Commerce, quite often at the meetings you would hear over and over again from the agricultural committee that this is coming. This has not been coming for two weeks, Mr. Speaker, this has been coming for years.

If you would listen to the people who are involved in agriculture, you would have heard years ago that the issue is coming because of the subsidies that we are paying out that are not matching the other international competitors. The Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities and the Union of Manitoba Municipalities that amalgamated into the AMM in the last election that they had involves some 1,600 members. Being a member of that, as well as the City Council while I was there for my two terms, we heard quite often from the mayors and reeves and the people who are from the outlying communities in Manitoba, which we like to refer to as rural municipalities, and they brought the message loud and clear for the last number of years as well, that the subsidy levels in other countries are just simply not able to be met by this country in production costs.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if allowed the opportunity, the implications that have grown

from the subsidies have hit directly onto the producers, directly onto their bottom line and directly onto their costs. I heard it as well, as one of the elected members in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities of which I was a representative, from many, many of the people in the rural communities, and I took federally at that time many resolutions that spoke to the farm crisis in Manitoba. Over the last three years, those have been brought by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to ministers' attention at the Liberal level in the federal government, and it is a major issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, although not a farmer, I can speak with a certain amount of authority on agricultural issues in our province. I can tell you that the contacts that I have been involved with in agriculture are absolutely ecstatic at the immediate attention that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) from the province of Manitoba, together with the Minister of Agriculture from Saskatchewan, paid heed to the issue. That was done within a couple of weeks of election time, of September 21, that they went to Ottawa and took the point forth to officials in Ottawa that there is a crisis here and tried to reaffirm what has been said over the last couple of years by the farm producers and the farm groups in this province.

Our Premier's attention to this issue has been extremely well recognized in Brandon. During the fall fair, when the Premier was out there and spoke to groups at the breakfast meeting, many of the producers were elated that the Premier had put together with members opposite and many of the involved parties in agriculture and took that to Ottawa to represent our province. I can tell you from Brandon, the president of our Chamber of Commerce went with them and brought back a message to me loud and clear that she was extremely happy with the Premier and the direction that this government was taking on the farm issues that we have out there right now.

The honourable minister and the business leaders and, if I am not mistaken, the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) were very much in agreement on some direction that this province should be taking and bringing that forth to Ottawa and bringing that united message across for us.

Brandon is, as I have mentioned, a community where many people involved in the different boards and committees and organizations—you see the same faces over and over again, many of them business people, many of them agricultural people, many of them from groups of labour and many of them municipal officials and provincial government officials. I can say that the community, over the last century, has grown to just over 40,000 people, but Brandon definitely is based on a 185,000-person trading area, and those are rural people. I cannot emphasize that fact enough.

We are seeing from the people that we are meeting with, the people that do own the businesses in town, that people are nervous, extremely nervous, with good reason. The reason is that there is no cash flow, there is no cash coming in. There is a cash flow, but it is all going out. They are to the point where you are seeing pre-Christmas sales and things that are 50 percent off and 60 percent off in the stores right now, and it does not take someone in the business world to figure out that these businesses are in jeopardy. These businesses are in trouble. If we are seeing it in Brandon, I know that we are seeing it in Emerson and Morden and Winkler and everywhere else across the southwest and in this province and up to Dauphin.

*(1450)

Many people like myself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that are extremely a high percentage of residents in Brandon, have backgrounds and family members who are involved in the farming community. Their livelihoods are dependent on those farms. The people in town are dependent on those farms doing well to supplement and help the industries and business within our communities. Although the farms have diversified and they have gotten into a lot of different areas—in fact, you see a lot of farms around southwestern Manitoba, and I imagine it is the same in the rest of the province, that have bee hives and a lot of other things just simply to try to supplement and try to put some dollars back onto their farms.

It is just so much diversification that they can get into. When they run out of hours in a

day, they cannot really do anything else. Many of them are turning to the urban centres and the larger rural centres for employment. It is not just one person; it is both people that are on the farm and, in many cases, amalgamated farms where you have got a couple of brothers and their spouses who are all working in an urban centre, and they are all working on the family farms to try to make ends meet.

I can best describe the feelings that have come back to me from friends and the many acquaintances that I have in the farming community in the quotes that have been in the editorials in the last six months. It says it all when you hear it coming from the farmers and from the farming community. I will just mention a few. One person said: I am tired of this whole rat race. Begging and being on the line all the time just is not worth it anymore. This is a person apparently that has been in farming for decades and is thinking of giving it up.

Another person said: The Prime Minister has not got a clue what is going on here in the West, and I do not think he gives a damn. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the feeling that I am hearing over and over again from people in Brandon. Another one: It is ridiculous what has happened out here. Whether that is what they want us to do in the West here, roll over and die, I do not know. Straight from the people that are the producers; straight from the people that are farmers out there producing the food. The other one was from Brandon from a person that I well know. He says: The program, AIDA, as explained to us, is not going to fix the problem. It will not be enough so that I can pay the bills at the grocery store, let alone the fuel dealer and the farm supply people. I guess I will feed myself and my family first, and, if there is anything left, I might pay part of the bills.

That is exactly what producers are telling us. That is exactly what we should be bringing to this House and reiterating over and over again, working in an united way to take this to the federal government. This motion, this resolution that has been put forth by us specifically states that. It does not just state that out of pulling numbers out of the air, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It has come from going to the producers, working with the groups that are involved in agriculture,

working with the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), working with members on the opposite side here, to come up with factual numbers to produce that are realistic to take to the federal government to go after. The resolution has said that.

We do not want to delude this mention of an amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, when I look at it and looked at it quite in-depth, we want to be realistic. We do not want to just pull numbers out of the air and start jockeying around with numbers and bringing numbers into an equation when we have already gone through this with the people that know best. Those are the people that are seriously involved in the agricultural community. It was not just a number of people and a group of people that got together and said: Here is a number; let us take it to Ottawa. It was well thought out, well produced, and well put together.

I can tell you, the closure of local elevators and the rail line closures forced the cost of farming right out of the area of any new producers going into it. We are seeing over and over and over again grandfathers and fathers trying to establish their family, their sons and daughters, into the family farm. As they buy them, their debt is so incredibly high, which it has to be because the elders on the farm need a retirement as well. They need an income as well. The debt that is being carried by these farmers in this province is just absolutely outrageous. They are going against so many other things when they see the rising costs of the fuel. They see the rising costs of transporting their goods. They have to buy bigger and bigger trucks because the elevators are further away. They have to cost out those expenditures and the equipment they have to buy to produce. The only thing that they are not seeing increased on the family farm is what they are producing.

The social impact from this is something that we should not take lightly either. It is the families and the communities that are taking the social impact of this, of having someone work on the farm 24 hours a day, and in that 24 hours a day they are trying to work another job in the urban communities to make ends meet. The family is getting shuffled around, and the number of hours being put in is getting left

behind. We are seeing that, and we are seeing the social impact from this in every part of this province. Farms are failing because the federal government has abandoned producers, not because farming practices are not efficient.

I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the farmers in Manitoba are certainly proven leaders in efficiency. Some of the best practices in the world come from the farmers here in Manitoba, and steps that they have taken to enter into value-added agriculture just are not meeting it. The problems or inadequacies are not because of them; it is because of the subsidy levels that our international competitors enjoy. When we get 9 percent onto our subsidy level, when the Americans put something in the tune of 38 percent and the European countries are giving 56 percent, it does not take long to understand their dilemma. Over 75 percent of Manitoba's primary production is exported and farmers—

An Honourable Member: 80 percent.

Mr. Smith: That would be over 75. So farmers cannot escape the importance of subsidies in the other countries, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and our farmers are prepared to compete on the open market. They have proven that they can compete on the open market, but what they truly need is a true open market, and the federal government has to get into the game. To say it is a game is probably putting it too lightly, because the importance of them coming into this to help our farmers here in the West is essential.

The federal government has to recognize that the cuts to agriculture over the years have seriously affected the producers by as much as \$2 billion. Now, it might be \$2.05 billion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from 1988 to 1998, and Manitoba alone lost as much as all the other nonprairie provinces combined in this time.

This resolution is calling upon the federal government to accept its responsibilities to the farmers of Manitoba, and the primary cause of the farmers' problems are the international trade barriers that they are up against. They need to be able to play on a fair playing field. This area is solely the responsibility of the federal government. The problems that weather has caused farmers this year, of course, also adds to

the dilemma, but I will tell you, it is a long-term disaster that has been coming because of the subsidies. It is time for the federal government to do its share for the suffering of the Manitoba farmers and for the people in southwestern Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, Manitoba producers are practical and they are responsible. They are people who together with the community representatives, business leaders and government formulated a factual strategy that was taken to Ottawa and was specific in their presentation. They considered the past few years that have accounted for approximately 10 percent of Manitoba's gross domestic product. They considered one out of every \$11 of production is a result of agriculture in this province, and I would say one out of those \$11 is a lot higher than that in the rural communities. Manitoba's total net income from farming will result in a loss of \$100 million this year, and that is a drop of over \$287 million below the previous five-year average, a drop of over \$400 million from 1990 to 1998, and what industry or business could possibly compete under those conditions?

* (1500)

I also agree with the seconder of the resolution, the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), who said that long-term planning in farming is definitely needed. I know a member from the opposite side had mentioned that, and I will agree with that as well. The business plan needs to be continued and developed for distribution of assistance coming back to this province, and I will agree with that as well. We would all agree that accountability is certainly needed when the dollars come.

This is a well-constructed resolution; it is presented with the extensive consultation of the facts with all the people and all the people concerned. I urge all members to support it. Unfortunately, the amendment that was proposed missed the point, in my opinion, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, as past practice would suggest, the previous government was less than successful in any negotiations with the federal government; and, with their unrealistic amendments, it is quite clear why.

Thank you for your time and your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure for me to put a few comments on the record. Like the member opposite for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), I agree that there should be an all-party resolution brought forward. I have no problem with that.

I do take, I guess, a little bit of issue in the sense that whenever resolutions are brought forward by members of any side of the House, an amendment is meant to improve it and to add something. When you are trying to get an agreement amongst all members of the House, it probably would not hurt to sit down when you are writing a resolution and have that discussion before we come to the House rather than have it come forward in an amendment and have someone offended by the amendment.

Certainly I do not think you will find too many people on this side that are not trying to work and develop an all-party resolution. I think that is the definite way that we have to go. Perhaps through the discussion and through some further discussions with the Agriculture minister and the Ag critic, we can maybe come up with a resolution that may be different from the two that have been presented, that we can all agree on.

I would like to comment just briefly, if I may, on the resolution that was put forward. It was titled the resolution on the Manitoba farm crisis. I would suggest that that is not just a Manitoba issue; it is probably a farm crisis across Canada. As the minister has put in her comments, we certainly recognize that there are outside pressures that are creating a lot of the problems we are experiencing today.

I am a little I guess befuddled or disillusioned a little bit with the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), who would second a motion like this as a Leader of a party in Manitoba. He denied that same discussion when the House sat earlier. I almost find that to be hypocritical, but, again, I understand that he has certain motives for doing these kinds of things, and that becomes his decision.

I think we have talked and all members have talked quite capably and identified the problems. We certainly know that it is a world pressure that is causing commodity prices to be where they are. In this case, in the province of Manitoba and the country of Canada, we are being asked to compare ability to pay by the federal government. That is really what it boils down to in my mind.

The federal government, in their wisdom, came forward with a program called AIDA. I talked to some friends of mine in Ontario and I was lamenting about the farm crisis that we are experiencing in western Canada, and particularly my part of the province. He said, well, it has been looked after. The federal government gave you a billion and a half. How much more can you ask for? I think that is the message that everybody has missed.

The federal government has done such a great job of promoting this AIDA package, everybody that is not connected to farming believes that the farming community has received a billion and a half. When you sit down and talk to them one on one and ask them if they know of anybody who has actually received the payments or a portion of, then we find that number shrinks and shrinks and shrinks to a point where most of the constituents in my area, out of frustration after the first round of applications, have withdrawn their application; they have been denied. It is suggested to me that the increase in funding that they want the province to participate in a percentage program with is not going to reach them anyway, so why would we want to proceed any further?

I think AIDA has been a disaster from the day it came in, unfortunately. We were certainly opposed to it. We know the history as to how we got involved in it.

I think one of the interesting things that I have discovered throughout this debate and again coming from a family that has been active in farming to a small degree but been very active in the farming community in the sense that our family supplies farm equipment to these people, and the other half of our business, the automobile industry. It is quite interesting. When the trends in the industry were coming for

the east we would see it; it would hit the major centres in Toronto, Montreal, and it would gradually work its way to Winnipeg, to Brandon and then into rural Manitoba. We saw that with sales. We saw that with profitability.

The different side happens when the agricultural community suffers in the sense that it starts at the local level, at the small communities in rural Manitoba, rural western Canada and eventually creeps to the larger centres. The larger centres sometimes, unintentionally, I suspect, do not believe that the problem is there until it actually comes to them in a wave, and then they too join us in creating the presentations and the pressures that we need to do as government and as a community of Manitobans to support the farm community.

The resolution and the changes that were brought forward by the critic, I do not think they are too far apart. I think they are very similar in what they are asking for. I think it is just a matter of method, of how you approach it and what you are asking for. I know that the members opposite have tried to state that they do not want a quick fix, that they do not want a stopgap solution. They want to be able to have something that can be ongoing and actually work for the farming community and work for rural Manitobans, rural western Canadians, for the future, not just something that is going to put us back in this same situation in a year from now or in two years from now when funding changes.

I think the real thing that we have to do, as politicians representing the province of Manitoba and perhaps bringing Saskatchewan and Alberta on-line, is to ask the federal government to define what their agricultural policy is and what their agricultural vision is. Once we have that, then we know where we can work from and what we have to do. I have many farmers in my communities that in the past five to 10 years have taken to diversification like a duck to water. They have seen opportunities, and they have developed those opportunities. Yes, they are still suffering and still enduring the low commodity prices that are affecting them today, but I would say not in such a great degree as they could have 10 years ago, five years ago. In the sense that they have seen other

opportunities, they have taken advantage of them.

One of the issues, though, that they bring to my attention on a constant basis is the fact that, if that is the direction we are going to go as a province or as a country in our agricultural policy, let us have it stated clearly. Let us know the rules of the game so that we can adhere to them. We can make our programs and our platforms flexible enough to move in and out or move with them as they shift. We all know that agriculture is not something that has not changed dramatically in the last 15 to 20 years, perhaps even more so in the last 10 years. We have seen equipment go from reasonable prices from my point of view to ridiculous prices. It has basically put not only our farmers out of the market for buying the product, but it has also put the actual manufacturers out of business, because they cannot supply the demand for the price that the people that are using it can afford to pay, and that has to be addressed somewhere in the vision of Canadian agriculture.

* (1510)

I do want to quote just a couple of things that the Keystone Agricultural Producers have put forward. I have been fortunate to have a KAP representative coming from one of my communities or nearby communities for the last several years, and I spend considerable time listening to what he says, knowing that he is speaking on behalf of a larger voice and a larger group of people. The KAP's position on diversification on agriculture—and, you know, if we are going to go that route, and I offer this as a challenge to the new Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk)—I think that we have to look at ways of not just giving subsidies in the sense of a per-bushe^l or a per-acre basis, but we have got to set up the entire atmosphere for agriculture to move forward. We have to talk about the programs of the capital costs of diversifying into livestock and special crops and special value-added processing. We have to have a commitment from the province and from the feds to maintain infrastructure, in the transportation side particularly.

If a government can develop that environment for the farms and community or for the

agricultural community, I suggest that it would be easier for them to find where they can fit into that market and best take advantage of what is out there, rather than running from one program to another to only find the door slammed in their faces as they enter and as they leave without satisfaction.

We have certainly got to address the changes in supply-managed quota allocations. I think it is an issue. I am not saying we have to eliminate them. All I am saying is that we have to address them, and address them as to are they meeting the needs of our producers and how can we continue to improve on them to make them meet the needs of our producers in a better way.

I think that we have to develop, and it is something that came across and it is something the member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) alluded to in the task force across the province of Manitoba. One thing that farmers, agricultural producers are good at, and that is producing. They produce high valued crops on a regular consistent basis. I think of the situation in southwestern Manitoba this particular summer with the wet conditions that we had. A farmer I was visiting with said to me you know, he said, Merv, we have spent the last 40 years farming in the dry dirt. We finally got that figured out and all of a sudden now we have got conditions that we just are not accustomed to, so they had to change how they approached the seeding process, the spraying, the fertilizing, the harvesting process. All had to change to fit that, and I think what we have to do as politicians and as governments is set the guidelines and set the vision for Canadian agriculture. I firmly believe that our producers will find their place in the market to take advantage of what they do best and make a good living and perhaps give us an opportunity to return some of our families to the family farm.

One of the discussions in this debate has been what is the family farm, and I think that is an issue that is going to have to be resolved to some degree, but I suggest again in my particular communities in Turtle Mountain we have a large influx of hog production going on right now. It has been identified as one of the areas of the province that can suitably sustain it because those large areas of property that are not

inhabited, they are not going to be affected by the hog barns that they are putting in, and families or groups of families or groups of friends or business community people are all combining their efforts together to invest in these barns. Are they doing it purely for the profit and return? I think not. I think what they are trying to do is show that there is a commitment in our rural communities to invest in them and to offer jobs and opportunity to our young people. We certainly have benefited in our particular area with the barns. Our tax assessments have gone up. For every barn that there is, there is a family working which enhances our education system which keeps our schools busy, which keeps our hospitals busy and I think we all know the circle.

I think that one of the comments I would just like to put on the record and it came from Brandon yesterday in the paper and it was the definition of the family farm. It came from Mr. Jeff Lawson, whom, I am sure, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) knows, but he just states that family farms come in all shapes and sizes: some as small acreages, growing herbs and Christmas trees; or some as large grain and livestock operations. If your farm gets to a point where one family cannot physically do all the work and needs to hire outside help, are they now considered not a family farm? How do we differentiate from that? I think that is one of the difficulties that we all have in trying to put definitions and firm definitions. Whatever we come up with I think will have to be something that will be flexible and usable in the circumstances that they present themselves.

I think that is probably where I have some differences or concerns about the first resolution that was put forward, the \$300 million figure. I personally and unfortunately have not been able to see the numbers that work into that, and I know that any minister in a responsible government that was asked to come forward with a commitment of \$300 million, or in the province's situation, even \$50 million, would want a detailed explanation as to where the money was going to be spent and how it is going to be used, and I think that is only fair. I do not think that is asking too much. I think what we have to do is sit down perhaps as happens on a regular basis and work out a resolution. I would

hate to see members opposite vote against the amendment as they would hate to see us vote against the resolution. I am sure there is somewhere in the middle that could satisfy all the needs of all people. We are fighting for the basic farm family, the agriculture community in the province of Manitoba. I think that it is important that we stand together with a plan that we can all accept and make it work for our farm community. They are the ones that are out there suffering while we sit in here and try and develop ideas and resolutions to their problems.

I think there are answers out there. We have to work hard to get to them, and we all have to be understanding of the situation. Thank you.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand up today to speak with regard to the resolution. Certainly I will speak a little later about the amendment to the resolution.

This particular resolution deals with the great crisis that is taking place in the country as was mentioned previously by other members, that it is not just happening in western Canada. There are farmers all across the country that are faced with this crisis. The federal government has abdicated its responsibility with regard to this issue, as our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has pointed out on numerous occasions making trips down east to Ottawa with regard to meeting with the federal counterpart trying to address this issue in many different ways.

If I might just comment on my own community. I come from the constituency of La Verendrye, and La Verendrye has a variety of different farmers and agricultural industry within that constituency. I would say that many of the farmers are facing exactly what farmers in the southwest corner of the province have faced over the past while and have passed that message onto myself as well as other elected MLAs from the region, whether it be from Springfield or Lac du Bonnet or from Steinbach, Emerson and Morris and so on from the southeast.

I would just like to state at this point that it is not just the family farm that is being faced

with this serious issue. People within the perimeter of Winnipeg are also feeling the ramifications of this particular crisis. There are many individuals who live within the city of Winnipeg, who do have a great appreciation for agriculture and realize that this particular crisis is going to affect them as well. Not only the family farm in the southwest or other parts of Manitoba, but we as a total community are a population of Manitoba and are going to be affected in one way or another by this crisis.

* (1520)

I would just like to state that it is not only a number of farmers or a few farmers that are at risk here. You are talking about a number of farmers that are in serious jeopardy of losing their family farm that has been in their families for 100 years. My particular situation is that on my mother's side, she was raised in a family of 12, all of her brothers and sisters were involved either owning a farm or certainly in partnership with their spouses in a farm. As was mentioned before—I cannot recall who the honourable member was that mentioned it—that the government on this side or members on this side somehow are lacking some type of credibility with regard to this issue, somehow we are less caring because all of the MLAs on this side are not from outside of Winnipeg. Somehow that does not allow us to comment or feel for our brothers and sisters who are located in the farming communities around Manitoba.

So I just want to stress that all of us are connected to agriculture in one way or another, and I just want to continue by saying that it is my understanding, for example, that the stress that is being created on the family farm is tremendous. I may be corrected on this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I understand that the previous government cut a stress line, the farmers' stress line or help line for individuals who were feeling the stress of farming these days, especially with this crisis on top of it.

As I mentioned, I am not sure if that is accurate or not, but I understand that a number of people now have come forward talking to different individuals, different MLAs, asking: where is the support, where is the help, whom can we talk to? It has created individuals abusing

family members because of the stress. They are so angry; they do not know where to turn. They have debt hanging over their head with regard to farm machinery, farm equipment or the land. Not all farmers have been able to inherit the family farm from their parents or from their grandparents. New farmers have tried to start off beginning a history or a farm on their own and have not been able to do so by the interest rates and so on that they have to pay. All these have created a great deal of stress on the individual farmer and on the family farm in general.

Another comment I would like to make, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we find nowadays you have companies like Maple Leaf, for example, who have recently taken over Elite Swine and Team Landmark, for example, both within my constituency, and many of the hog producers and other producers in the area are very concerned about this. They see large multinational companies being involved in large takeovers that affect their ability to make a fair wage or fair income on the family farm.

I think this is a direct result of the pressure being put on farmers nowadays. You are talking about the farm community that is between a rock and a hard place. Many of them cannot make ends meet. They feel that they have nowhere to turn, and when a company comes along and wants to buy them up, whether it be Cargill or Pioneer, they feel that they do not have a choice. Even though they have lived on that land for a hundred years, or the family has, they just feel that they have nowhere to turn, as was mentioned by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) about individuals going out and having second jobs or starting a bee farm operation just to have a second income and many members of the family going out and working in the community such as Brandon or people in my constituency, for example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, coming into Winnipeg and working at McDonald's or working at Wal-Mart, not that they want to. They would prefer to work full time on the family farm, but they just see the income that is coming in on the family farm as not being enough. It is just barely subsistence, and they are not able to make the farm go just on the income they get from the farm.

A couple of things I wanted to comment further on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that amendments are generally used to improve some document or whatever they are amending. It is meant to make something better. The only comment I would like to make is that this particular amendment does not meet necessarily what producers are looking for. It does not address that situation. I understand that not only did our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) go down to Ottawa, but there was an all-party delegation, as such, who, along with other stakeholders, went down to Ottawa shoulder to shoulder, as some of my colleagues on the other side of the House have stated, to try to address this situation with the federal government. The federal government has basically turned its back on the western farmers and on agriculture essentially. The idea that Mr. Vanclief has put forward is that tough love is the best situation, and I guess I am really sorry to hear that there are a number of people within the agricultural community who agree with this, who agree with his approach.

I spoke to a couple of people who farm near my home town of Lorette, and they have commented about how that is great because a lot of those farmers could not run a popcorn stand if that was the only thing they were handed. There are also people who are farmers who believe that Mr. Vanclief's approach, his tough love approach, is the best way to go.

I think it does not work. I think the point I try to make at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that in order to address this concern and address the crisis that is at hand, we have to have a concerted effort with regard to provincial politicians or federal politicians in the west, certainly in Manitoba. But we have to address this concern jointly. We have to be unanimous in many ways with regard to the issue, and we have to address it, I guess, in a strategic way, because you have people, whether they be people in the agricultural community itself, feeling that the federal government's approach to it is the right approach. They may have their own agenda with regard to getting rid of a lot of small farms, because they want to capture, as the person I had mentioned earlier in my own constituency, he is looking to gobble up a lot of farmland. He cannot wait to see two or three of

his neighbours go by the wayside so he can purchase their land at a very, well, what he calls, a reasonable rate or a reasonable price, which I beg to differ, because he is looking to basically steal that land and take that land away from people who have had that land and farmed it for many, many years.

So at this particular point I would like to just conclude by saying the resolution put forward by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is a good one, and we totally support it. I totally support it, as my constituents would as well. The amendment, I am afraid, I have to oppose. But at this particular time I would just like to say thank you for allowing me to speak. As the Minister of Agriculture has put it many, many times, this is something that is not just dreamt up by farmers in the middle of a night sometime wanting to get some extra income.

I would like to conclude by just saying thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak to this issue. Thank you.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): It is a pleasure for me to rise today to address this resolution, because I think the effort in bringing this resolution to the House has been a very important one to show that indeed members of this Legislature do understand the issues that are surrounding agriculture and the problems that are associated, especially in the grains and oilseed sector of agriculture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, it is sometimes questioned by people who are not necessarily involved in agriculture why it is that we find ourselves in a dilemma and find it necessary to apply for subsidies, especially in the grains and oilseeds in agriculture in this province. Indeed this is not just a provincial issue. This is one that is present in Saskatchewan and in Alberta and most of the farming areas of Canada. The reason for it, of course, is complex. It is not one simple reason that you can put on the table and say here is what the problem is and here is how you can resolve it. I guess, through the years, we have tried to address the issue of agriculture and the subsidies that surround agriculture in various ways. Federal governments through the course of history have tried to wrestle with this dilemma in a variety of ways.

* (1530)

Of course, agriculture is not just a Canadian phenomenon. It is one that is active throughout the world, and what happens in Europe and what happens in the United States directly affect the pocketbooks of farmers in Canada. You know, as a province, we do not have a lot of ability to be able to fight the treasuries of either Europe or the United States. Farmers, indeed, have even much less capacity to do that, and yet the federal government has pushed this problem over to the farmers of Canada and has said: we do not believe in subsidies, so therefore, farmers, you wrestle with this problem on your own.

I think farmers have done a pretty incredible job in terms of trying to address the issues that they face. They have probably become the most efficient in the world in terms of how they produce the product. They have come face to face with the problem of transportation in this country. Of course, with two seaports and one that is not being used that much in Manitoba, our transportation problems enter into the whole picture of profitability in agriculture.

So, in the grains and oilseed sector, farmers in Manitoba especially face an enormous problem and one which Ottawa has to be responsible for, because only our federal government to whom we pay a considerable number of tax dollars yearly can wrestle with the problem and address the issues because of the fact that we have the United States south of us and Europe who subsidize agriculture and the production of grain very, very heavily. Of course, both the United States and Europe will tell you that this is done on a level playing field, because under the World Trade Organization and its rules there is an allowable amount of subsidy that can occur to agriculture in each of the countries, whether it is in any of the European countries, the United States or in Canada.

So the United States and Europe do use their allowable subsidies to support agriculture, but here in Canada that has not happened, and there are reasons for that. I think back in 1995 when the federal government found itself with a budgetary problem, they used the Crow benefit to be able to reduce their costs and to reduce their support to agriculture. That was the

beginning of the tremendous problem that we have today because the costs of transportation have quadrupled, and today those costs are being borne solely by the producer, by the farmer.

Now, the Crow rate probably should have gone years and years ago. I have said that personally, because there was a reason for the Crow to be eliminated over time. However, something had to be put in its place because we have roads in this province and in this country which are substandard. There has always been through history a contribution by the national government to the national highways of this country up until this Liberal government took office, and today there is zero amount of money being invested in the road systems even after the Crow rate was abandoned.

If you look at the European countries and even in the United States, you will see that there has been a consolidation of transportation routes including railways. In Europe and in Japan and in other industrialized countries, rail transportation is still the most efficient way of transporting goods across a nation. But what has happened in Canada? We have abandoned hundreds and hundreds, thousands of miles of railway. The most efficient form of transportation of goods in this country has been abandoned, so all of that traffic today has to go by road, and we know that the cost of fuel, the consumption of fuel, the cost of transportation by road, is not nearly as efficient as it is by rail. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we seem to have regressed in the way in which we do business in agriculture in Canada, and yet our producers continue to be the most efficient and effective producers that you can find almost anywhere in the world.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am involved in agriculture, and I am a producer of grains and oilseeds. I have looked at our own situation and have realized how much of our income and our earning power has been eroded over the course of the last number of years. It is getting to the point—and I think that this is probably true in every farm in Manitoba and in western Canada—where our ability to earn a profit off our production is almost being terminated today and only because of what is happening elsewhere in

the world, specifically Europe and the United States.

If we do not change the situation very quickly, what is going to happen is rural Canada, rural Manitoba, is going to suffer immensely. Subsequently, we will find that negative effect transcend itself to the cities, to the urban centres as well. Because we are a small province, our foundation is still agriculture. Mixed with a lot of technology, primary production is still important in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look at the resolution that was proposed by the government—the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) tells me that it is indeed fashioned after the resolution that was taken to Ottawa to address the issue of agriculture that was attended by all parties in the Legislature as well as producer groups within the province and also joined by other provinces as well, by the Province of Saskatchewan.

I have to say that the resolution does address the issues that we find in agriculture. However, the attempt has been by the amendments to the resolution to try and strengthen it, because I think one of the shortcomings of the resolution as it is presented is that it addresses the short-term problems in agriculture, and it asks the federal government to address the issues as they are before us today, but simply putting a band-aid over a wound does not solve the problem, does not heal that situation.

In Manitoba and in western Canada today we require a long-term solution to the problems that agriculture faces, and I think the amendment to the resolution does that. It urges the federal government to continue to work towards and to speedily work towards a long-term solution to agriculture.

The Minister of Agriculture, provincially, certainly agrees with that position. She understands that we need a long-term safety net program in agriculture which will address the shortcomings in agriculture because of the situation as it is worldwide.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I urge the government to take a positive look at the

amendments to this resolution and to take from it what is attempted in terms of addressing the problems for the long term and accept the amendments, and together we can go forward combining this with the resolution from the government to make it a stronger resolution for the betterment of agriculture in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talked about AIDA. The minister federally for Agriculture said that AIDA was going to be his solution to agriculture. At the time that AIDA was introduced our party was in government and, indeed, my colleague the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) as Minister of Agriculture very clearly pointed out that AIDA was not going to address the hurt at the farm gate in Manitoba, because let us remember that the problems that we have in agriculture are not at the farm gate. The problems in agriculture are in Ottawa, because our producers are efficient producers. Our producers want to sell their product into the best marketplace that they can, which they are restricted to because of the rules under the Canadian Wheat Board.

As a matter of fact, if you compared the farmer to a businessperson, the businessperson sells a product and gets his money for the product when he sells it. When a farmer sells his grain he gets about 60 percent of the value of that product and then has to wait until the end of the crop year or somewhere down the road to receive the rest of the money for the product, but yet the input costs have to be paid for up front. I cannot go to my supplier and buy a tonne of fertilizer and pay the supplier 60 percent of it and tell him to wait until I get my final cheque for my product and then give him the rest of the money. It does not work that way. That money has to be put out in the beginning but, unfortunately, because of the market systems that we have in our country we are not allowed to sell our product and get all of the money for the product that we sell. So there is no comparison to business and to agriculture in that respect.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, AIDA did not address the shortcomings in agriculture. As a matter of fact, articles have been written about the shortcomings of AIDA and the fact that it does not reward those people who put all of their

energy and effort into the most efficient type of production. Because its formula is based on net income, what it does is that it rewards the wrong people in the wrong way at the wrong time. I think, until the formula was tested in the marketplace, this was not known.

* (1540)

I will tell you what else it does, and this is by way of testimony from a producer who has put in 53 crops in his lifetime. He told me that over the last few years he has been trying to reduce his activity in agriculture because he wants to retire. So he is scaling down his farm. Now, because his income has been dropping, because he is trying to get out of farming slowly, the AIDA formula has clicked in for him. He said: I do not need the money from AIDA. I am trying to get out of agriculture. The guy across my lane who is a young fellow trying to expand agriculture, who has got a negative margin, needs the support, but because of the way the formula was put together he does not get that support.

That is why my colleague, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), when we looked at the AIDA formula, said AIDA does not address the problems in agriculture in Manitoba, and he would not sign on, and rightly so. Only after Saskatchewan came on stream with AIDA were we forced to enter into an agreement because we tried to support our farmers to the best way possible, and at that point in time there was no view of looking at any other support program for agriculture but AIDA, according to the federal government.

An Honourable Member: Saskatchewan announced that they are pulling out of AIDA today.

Mr. Derkach: My colleague tells me that Saskatchewan today announces that they want to pull out of AIDA, and I do not blame them because AIDA is not addressing the issues of the farm crisis today.

I want to talk about what our provincial government when we were in office did for agriculture. You know, I have not heard the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) say to my colleague, who was the Minister of

Agriculture, that he did the right things a year ago in trying to support Manitoba farmers. It is not talked about very much, but provincially our Minister of Agriculture, through MACC, put a loan program in place which assisted farmers in getting enough money to be able to put a crop in last spring. Farmers did not want a handout, and through our task force in agriculture, which was chaired by the member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), I believe, we went around the province and farmers told us that they did not want handouts, but that they needed some support.

So our Minister of Agriculture, through MACC, without the involvement of the federal government, through our Treasury, was able to get money allocated for a loan program. Farmers could borrow up to \$50,000, and they could lay aside the principal payment for two years in order for them to be able to get themselves back on their feet. Now that was one program that was entered into which is not talked about in the Legislature. It was done solely by the province.

The second program that was entered into—and my colleague will remind the House that there was about \$50 million of provincial monies put into that program—was the acreage payment to those farmers who faced a crisis last spring because they could not put their crops in. Now what were we to do? I heard the new Premier of the province (Mr. Doer), the then Leader of the Opposition, during the election campaign when he was questioned about the \$50 an acre and whether or not the province should have paid that money out, say: I think it was paid out too early. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was not paid out too early. Those farmers needed that money to be able to maintain their land over the course of last summer so that the next spring they would have an opportunity to put a crop in; otherwise, that land would not have been maintained.

I have travelled the southwest part of this province, and I can tell you that there are fields out there today that have not been touched since a year ago. Because they were too wet, farmers were not able to get on them.

I think the spirit of agriculture has been broken in many of our communities. Farmers

are giving up. They are at a point in saying: we cannot continue this way. Our families have suffered for far too long.

You know, I listened to us talk in the Legislature about poverty, and I would like the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) to listen to this comment because it is so important. We talk about the level of poverty in our province. We talk about the poverty line. I think for a family of four, what is the poverty line? About \$30,000 or thereabouts? I can take you into my constituency, and I can show you family after family after family who do not earn nearly the \$30,000 that we speak about as being the line of poverty for a family of four.

I was filling up my car at a gas station the other day. The fellow who was filling my car up is a farmer, and he has gotten a job to try and make ends meet. I do not know what he earns at the gas pump, but his wife works with Manitoba Health and is a homegiver, or a homemaker, home care provider. [interjection] Well, we could talk about that issue later. Let us try to focus on this issue for a moment. Here is a family who was earning \$21,000 a year. They had a child in Grade 9. They owned their own home, but, indeed, they would be considered as one of the poor in Manitoba, but they did not consider themselves poor. They considered themselves as being one of the ordinary people in that community who was making ends meet by taking two jobs off the farm. I guess I question: what is wrong in this country when people who are engaged in agriculture are forced to take jobs which rightfully should be taken by those people who are not engaged in agriculture?

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I congratulate the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) for taking the initiative, first of all, to introduce a resolution into the House that we can debate on agriculture because this is a very timely topic and one that we need to talk about. I also urge the Minister of Agriculture to look in a positive way at the amendment that was proposed by my colleague the member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) to ensure that the resolution is strengthened so that it indeed addresses the issues not just in the short term but in the long term as well, so that the federal government can

be given a message from the Legislature of this province and from the people of this province that it must pay attention to the crisis on the farm in Manitoba today.

Later this afternoon we will have to make a decision about how we go forward from this point with this resolution, whether it is going to be a combined resolution of all parties of this House which talks about the problems and talks about the solutions that we have to seek for the short term, and the solutions which must be sought for the long term. The Minister of Agriculture says from her seat that we are working on the long-term solutions as well. We know that. We know that and certainly we would expect that from our Minister of Agriculture. What we are saying here today is let us put all of the cards on the table; let us put in the resolution the fact that we are looking for short-term and long-term solutions and let us go forward together in a positive way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have farm organizations out there who are also struggling with this issue and how we address it. But the most serious problem is not in the livestock sector. Even in hogs we are seeing the prices of hogs coming up today to where there is profitability in raising hogs. The real issue is in grains and oilseeds. That is where our focus has to be. Through our farm organizations I think we need to concentrate and focus our attention on the fact that any money that is put into the agriculture sector today has to focus on the attention of where the problem is. If we allow the federal government to continue with the same formula that they have put forward in the AIDA program, it is not going to meet the needs of the farm community today.

* (1550)

So that is why I think that the Minister of Agriculture and the government should take another look at the WHEREASes and the THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED in the amendment and see whether or not we can come to some resolution to ensure that we put forward the best possible resolution today.

I want to just mention one other thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not know how much time

I have left, but I do want to mention the fact that if you look at the regions of the province, there are certain regions of this province that are blessed in different ways than other regions of the province. If we look at the south part of our province where our climate is somewhat different, we are able to grow a variety of crops. We can grow the specialty crops which bring more income onto the farm. We can diversify in many ways, but if you look at the western and the north-central part of our province, we know that there are limitations because of climatic conditions. Therefore, we do not have the flexibility to be able to grow some of the specialty crops such as beans and corn and sunflowers that you can grow in the southern part of the province.

An Honourable Member: Hemp.

Mr. Derkach: Well, hemp we can grow. We are fortunate enough to be able to produce hemp, but forages are something that we have been told over time by the departments of Agriculture that we can diversify into in the North and the western part of the province, and that has happened. Unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have far more forages today than we can consume in Manitoba, and even in the parts that produce livestock in our country. So today we have mountains of forage out there that are sitting without a marketplace for them.

Again, farmers found a solution around this problem as well, a partial solution. In Japan and in some of the other countries of the world, there is a demand for a high quality of hay product. So some of our producers have diversified into compressing hay into small bales which can be efficiently handled by the small herds that are present in the Oriental countries and some of the other Asian countries. Therefore, there is a market for that kind of hay. So I think our producers have researched and have looked at every opportunity that they can to ensure that they can make the most efficient and the best use of the land that they have stewardship over.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we look at the problems of agriculture, we have to not only look at agriculture as one basic activity, because indeed it is a multifaceted activity, one which is far more complex than it appears from the

surface. It is a very complex and intricate business today. It is not like simply going out there and planting a beanstalk or some wheat and waiting till it ripens and then running with it to the marketplace.

That is why our government put such an effort into value-added processing in our province. Our Minister of Agriculture, together with the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, along with myself, who was then Minister of Rural Development, put an emphasis on attracting value-added processing into this province. I am very proud of the record that we established in this province. I sincerely hope that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), who has responsibility for rural development, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk), who has responsibility for the industrial side, and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) will get together and continue that tremendous effort that was put forward by our government, together with municipalities, with communities, to ensure that we create those jobs in this province that are so important in our rural communities by adding value to them.

I see the member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) here today. I want to, first of all, congratulate him on being elected; but secondly, I want him to be also the spokesman for Brandon West and for Brandon, because in Brandon we put special emphasis on ensuring that in that city we would be able to attract more employment, more population, so that it becomes the true second city of our province that we can all identify with and that we can all be proud of. I am very proud of the fact that we were able to attract Maple Leaf Foods to the city of Brandon, 1,200 jobs, and another 2,200, I am sure, that will be created in the next little while.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know there are others who want to speak today, and I certainly want to give them that opportunity. I want to conclude by saying that in agriculture today there is a crisis, but I believe in the whole area of the food production in our province and grain production in our province there are tremendous opportunities, tremendous opportunities to add value to some of the best grown products, the most highly regarded grown products that you can

find anywhere in the world. I certainly want to not only say to you but to the House and to Manitobans today that the resolution and the amendment that are put forward today are ones that we can go forward on together and urge the federal government to do what its responsibility is, and that is to support agriculture in Manitoba and in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak to the resolution on the Manitoba farm crisis, and I have appreciated the debate from both sides of this House. As a member of Rossmere, people in this Chamber might think that I am not able to speak to this resolution because I am an urban MLA, but the crisis that the farmers are facing should concern all Manitobans because a strong farm economy is important to all Manitobans.

I would also like to say or point out that I have rural roots. I grew up on a family farm north of Boissevain, which is where the farm crisis is the greatest today. Our family farm was five miles north on the No. 10 Highway, and that is where I spent the first 20 years of my life. My family experienced crop failures such as drought, hail or too much rainfall, to name a few of the causes for farm disasters. Therefore, I have first-hand experience of the farm crisis today. I worked on the farm throughout my youth, and even as a teacher I would help with farm work during the summer months. If it had not been for mixed farming, which we practised, we would not have survived. The farm crisis today is an issue that I feel I understand because I have personally experienced hard times on the family farm.

The future of the family farm in Manitoba is threatened. If the family farm disappears, we will have more depopulation of rural areas, and small towns and small cities such as Brandon will suffer. Rural Manitoba, as well as urban centres, depend on the success of the family farm. Many farmers today are suffering because of the flood conditions which kept them from seeding their crops, but many farmers are not able to compete in the world market because Europe and the United States have subsidized their farmers. Our farmers are not on a level playing field with farmers in Europe and other parts of the world.

Also, farmers' costs have risen while the price of farm commodities has dropped. The cancellation of the Crow rate subsidy alone has caused transportation costs of Manitoba to rise drastically. The national support programs have been cut, and the federal government has not developed any short-term or long-term programs to support farmers in the West.

Throughout the history of western Canada, the family farm has been the backbone of our economy. The CPR was built to attract farm people from many parts of the world. As the families grew, urban centres grew as the result of the success of the family farm. Historically, we have stood up for the family farm, but today our national government seems to pay very little attention to the family farm. For instance, as the CPR was built, the federal government supported and subsidized the building of our first railway. Also, the federal government built experimental farms across Canada to assist farmers. Even the federal government developed the Wheat Board. The point that I want to make is that collectively, through the efforts of the federal government, national agriculture programs were developed to support the family farm.

* (1600)

Today, however, western Canada seems to not have the interest and support of our federal government. I appreciate the fact that this Assembly is united and strongly urges the federal government to take immediate action and grant our request for \$300 million for Manitoba's farm families. I also appreciate Premier Gary Doer's personal initiative in urging the federal government to stand up for Manitoba farmers. By travelling to Ottawa with the Premier of Saskatchewan, this has drawn attention to the plight of the western farmers today.

I would also like to point out that the farmers do not want a handout. Farmers are very self-sufficient people who rely on themselves to be successful producers. The federal government's support of \$300 million would place our farmers on a more level playing field with farmers in Europe and the United States who are getting a heavy subsidy, and that is what the farmers now want.

Another point that I would like to make is that farmers have paid taxes such as fuel tax, GST, PST, property tax, and every other tax you can think of. So, when hard times are faced, we should help the farmers or any other group that faces difficult times. We are only returning some of the tax money the farmers have paid over the years.

I was somewhat disappointed that the member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) has made a motion to amend the original resolution which had a lot of input from many stakeholders. The amendment introduced gives the public the perception that we do not have a united front in this Legislature. Also, members on the opposite side should have consulted with members on this side of the House that they were not satisfied with the original resolution. The amendment could confuse the public and could make this whole debate look political. I hope in the end we all come together and support the farmers of western Canada.

We are now doing crisis management, and these circumstances do happen from time to time. We are in this situation caught because some people have been asleep at the switch. Maybe we have paid too much attention to megaprojects such as large hog farms. What must we do to formulate a new strategy with new directions and new vision that will support the family farm? Let us pass this resolution and urge the federal government to support the family farm. Thank you.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to see the House devoting this time to the agriculture crisis occurring in the province here today. But as is customary, I would like to take a moment to congratulate you, Sir, in attaining your position as the Deputy Speaker of this House. I had the privilege back in 1986-88 to serve under you, Sir, and at that time you did a wonderful, fantastic job. So today, again, I congratulate you.

I know we are going to have an opportunity when we finally get into debating the Speech from the Throne, but just for one moment I would like to congratulate the young pages who have been chosen for this session of our

legislative sitting. You are, indeed, in for an eye opener. Each and every one of you possess certain skills. Each and every one of you will be looking upon us in young people's eyes, and we hope that we have that opportunity to sort of not make you look down on us but to want to be able to participate with each and every one of us.

To the new members who are all elected, I congratulate each and every one of you on both sides of the House. For those of you who have been unfortunate enough to make ministry, I feel sorry for you. One of the positions I do not wish on anybody, because my mother always taught me if you are asked a question you are supposed to answer it. Around here, things are no different if I sit on this side and I watch what is happening, or indeed when I sat on that side and I watched what also was happening. But we are in for a learning experience, and the curve will be straight up.

I look at our new Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), an individual who, I believe, has devoted an awful lot of her time in trying to maintain the family farm. Her family and she have been very, very close to me, and I have the greatest respect for her brothers and herself. I know she will do everything in her power to try and alleviate some of the stress, but agriculture is by no means a benign subject to debate. It is sure to provoke an argument no matter which side of the debate you might wish to join. Unfortunately, this sometimes makes it difficult to rally a Legislature such as this to a united front.

The resolution being debated is an important one, and I would like to speak in support of the amendments made yesterday by the member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner). As a representative of a rural riding whose economy is wholly dependent on agriculture, I know first-hand the urgent necessity of concrete government action to help in remedying the situation. Certainly all levels of government must work to the best of their ability to help our farming community deal with this disaster. The previous government of Manitoba was dedicated to this, and I see today that the other parties represented in this House are dedicated to this, albeit after initial stumbling by some.

The member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) certainly has a lot of gall to stand up in this House, as he has in these last few days, and call for nonpartisan convergence on this resolution, after vetoing such an effort earlier this year. I hope that his turnabout is sincere and that he has realized his earlier error. Without any doubt, there is no room for further mistakes by the member for River Heights or any other representative sitting in this House. The members of this Assembly owe to each and every citizen of Manitoba the greatest of efforts in trying to bring resolutions to the struggling farmers of this province. Like no other time in recent history, they require our assistance. We must continue to fight on their behalf and develop with them the solutions, both short and long term, which are needed to right the crisis situation facing us today.

Unfortunately, our colleagues in Ottawa do not share this sentiment. The federal government, the government who is in the best position to come to farmers' aid, has turned its back on producers in this province and producers across the country. They will not acknowledge the disaster that has befallen grain producers in this country; a disaster, I might add, that is largely of the federal government's doing. It is their losing effort in the international food price war that has left farmers in the terrible situation that they face today.

Manitoba farmers are suffering through some of the worst commodity prices in history. They are struggling to carve out a living despite the unfair challenges posed to them by foreign subsidizing. While this transpires, the federal government, who is in large part responsible, stands ignorant and unmoved. It was the federal government who eliminated the Crow rate, tripling the transportation cost to farmers. The federal government virtually decimated the subsidy safeguard that might now protect Canadian farmers.

When agricultural subsidies were initiated, the purpose was to try and keep the small farmer on the farm. Well, we see today the effects of removing those subsidies. The federal government continues to refuse to develop an effective means of disaster assistance for the farmers, and now, when producers have trouble, when some

can barely continue production, the federal government turns its back and says it is nothing serious, that there is no problem and that there is no help available, in spite of a multibillion-dollar surplus.

As we all know, there is a problem. The problem is very serious, and the problem will certainly not go away by itself. Our grain and oilseed producers will not be able to shake the damaging effects of this crisis if nothing is done about the massive subsidy disparities that exist between Canadian producers and their compatriots in the United States and Europe. The Canadian government has stood by long enough while other countries continue to jack up subsidies. Over the last five years alone, the United States has increased farm subsidy payments from \$7.3 billion to \$22.5 billion, literally tripling support. The common agricultural policy in Europe affects the whole of the European agriculture, from milk to meat, from wheat to fruit, promoting, rewarding and punishing not only farmers but also consumers and taxpayers of the European Union, absorbing a budget of more than euro 43 billion and transfer payments from the public sector in the 15 member countries equal to the 36 percent of the value of output.

* (1610)

Producer support for farmers in Europe, which was three times that for Canadian farmers to begin with, increased a further 10 percent over the last five years. What was the federal government of Canada doing while this was going on? They were busy cutting the support out from under the Canadian farmer by slashing subsidies in half. How can they possibly expect farmers to survive on that kind of a lopsided playing field? How can they say there is no problem?

The federal government has not only been ineffective in dealing with the trade crisis, but also their low level of concern for farmers suffering from this spring's flooding has been nothing short of appalling. They set aside \$900 million for the Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance program. With the province's contribution, there was close to \$1.5 billion available to assist farmers. However, many of

the hardest hit farmers are not able to access this funding. This particular program has proven to be nothing short of a disaster itself.

The southern areas of this province have been hit with wet springs and wet summers, which have kept yields down. Furthermore, inputs have been leached out, so any fertilizer or herbicide farmers apply is pretty well gone.

The farmers in the Red River Valley got paid for those loss inputs in 1997. So far no such payments were made to the farmers affected by this spring's flooding.

It is the overhead and fixed payments that get farmers in years like this. There was talk of banks forgoing payments this year and then adding them on to the end of the loan to try and alleviate some of the stress. I am not sure if this is being done. If it is being done, it is being done on a farmer-by-farmer basis.

There is or, at least, was a toll-free AIDA hotline that had been receiving on average about 550 calls per day. It does not take a genius to realize that there is a severe problem. The federal Minister of Agriculture is obviously no genius. He has said that he was quite disappointed that the farmers were not sending their AIDA forms in. Maybe he should have made them user friendly.

When yields are small, when prices are low, no one can afford to pay an accountant hundreds of dollars to handle their claim, especially if the chances of actually receiving any assistance are slim to none. Maybe if the return of their AIDA forms would help them at all, farmers might return them. When a crisis of this magnitude hits, it is not only the farmers that suffer. Rural stores and suppliers, especially the independents, are likely to be in grave danger. Their business is local. All it takes is for a few customers not to pay on time, and we have one more business in trouble.

So while our farms were flooding and our competitors were bolstering their subsidy levels, Canada chose to nearly eradicate subsidy protection for our farmers. Granted, these reductions were made in good faith, assuming that our trade partners would follow suit.

However, it would now appear that these concessions were presumptuous and naive. Our trade partners have done everything but follow our lead. Now we are put at a distinct disadvantage because of this.

While farmers in the European Union and United States are receiving the strongest support in recent history, Canadian farmers are hardly receiving any at all. Yesterday the member for Emerson moved some very relevant amendments to the proposed resolution. These changes seek to adjust the original resolution to properly address the root of the farm crisis that is plaguing this province today. We need to put in place some kind of security for our farmers. They have been left unguarded and vulnerable by the federal government.

Without assistance in their time of need and without assurances that this kind of crisis might somehow be averted in the future, it is absolutely essential that this current government urge as strongly as possible the federal government to not only take responsibility and come to the assistance of farmers now but to also put in place subsidy safeguards to combat the liabilities we face in foreign producer supports. Whether it is supporting our farmers through an income crisis or working to get the best possible deal for Canadian producers and producers at the next round of the WTO negotiations, they must take a leading role. Generally, some sectors of the public and clearly some parts of government and maybe even a few local people do not appreciate how bad things could get in rural Manitoba. They do not realize the urgency with which we must take action.

There are several things that we must do immediately. We must continue to fight to make the Liberal government in Ottawa understand what is at stake here, that there is a disaster. We have to encourage those individuals who need help to demand help from the federal government. Farmers, government, businesses and all Manitobans need to work together, as they have already done, to make things happen. Most individuals have never even dreamt that such a disaster could occur. So, when it did happen and there was suddenly such a large need for help, authorities, namely the federal government, were simply not ready to acknowledge it.

After the 1997 Red River flood, only 10,000 acres of crop land were not seeded. In the southwest this year, hundreds of thousands of acres were left unseeded, and even the land that was seeded had only a small chance of yielding a decent crop. Without a crop, there will not be much cash flow, grain to handle or repairs to buy. That is when things grind to a halt. I sincerely hope, for the sake of farmers and Manitobans, that AIDA can pay out some decent money and that some money will come to pay for leached-out inputs. The farming community is in for a very rough ride. Farmers are a proud bunch and do not give up easily, but soon we are going to see signs of how bad things can get.

We know that farming and all of agriculture is an incredibly risky business to be in. Therefore, I hope very much that this House will take good consideration of the amendments proposed by our Agriculture critic, and I urge the members opposite to acknowledge not only the acute short-term needs that are present but also the very real long-term needs that must be addressed if our farmers are to be successful in future years. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to the amendment which was proposed by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner). I have already spoken earlier on the main subject of debate and indeed was the seconder of this initial resolution.

I would like to make several points. I think that the focus of this resolution should remain the need for a short-term financial influx for Manitoba farmers on the order of \$300 million, which, I think, is in the ballpark of the sort of support that Manitoba farmers urgently need, so that we can provide farmers the kind of support that will take them through some very difficult times over the course of the next number of months.

It is, I think, welcome that the member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) has put on the table some suggestions as to how that money should be spent. I think that these suggestions should be incorporated in a message that goes to Ottawa but that the message should fundamentally stay

the same: give us the money to provide the financial support, and we can make sure together that we have a business plan that would provide this to the farmers who are really in desperate shape where there is the most need, to young farmers who clearly are the future for Manitoba, so that in fact we make sure we have got a strong industry and a strong future.

So I am going to vote against the amendment, because I believe that, in replacing the urgent short-term needs with a recommendation that we move to mirror the U.S. and the European Union subsidy approaches, we risk the uncertainties of which one precisely you are going to mirror, the U. S. programs or the EU programs. [interjection] Well, you should have said that in your resolution that you wanted the U.S. and not the EU program.

* (1620)

The other concern about the details of your resolution is that the U.S. does not just have one program for subsidizing. It has programs as, I mentioned earlier, the Conservation Reserve Program which is an important program as well as those that support farmers in other ways. I would support the fact that we include a business plan of recommendations of how we spend the \$300 million and that this should be part of it. But I believe that we have not yet moved to the point where we have all-party agreement on what is the specific constituents of how that \$300 million should be spent, where I agree that there is some merit in the proposal that you make.

Well, I think what is important is that there is recognition that there is urgent need for financial support. I think that there is recognition that what is implied in the kind of approach is that this not just be short term but something which could fold into a longer term program, so indeed if there is not a better agreement at the World Trade Organization in terms of agricultural subsidies that there would be longer term support.

I also think that we need, in that business plan, to take into account some unique aspects of the Canadian situation which make us a little bit different from the U.S. situation. I would refer

the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) to a satellite photo which compared Montana and just north of the border. It showed that virtually all of this area of Montana was plowed up because of the nature of the supports being provided in the United States, whereas on the Canadian side the large proportion of the land was in fact in pasture and, given the nature of the land, probably a more productive and appropriate use. So I think that when we look at the way we support, we do not want to support in ways that are going to allow or facilitate the plowing of marginal land which really should stay in pasture.

So I think when we look at, for example, the U.S. situation, we should in fact be making a careful look at the Canadian situation, what is optimum for Canada and not just precisely copying what are in some ways good but have their problems as well, subsidy programs in the United States.

I think that it is also important to take into account presentations from groups like the Keystone Agricultural Producers, a group which the member for Emerson was at one point the president of, if I remember correctly. I would refer to the presentation on November 25 to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and some of the recommendations which were made by the Keystone Agricultural Producers there.

They talked about and urged the direct financial support to compensate for the depressed commodity prices, policy changes to facilitate lower grain transportation costs, lower revenue cap, open rail access, which I mentioned earlier on and which would be an important component. Increased support for road infrastructure critical for grain movement was mentioned by KAP. Elimination of the excise tax on farm fuels, this could be an important federal contribution. Just as a decrease in education taxes and a decrease in PST on farm inputs, business inputs could be an important provincial contribution, and I hope the government is listening. Improvements in crop insurance, NISA and other disaster programs, aggressive pursuit of changes to the WTO ruling, ending government cost-recovery measures in agricultural services and increased

support to agricultural research, which are all important and could be included in point of fact in such a business plan.

I think it is important to mention the program GRIP, which was a very important step forward and, sadly, could have been modified and extended, but under the previous Conservative government of Manitoba there was a decision unilaterally to terminate GRIP, which was unfortunate. You know, we all appreciate that and we recognize that the previous Conservative government made a mistake and that we could have done better at that point. Certainly, hopefully, we will do better in the future, both short term and long term. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to speak on this very important issue. As the newly elected member for Springfield, I do have a sizable constituency of farmers who, I have to say thankfully, are not as affected as others in our province.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe one of the things about politics is that we have an ability to dehumanize issues when we deal with them, and one of the things that I think we have to do with this particular issue is put a human face on it. In fact, this morning I took the opportunity to phone Ian Forrester in Letellier. I called him and I said, you know, Ian, how does it look out there? Interestingly enough, he was having a meeting with three other farmers and he gave me some indications. He said: you know, Ron, a really good crop this year and still we are struggling. He said with the cash flow that they have right now, there is no return. Even with an excellent crop, with a great crop, there is no return. So I asked him, I said what kind of an impact does that have on your family? He said, you know, Christmas will not be the same. In fact, it has gotten to the point now where his wife goes out and works and that is how they support the family. So now we have gotten to the point where the women go out and they work, and that is how we put bread on the table. That is how we feed our families. That is how they clothe their families. The farm is basically, if they are lucky, a break-even concept. That is a very, very sad commentary on farming in this

country. He went so far as to tell me, Ian did, that out of four families, the four farmers who were there that day, only one of them does not have a spouse working outside of the farm. That is 75 percent now of the spouses of farmers who must work to even keep the family above water. That is one of the reasons why we are having this debate today.

I wanted to move on and deal with the crux of why, in fact, we are even having this debate in the sense that this is really a federal issue. Here we are, the Manitoba Legislature, debating an issue that really is best served if it was debated in the House of Commons. This is an international issue. This is an issue of national importance, yet here we are, trying to cobble together a resolution to send to Ottawa to encourage them to deal with this particular issue.

You know, we have seen leadership in nations across the world. In fact, one of the reasons why we are having this problem is you have the leaders of Europe, the Chancellor of Germany, the President of France, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, looking at their farmers and saying, you know what, we really have to do something for our farmers. I say congratulations to them. They have seen that there is a problem and they are dealing with it. They are putting in supports for their farmers.

We have our neighbours to the south. They look at their farmers and they realize that they have to put some supports in for their farmers. That is exactly what they have done. In fact, I believe the number is to the tune of approximately \$33 billion Canadian is what the Americans are subsidizing their farmers, Mr. Deputy Speaker—\$33 billion.

* (1630)

Yet where is our federal government? Where is our Prime Minister? The issue that seems to be burning in this country right now is separatism. Every time it seems to die, he throws more gasoline on it instead of dealing with real issues where men and women are trying to survive on the farm, are trying to make a living, an honest living like everybody else, and what is happening to them? They are going bankrupt. That seems to be the only thing they

have going for them right now because our Prime Minister seems to be more interested in divide and conquer this nation for the next election so he can be the millennium Prime Minister or whatever his goal seems to be. I say, shame on him, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Shame on him for that particular point.

You know, I have the opportunity to get a wonderful newspaper, and it is called Cattle Country. For those of you who do not get it, I recommend it highly. There is a lady in there who has written a wonderful editorial, and her name is Karen Emilson. I would like to make a couple of quotes. This is our federal government. I would recommend that you hold on very tightly to your seat. That is how shocking some of this stuff is. Hold on tight.

Our patriarch federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief is not only the voice of the Canadian producer, but he is also a failed farmer. What does that say about the future of agriculture in this country? In recent articles and interviews Vanclief justifies not giving additional assistance to farmers because he feels a tough love approach is what is needed to shape up today's farmer. He insinuates that producers are struggling because they are poor managers. I must break there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and say shame on him. Shame on him for even insinuating something like that. He goes further—and that they should not be in business if they cannot cut it. What a thing a say. That is our national minister. That is the kind of debate they think is appropriate. Shame on them.

He admits that he made some bad decisions that caused him to lose his farm, spending at the wrong time and so on and so forth. He was saved by a career in politics and is thankful for the opportunity. Boy, that is great help for those farmers in need today. That is really good help that the way to get out of it is run for politics. You would expect a little bit more from our national minister.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Karen goes on to say, and I think it is very timely, Mr. Speaker, as a cattle producer, I will admit, she says, that at first I did not take the farm crisis in southwestern Manitoba too

seriously. After all, cattle prices are good. We are not suffering like other counterparts producing grain, but then I realized this is a self-centred attitude that undermines agriculture in this country, and that is the attitude of our federal government.

I will go on. I am not an economist, she says, but common sense tells me that Vanclief's solution to let producers sink or swim will have tremendous ramifications in the long term, mostly because he is doing nothing to address the real problem, increasing costs. That is the problem.

I am going to conclude with her article in which it says that if we continue to allow our farmers to go under eventually we will become increasingly dependent on other countries like the United States for our food. That is what the federal government's policy is eventually going to get us to. She goes on to say, ask a war veteran or any immigrant if this is a good idea. I agree with her. That is a terrible idea, Mr. Speaker. We should keep our family farm going.

There is another article today, John Beckham in the Free Press. What we increasingly do know is that we can hope for nothing from the burnt out and embittered man Vanclief, and it appears that not much more can be hoped for from this tax-crazed, intellectually challenged, bureaucracy-stifled regionally biased government that he is part of. Fresh ideas and solutions will have to rise from a different quarter altogether for the sake of agriculture. This seems to be the forum where we are getting new ideas coming from, not from the federal government.

So what is our federal government doing? I indicated to you, you should maybe hold onto your seat, and I would recommend to you again, this is what our federal government seems to be up to. These are the priorities of our federal government, not a debate on agriculture, which is going through very difficult and trying times. No, I will tell you what our federal government is up to. They talk about—it is an article from Lysiane Gagnon. She talks about the Prime Minister's office. Ancient potentates used slaves to test their food lest someone try to poison them. Mr. Chretien's minions face lesser

dangers. Their job is to test the five-star hotels where he plans to stay. Apparently, even in the world's most luxurious resort, things might be lacking that le petit gars de Shawinigan badly needs, so advanced teams are displaced. That is how absolutely out of touch our federal government is. We have men and women under stress, families in crisis, Mr. Speaker, and we have the man from Shawinigan sending out teams to check out five-star hotels. There is a reason why hotels have a rating. If they have five stars, they are pretty good. He does not have to send a team to check it out. Shame on him for even doing stuff like that. He should be visiting our farmers with his teams. He should be staying on the farms and seeing what kind of crisis that people are going through. What kind of a Christmas are these people going to have? Why does he not show some heart and come into this province and see what is going on?

Mr. Speaker, the federal government recently announced an additional \$170 million for the Agriculture Income Disaster Assistance program. Manitoba producers—hold onto your seats everybody and wait until you hear this one—will see only \$17 million in additional support. What a shame. What a shame, \$17 million.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have something here for you. It is called the "waste report." I happened to get it today. Here you go: \$3 million dollars were spent by the federal government on hot dog stands that went bankrupt. Taxpayers have been forced to swallow more than \$3 million in bad loans to hotdog franchises in Quebec, \$3 million for hotdogs, and we get \$17 million for the farmer. Let us put that on a scale. Hot dog vendors on one side of the scale and our farmers on the other side of the scale, and how do you weigh that? Well our federal government puts them almost at an equal.

I have another one for you. The National Film Board of Canada, \$15 million in '97 and '98. Oh, can I list you one of the movies? Bed, a delightful look at the evolution and the history of the bed. That cost us a quarter-million dollars, but we do not have more than \$17 million for our farmers. Oh, here is the next movie, Kid Nerd, an offbeat look back at nerdhood by adults.

Another one, Gypsies of Svinia. It goes on and on and on. Here is one, \$41 million more for millennium projects have been approved. Here is another one, \$5,333 for the celebration of the British Columbia cowboy. Or another one, \$1.5 million, The Canadian Canoe Museum.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I have some advice for our federal government. Why do we not start taking some of that money and putting it where it is really needed. It is needed by our farmers and not wasted on this kind of rubbish that taxpayers are so sick of. Hot dog stands, \$3 million. What a shame. Here is another one, former Grit M.P., \$83,000, and it goes on and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude this is really a federal issue. This really should have been debated in the House of Commons. That is the forum it should have been in. That is the proper place it is in. Our federal government is supposed to speak for all of us on international issues, and instead we are dealing with it here.

If we are willing to see our farming community die, and with that our ability to produce food, I feel that our nation as a nation state is diminished. I am going to support this subamendment because I think this is an international issue, and this goes way and beyond what our Manitoba farmers need. We need a federal government, a national negotiator to deal on the international stage. If we see our family farms, our farmers losing out on this one, I would say God help us all if this happens, and I will be supporting this amendment, because we had better protect our ability to produce food for this nation. Thank you very much.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I rise to speak to the resolution before the Chamber, and I would thank the honourable member opposite for his comments a moment ago about the Millennium Fund. He might want to note that the previous government had \$10 million in a millennium fund, and when we were left with the kind of spending difficulties we were facing, we tried to make sure there was more money for nurses and less money for projects that, albeit worthy, would not be the priorities of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, there are two issues before this Chamber. No. 1 is the plight of the western

Canadian farmer and what this legislation should be doing about it; and No. 2 is what have the producers and the united front stated to Ottawa, why and should we therefore change it in this Chamber after we have gone to Ottawa with a coalition of people from across this province and dealing—

An Honourable Member: Strengthen it.

* (1640)

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, strengthen it. You know, people who represented the farm organizations of Manitoba, the producer organizations of Manitoba, that came forward with the idea of \$300 million are strong people. They do not need, in my view, to be accused of being weak by not taking a position that perhaps members opposite would take. They are strong individual people who came together in a collective way to present a view to Ottawa of the magnitude of the crisis and came to Ottawa with a united front of what was needed as a bridge to do what had to be done over the next six to eight months.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: Perhaps an issue of this importance we do not need to heckle each other back and forth. Mr. Speaker, the resolution is extremely important for all of us. There can be no question on this issue that it was important to have a united nonpartisan voice in this Legislature last June and hopefully a united voice in this Legislature to Ottawa in November 1999. It was important for us to go forward to Ottawa with the hog producers and the Keystone agricultural organizations, the women's agricultural groups, the Manitoba organization, urban municipal group, and with all the political parties and representatives from all political parties putting our differences aside, putting our nuances of the resolutions and ideas aside and going to Ottawa, every one of us meeting with the federal cabinet ministers, every one of us saying the same thing in the same room to the different people in Ottawa so that we went united to Ottawa so that we could not be divided in Ottawa. I really believe strongly that—and we have supported resolutions in the past and we could strengthen it to make us look better or weaken it to deal with

the concern we have—sometimes you got to put partisan politics aside and sometimes you have got to go to Ottawa united. When you say something in Ottawa directly to the cabinet, you should have the guts and backbone to say the same thing back home in Manitoba, and that is what we are saying in this resolution.

People do not want duplicitous talk. They do not want us to come with one position one day and another position another day and another position the day after; they want to have it united to begin with. People in that room, the producers in that room got it right. They knew what they were dealing with. They were dealing with an intransigent federal government; they were dealing with the reality that lasted from last June on. They did not get a paper clip to deal with the crisis that they were facing.

On that issue, Mr. Speaker, I supported the Conservative Party in government when they came forward in this House with a resolution. We could have amended it and massaged it and done whatever we wanted, but at the end of the day after the discussions were over, a united voice to Ottawa was more important than a disunited position in this Legislature. That has clearly got to be the message arising from this legitimate debate that has been so well participated in by so many members from all sides of this Chamber today.

I was proud of the delegation that we had when they stood in a room with the Saskatchewan delegation with the three political parties from Saskatchewan, and every person—and there must have been 60 people in that room—said the same thing to the federal government and the four ministers in front of us: Mr. Goodale, Mr. Vanclief, Mr. Martin, Mr. Duhamel. We all said the same thing. It did not matter what our political persuasions were. It did not matter what disagreement there was, how successful or not successful AIDA had been, because there was obviously a disagreement or some—there is not 100 percent unanimity, although most people in the grain industry and in other related industries know how much AIDA is worth and we certainly heard how much AIDA was worth at the rally that was attended in Melita.

I have always thought that, when you are negotiating with an adversary, you try to convince the public of the legitimacy of your position, you try to convince all the partners in that advocacy that you have got to be united, you try as much as possible to keep all of the political parties together when you are going to Ottawa, and you try to build allies in other provinces. We worked very hard after our election to work with the Province of Saskatchewan, who has been also devastated by the price and weather crisis in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. You try to build from there other allies in this fight.

Last week we had a conference call with premiers, and we insisted that any communique going to the Prime Minister included the agricultural crisis, that we in Manitoba and Saskatchewan could never sign a communique going forward to the federal government about the next federal budget unless we had a guarantee that agriculture was in the communique signed by all premiers and territories that went to Ottawa, again trying to have a united front going to the ministers in Ottawa and the people of Canada about the necessity and the depth of the crisis here in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

If this was the resolution we were going to take to Ottawa and this amendment that has been placed forward was going to be the resolution that all the producer groups thought we should support, then I think there is some consistency to the position again in Ottawa and in this Legislature. But I have difficulty personally having a position that is contrary to the position that we took with the producer groups in Ottawa. I feel it is very, very difficult to have 60 men and women, the Brandon Chamber of Commerce, the hog producers, KAP, AMM, the other organizations, they keep changing their names. Mr. Wayne Motheral, a wonderful man, a wonderful person, I remember in the room before we went, he said to all of us: We are in real trouble.

We are in real difficult times here in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, but we have got to put forward a proposal that Canadians will understand is dealing with the extent of the crisis on the one hand and the reasonableness of

producers working in Canada on the other. This was the same day that North Dakota announced a \$242-million top-up to the federal program in Washington. It was announced some three months earlier, an \$8-billion program for the American producers. We all in the room—the member for Arthur-Virden, the member for River Heights, and all the producers in the room again agreed with the \$300-million proposal.

Now, should we get as much as France, Germany, the U.K., and the United States? Obviously our producers were telling us, we are more efficient, we are more effective. We want to get rid of those subsidies. We want to get rid of the subsidies because we think it is killing us to have to compete with 58 cents on the dollar or 38 cents on the dollar. [interjection]

Let me finish. But what they said to us is we cannot follow in their massive subsidy tracks as a strategy. We need to bridge this commodity crisis in the short term, but we do not do it in a way that argues and accedes to the European position. We have to have a bridge through the crisis that is reasonable for all Canadians and try to get rid of the subsidies. You do not get rid of the subsidies by xeroxing the subsidies as part of your agricultural position. Now, that is the advice they gave to us. We are opposed to the European subsidies. We are opposed to the American subsidies. To have consistency in our trade position, we have to ensure that we are not making the same mistakes as they are and appear to be reasonable with the Canadian public.

Now, would I love to see the \$300 million back for Manitoba after our visit? Absolutely. Did we make some progress? I believe there was progress made, and I do not believe the movie is over yet. I know that people in Ottawa are concerned because people in the cities in Canada now believe, are starting to hear that there is a crisis, and that is one of the great benefits of that united all-party approach to Ottawa.

* (1650)

We knew when we went into the honourable Prime Minister's office that we were not going to come out of there with \$1.3 billion. I think members opposite who have dealt with the

federal government before would probably think the same thing. But we did want to show Canadians and we did want to demonstrate to Manitobans and the people in Saskatchewan that the issue was so important that all of us were going to put aside our political differences and all of us were going to go to Ottawa united. I am proud that we did that because I think for the two days we were in Ottawa, they were trying to divide this producer group from that producer group, and this support program from that support program, and this political party from that political party, and that political party in Ottawa from this political party, and we did not get split at all. I think any of us who were there, you could disagree about what was proposed but every person in the room, 60 people, there was not a difference of opinion on what was needed to deal with and bridge the crisis today.

There was not any disagreement. There was some greater criticism of AIDA from some producers than others. There was some greater criticism of the federal government. There was some greater criticism of the federal Minister of Agriculture. There was greater or lesser criticism of a lot of things, but there was not any disagreement about what was needed now, what was needed to be announced in October of 1999, not November of '99 where this resolution is, or not December.

Mr. Speaker, many people have spoken before me in an eloquent way about the situation. I have received and probably presented more questions on the agricultural crisis last spring and summer in the session than any other issue, the magnitude and the calamity of the flooding and what it meant to the producers, what it meant to the family farms, what it means to the businesses, what it means to the Brandon area, the western area of Manitoba, some \$200 million. I thought Lori Dangerfield did a terrific job in Ottawa again on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce as part of the delegation. She, too, said we want to ask what is reasonable so that we look credible in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, we felt, as members opposite do, that there are no political differences when you go to Melita and hear the 3,000 people expressing their concerns. There were no differences when you were in the coffee shops

before you got there. There are no differences when you see what is going on in the fields, the magnitude of the water and the lack of runoff. To see that even in late June when we knew that the Red River in '97 was able to recede was very, very powerful to all Manitobans because we are all one or two generations perhaps, or most of us, a couple of generations beyond the farm, if we are not already farming today.

So it was very, very moving to all of us, and that is why we tried to participate in a co-operative way with members opposite, even though we knew we were literally days or weeks or months away from an election. This was too important to be political.

Mr. Speaker, I said at that meeting in June that it was absolutely wrong for a federal government to treat the flood victims of the Red River Valley in one way during a federal election campaign and forget the people of southwestern Manitoba and central Manitoba who had been flooded. This Legislature should go on record always, no matter where the people live, if they go through a disaster of the magnitude of the Red River flood or of the magnitude of the flooding in southwestern and central Manitoba and the lack of any support for those unseeded acres, that we all stand together in that disaster. We all stand together first and foremost as Manitobans, and we stand with the family farm that was affected or we stand with the household that has been flooded in those circumstances. I think it is important that we all do that under all conditions.

The second issue, of course, is price. The Canadian farmer has been devastated by the subsidies, and I do not disagree with the genesis of the problem. The fact that our farmer, in spite of their more effective and productive nature, is being dealt out by a federal government that will not deal them in is something of a huge magnitude of tragedy in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. What we really have now is the whole issue of are we going to have a national food policy in Canada that allows the family farm to be part and partner with producing the food and that the family farm is guaranteed a fair price for their goods and a fair price in a subsidized world means support from their federal government.

I believe strongly that the subsidies that have taken place in the international market must be dealt with in the world trade negotiations. It is hopefully being dealt with as we speak. Although I do not even know whether they have got to any kind of table yet, hopefully this issue is being dealt with in a way that will be, over the long haul, positive for the producers here in Manitoba.

When we met with the Prime Minister, we said farmers in Manitoba do not need a handout. They need a bridge so that they will not go under with the commodity subsidies from other countries, and they need a bridge from the federal government to see them through this commodity crisis. Whether it is one year, two years, three years, four years, five years, they have to have a long-term income support program that deals with unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions.

We also need, Mr. Speaker, in our view, to recognize that the debt nationally has been paid down with supports for farmers. The change in the Crow rate, the change in the transportation policy, the change in other programs for farmers, whether it is R & D and other programs, they have been dramatically cut in the '94 budget and the '95 budget. Part of what is producing a surplus today is farmers' money from yesterday. Why can we not have that investment back in the family farm to bridge them through this commodity crisis? It was taken away when the government was in tough times financially. Why can it not be given back when farmers are in tough times financially in 1999 and the year 2000? We believe in that.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the family farmer is watching right now, which is a crucial situation in Canada. We have subsidies to the orderly marketing system in many provinces in Canada, particularly in central Canada, that may or may not be negotiated at the WTO negotiations. At the same time, we may have a policy on so-called subsidies for the orderly marketing system. Particularly in the dairy industry in Ontario and Quebec, we have this kind of Darwinian view of the grain producer and the oilseed producer here in Canada. Oh, tough luck, they will have to survive in this Darwinian world, and if they do not, that is just

the way it goes. Well, it is unacceptable to have a duplicitous trade policy with farmers in Canada. You either have a policy that supports the subsidies from other countries to some degree to get through this crisis, or you have a consistent position on subsidies from Quebec and Ontario to western Canada. I think that is also rooted in potential western alienation that is just below the surface if we do not get some support from our national government. I dare say we should put it on the record in this House. We should not inflame it, but it should be part of the negotiations that are going on with Ottawa.

* (1700)

They have to know that Canada works when it works for all regions, and it works for all regions when the national government, in my view, has a consistent policy for all our producers and does not have one policy on subsidies in one region of the country and a much more Darwinian set of policies in another region called Manitoba and Saskatchewan. There is a price to pay for that if that is not resolved. There is a price to pay if Canada does not work for all of its producers in an equal way.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the people who attended this Ottawa mission—and I want to read their names: the two of us on this side; Mr. Zasada from Agriculture and Food; Mr. Lee; Jon Gerrard; Larry Maguire; Marcel Hacault, the chair of the Pork Council; Brian Saunderson, the Vice-President of Agricore; George Groeneveld, the Vice-President of Agricore; Don Dewar, President of Keystone; Chris Hamblin, Vice-President of Keystone; Wayne Motheral, President of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities; Art Enns, Vice-President of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association; Maxine Routledge, the Manitoba Women's Institute; Lori Dangerfield, President of the Brandon Chamber of Commerce; Andy Baker of the National Farmers Union; Wayne Drul, the United Grain Growers; Art Petkau from the Cattle Producers; and Gerry Friesen, President of Manitoba Pork.

We believe that they went forward with this resolution. They went forward to Ottawa, and we went forward to Ottawa with the advice of their membership to go forward with this

resolution. I believe, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about a \$95-billion surplus, part of it taken from programs for farmers and producers, when we talk about a \$95-billion surplus available, part of it taken from provincial governments for health and post-secondary education, then surely when we are talking about a virtual museum in a Speech from the Throne, we can support the real family farm, and we can support the real family farm with support of this resolution in this Chamber.

I would urge all of us, notwithstanding our disagreement about tactics that are in substance contained within the amendment, I would urge all of us at the end of the day to unite behind the resolution that is put forward today in the Chamber. It is important that at the end of the day we have one resolution to Ottawa, because united we will stand and succeed and divided we will be picked off and potentially fail. We cannot fail for our producers.

Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): I am prompted to say that the Premier (Mr. Doer) is in fine form, and the Premier was eloquent in his concern, his expressions for the plights of agriculture. I say, as I have often said in this Chamber, that I am thankful we have had these past hours, these past two days to discuss the issue of agriculture.

Agriculture, as I have complained from time to time, often under the pressures of other issues of a more urbanized society, tends to get pushed aside, particularly in this Chamber, but it behooves us to always be reminded that agriculture is such a fundamental part of our well-being as individuals, as families, as a province, as a country, that we legislators never waste our time when we spend some hours speaking about agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, one of the problems that has been presented to us by the resolution, moved by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), is that it attempts to attack two very specific issues. That is really the difficulty that we are trying to do, and that is what my colleague the member for Rhineland tried to address. It is probably sometimes a mistake

when we do not have a clear focus of what it is, the specific message that we are trying to carry. We have experienced, in too big a part of our province, a major natural disaster. Saskatchewan shared in the same circumstances. Alberta did not, and that is why they are not in this play.

Many people sometimes ask me. They are familiar with all too often having Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, even with different governments and different political ideologies, but very often when talking about prairie agriculture walk together in addressing the national government on issues of the day. But because of the natural disasters that occurred in southeastern Saskatchewan and southwestern Manitoba, we have these two separate issues. That is distinctly apart from the overall problem that western farmers—and it is mostly western farmers, although not exclusively, but essentially the grains and oilseed people. Let us remember that. When we talk about the disaster in agriculture, we should be thankful that that is not universal.

I speak as a modest cattle producer, and I can speak for the cattle producers of this province and the provinces across this country. We are probably enjoying our best year, our best year ever. I can never recall selling calves for \$1.50, \$1.60 a pound. The fat market is moving up. Our forage industry, although we have an abundance of it, but for those who specialize in it do very well, and we send our products to different parts of the world. Our supply-managed industries are doing well. Our hog industry is recovering and back into a profitable position, but we have a specific issue in the wheat and the grains and the oilseeds that has to be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, there will be many opportunities—and I am looking forward to that—to challenging this government on the long-term resolution of those issues. In fact, we will have some very distinctly different positions than what will come to us from the Minister of Agriculture and from members opposite. I have a great deal of trouble telling my durum wheat farmers and those of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Great Plains, who produce the best durum wheat in the world and 75 percent of it—

talk about cornering the market—and they cannot turn that into pasta.

We have to ship it to Italy and buy the pasta back or ship it down to Minneapolis and have them manufacture the pasta and the jobs because we have a Wheat Board, a government institution that for some reason or other cannot be flexible enough to allow that to happen. That is not an anti-Wheat Board statement. I just want flexibility. I want flexibility with it, and so does the Saskatchewan government want that. The Saskatchewan minister came to this building. We had a meeting with the Prairie Pasta Producers. It boggles one's imagination.

Why our durum wheat growers cannot produce and value-add their durum wheat and make the pasta if not necessarily in Manitoba, then in Saskatchewan or even North Dakota, preferably in Canada, and add that value to the farmers. No, our system forces them to load that grain into boxcars, to ship it across the mountains, add \$30-\$40 a tonne freight and then wonder why our farmers are in trouble. But that is another part of the debate, Mr. Premier, and that is why we are having some difference in coming together on this issue what in my humble judgment we should be doing.

I pick up on the Premier's own words. A national government needs to be held accountable. A national government needs to be consistent to all Canadians and all parts, all regions of this country. Many of us remember the floating houses, the damage that was done at the time of the Shawinigan flood in Quebec. Remember that, those graphic sounds. The national government, we have a disaster program. They came in and supported those people, those Canadians, in Quebec, to the tune of 90 percent, 90-10 under the national Disaster Assistance program.

When we experienced the flood of the century on our Red River in '97, the same federal government came to the support of the Red River farmers and supported, once their formula clicked in, 90 percent of the cost. When the southwestern farmers faced an equally large economic disaster, the federal government to date has come up with zero, with zero. That is what put the particular bitterness in this debate

on the part of the southwestern farmers particularly and the Saskatchewan farmers. Now it has gotten muddied up with the other issues that I just spoke about, the long-term commodity prices, the failure of the commodity prices, but that is at the heart of it. I want to tell this Premier (Mr. Doer), I want to tell the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Manitoba ought not to be held accountable for anything more than \$7 million or \$10 million in that monies that your review team figured out, the \$50 an acre. There is \$70 million, \$72 million, \$75 million, \$80 million bandied about. That should be shared 90-10 with the national government, if the national government is to be consistent with us western Canadians as they were on other issues.

* (1710)

To that extent, Mr. Speaker—I know we have the differences—I certainly acknowledge and I certainly appreciated at the time the support of the then official opposition back in June, whether it was at public meetings in Melita that the Premier refers to, whether it was by the presence of the then ag critic, the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), at announcements where our then Premier indicated the support programs that we were providing, the \$50-an-acre payment that was made, despite the fact that we had no assurances from the national government that they would share.

I must say I took some comfort out of the fact that when this government first came into office headlines proclaimed that the welcome mat was being put out for the Doer government. Ottawa seeks talks with Agriculture minister. Federal Minister of Agriculture Vanclief is putting out the welcome mat for the incoming government of Premier-elect Doer. Remember how difficult it was just to have him come to Manitoba? He flew over us, tried to spot the soaked fields, you know, from 3,000 feet. The invite for a one-on-one meeting would seem to signal a thawing of the cold war between Ottawa and the province on the thorny issue of aid for the province's suffering farmers.

Vanclief and the Filmon government have engaged in a war of words over compensation that has seen no shortage of mudslinging.

Earlier this summer, Filmon Tories unilaterally offered soil-soaked farmers \$50 for each unseeded acre, a move the Chretien Liberals saw as political gamesmanship.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there were no games being played in those fields in June or July, as upwards to a million acres could not be seeded. As we are being told by the same group that Howard Motheral represents that farmers were being concerned, they were not going to be able to pay their property taxes. If municipalities do not get their property taxes, what happens to our infrastructure, our schools, our hospitals, everything? So there was an urgent, urgent need to act then, and as my colleague indicated just in his comments, had we not provided that support at that time, those fields would be going into winter under snow and ice in a shape that would have guaranteed no crop for the coming year. That money had to flow and it did flow.

It is now up to my honourable friends opposite to ensure that we get treated in the same way that we were treated in the '97 flood in the Red River Valley. I would not like to be that cynical that that treatment was there only because a federal election was in the process. I really would not like to think that, but it will be at the end of the day that will determine that.

I would tell the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) not to be in a hurry to close off the books. I can recall another fight that I had with Ottawa in '89 when I became Resources minister. We had that year the worst fire season that the province had seen in its history. We had chalked up a bill of over \$32 million, \$34 million that we felt very strongly were Ottawa's responsibility. You recall that we moved virtually the entire or very large segments of the aboriginal populations out of those smoke areas of the North. We had to maintain them in places in different community centres throughout parts of southern Manitoba, all picked up at provincial cost at the time, but under our constitutional arrangement with respect to who is responsible for what, we correctly judged those to be federal charges and federal responsibilities. Even despite the fact that it was a Conservative government in Ottawa at that time and we had strong ministers like Jake Epp representing Manitoba at that time, it took us the better part of

two, two and a half years before Mulroney and company coughed up the necessary money.

My advice to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) is: you keep the book on this one open. You do not challenge and you do not throw that into that Christmas wish list of budget deficits that you are compiling. That is \$60-70 million that I am talking about. You go up there and get it. I think I am going to counsel my colleagues that we make it somewhat easier for you to get it by supporting this resolution.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): As the member for Arthur-Virden, I am pleased to be here today to debate this very important issue. I find it very interesting that the Honourable Jon Gerrard has the nerve to participate in the resolution of this agricultural issue. I think back to last spring in this House when the Manitoba Liberals, acting on the instruction of him as their Leader, denied leave to debate a private member's resolution on the farm crisis.

At that time I found it incredible that the Liberal Leader would instruct one of his own MLAs to deny leave to debate a resolution on the farm crisis that my predecessor the Honourable James Downey had brought forward. Mr. Gerrard obviously had no concept of his responsibility as the Manitoba Liberal Leader to allow debate on an issue that had and continues to have serious consequences for agricultural producers, businesses and indeed the entire provincial economy.

I feel sorry for his colleague past, the honourable Gary Kowalski, that he was asked to perform this distasteful task. The resolution brought forward by my predecessors strongly urged the federal government to take immediate action which will help effectively address the problems arising from the Manitoba flooding and to consider creating programs and services that will help ensure that the long-term economic impact of this devastating flooding is kept to a minimum, as my honourable colleague just mentioned.

This resolution was indeed very timely and worthy of debate. That is why it is so important that we address not only the issue of flooding and the impact it had on southeastern and

southwestern Manitoba but also the multitude of issues facing the greater Canadian agricultural community. The measure taken by Mr. Gerrard this past—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. All members in the Chamber are honourable members and are referred to by their constituencies. Thank you.

Mr. Maguire: The honourable member for River Heights this past spring, it was clearly a partisan move on his part. He did not want to debate the resolution, because it called on his federal Liberal colleagues to take more action, more effective action to deal with this spring's unfortunate natural disaster.

This debate was going to prove embarrassing for the federal Liberals, and the honourable member for River Heights was trying to protect them. That was an insult to Manitobans at that time. To deny leave for that critical debate was reprehensible.

So I stand here today amazed that the member for River Heights is participating in this resolution on the state of the Canadian agricultural industry, knowing that his beloved federal colleagues are going to be taken to task for their ineptitude in managing the farm economy. Apparently he has finally become better informed about the issues and is more cognizant of the fact that the state of the agricultural economy has a direct bearing on the overall health of the Canadian economy.

I am pleased to now make some of my remarks on this important debate. Mr. Speaker, I have heard many members of this House speak with great concern about the issues of southwest Manitoba and where I live in Arthur-Virden. I think without living the situation they would have to certainly hear the concerns that I have heard over the last 10 months as I have campaigned throughout the constituency.

We know only too well of the crisis, not only physically and emotionally or financially as well. I could go into a great deal of the time allowed about the situations with the excessive rainfall, concerns of broken equipment, problems in working all night to get crops in the ground, situations of extreme personal stress, if

you will. We have all heard earlier about the stress counselling that has been put in place to try to deal with some of these issues as we move forward.

* (1720)

Mr. Speaker, I did have the opportunity to go to Ottawa this fall, and I appreciated the opportunity. We went forward with an idea to Ottawa. We did not go forward with a resolution. As I mentioned to many members of the press, and I think that it was felt by all of the members of our group that went to Ottawa, that it was probably, I indicated—and I have been going to Ottawa now for over 15 years to deal with agricultural issues in some of these areas—it was the most frustrating trip I have probably ever been on in Ottawa. I think the Leader of the government today would concur with that. It certainly was a frustrating time for him and his colleague from Saskatchewan as well. To be told that the issue was not as bad as it was, because now we are using our August numbers instead of June numbers, was certainly not very professional from the federal government's perspective given the fact that they have been working for some six years in Ottawa now to try to come up with long-term proposals to impact these kinds of safety nets that are required.

We know very well that short-term relief is needed in this situation. The farmers of southwest Manitoba know that more than anyone else in the province at this particular time. Southwest Manitoba has been absolutely devastated. Of the million acres that have not been seeded this year in Manitoba, virtually three-quarters to 80 percent of them are within the constituency that I represent in Arthur-Virden.

We went to Ottawa for a trade equalization payment, Mr. Speaker. In the neighbourhood of Saskatchewan used \$20 an acre for their figure to come up with their billion-dollar program, yes, we are smaller and we would require less of a number than that \$1 billion that they were seeking. But the point is that our costs are higher than any other region of the Prairies due to the taking away of the Crow benefit that the federal government did in 1995, August 1 to be exact. The freight on my farm went from \$11 a

tonne for wheat to \$37 a tonne, that is if we had one tonne per acre. So if you are in a feed wheat position, you could be paying up towards \$54 or \$55 an acre for wheat exports that you did not have to pay prior to August 1, 1995. That impact alone has certainly been cause enough for many farmers to make the changes in their operations out there today.

Our situation that we are faced with in Manitoba today is not that our farmers are not skilled. It is not that our farmers are not trying to make the changes in diversification. They are making changes in diversification, Mr. Speaker. We are leading in the acreage of potatoes. We are leading in the acreage of beans. We are leading in beef production. We have got some of the best producers of beef in the constituency that I live in. I have met many of them as I have toured over the last year, if you will, in the nominations and election process that I went through.

We are also in the area of hogs, not just because of Maple Leaf being built in Brandon, but we are also the leaders in expanding hog production in Manitoba, if you will, in all of North America because of our central location. That central location cost us when the Crow was taken away because we have gone into the higher freight rates that I talked about that I have just referred to.

We are seeing our farmers make changes in their operations. They are diversifying. They are challenging and changing their operations on a daily basis to make sure that they can be ready for the new style of agriculture that is going to take place post-Crow. The big problem they have is that change in farming operations today takes capital. Capital is required to make these changes, and it has been absolutely severed in southwest Manitoba, not just because of the change in the Crow but because of the excessive flooding and rainfall that took place this year.

What disturbed me most about being in Ottawa was that we did not talk excessively about the ways and the means that these dollars would be paid or would there be a portion of it paid out to the farmers in southwest Manitoba who were more devastatingly hurt by the excessive rainfall. We have all been hit by the

lower prices due to the European and U.S. subsidization of agriculture, particularly in grains and oilseeds.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity of being in the United States five of the last seven years debating these issues with American farmers at their National Association of Wheat Growers annual meetings when we have had forums of round table discussion, international round tables that brought in French farmers, farmers from Australia, Canadian farmers and the Americans themselves. We have debated the kinds of—I was going to say Kyoto agreements on energy that have been discussed, and that is an area that we can look at under our environmental opportunities in agriculture, but, mainly, we have talked about the impacts that these subsidies have had on prices worldwide. It is agreed even by the Americans and the Europeans that their high subsidies force down the prices in the rest of the world.

So we have to make a decision, Mr. Speaker, whether or not we as a province are going to be able to shoulder the needs of our farmers independently or whether or not we should get Ottawa to come to the table with the dollars that they have saved, if you will, just to meet—and by the way, I fully believe that the savings that have come from the Crow benefit being completely taken away have saved many of the other sectors of agriculture from having to adapt and change any quicker than they already have, whether it was through reductions of quotas or changes from quota base to tariffication in the export subsidies that have been put forward under their programs.

I think it is important that we look at how many of these dollars are used in the kinds of programs that we are going to have in the future. I would go back to some of the special grains programs that we have had. I would look at the Western Grain Stabilization account. I remember the frustrations that we went through with some of those programs, but they did deliver dollars to farmers in the Prairies.

I think at this time we have to focus on making sure that the federal government knows their responsibilities and does want to come to the table, that we as a province are not being

forced to put another 40 percent up for the needs of the farmers here in Manitoba. We need to make sure that farmers in Manitoba are considered, that we take into consideration the pushing down, if you will, of the prices here because of these subsidies and that we continue to deal with them.

I would say in closing, Mr. Speaker, that we need fresh ideas. I would support the amendment that has been put forward because it puts the onus on the federal government to come forward with a new plan. This is a business plan where we could very quickly put money in the hands of farmers. I have talked to the U.S. national barley growers, and they have had dollars put in their hands instantaneously, within weeks under the present program that they have. They have a farm bill that phases their programs out over seven years, from 1995 until 2002 under the U.S. farm bill. We could have done that in a one-time opportunity under the Crow benefit, but it was completely taken away, and western Manitoba, the constituency I live in, was hit the most.

We have to adapt the quickest, but when those dollars have been completely taken away, Mr. Speaker, it hurts at home more than anywhere else in Canada. That is why our farmers have been leaders in diversification, why they have been leaders in making the changes on their farms, but they need to make sure that those dollars are there to back up the loss of income they have had from the excessive moisture that has just taken place.

House Business

Mr. Mackintosh: On a matter of House business, I wonder if there would be leave of the House to not see the clock for a period of 10 minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? [agreed]

* * *

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, we have programs already in place. We have the Manitoba Crop Insurance program that very much helps farmers, but our farmers in southwest Manitoba never had an opportunity to put a crop in the ground. For

the first time ever they never got a crop seeded. Most times, you know, crop insurance is only a benefit if you have it in the ground. The \$50 an acre that the former government came forward with was certainly a benefit and an opportunity, and every farmer in my region is thankful for the previous government's action of putting that \$50 forward.

We also have NISA, which is the Net Income Stabilization Account, but if you do not have income to put into it, you do not have any net income. What we need now is a topping up of the gross income, and it can be done in many ways. It can be done through the NISA account. That is one way we could do it. It also could be done through a separate program like similar programs that the U.S. farm bill has allowed the American farmer to have the luxury of having.

* (1730)

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by saying that I believe that the opportunity is here in this House to go forward to Ottawa, to give them the clear message that it is their responsibility to come through with the 90 percent of the funds that are required, if not all of the funds that are required under these kinds of programs, not just because of the disaster program, which has not been declared a disaster in southwest Manitoba because of a trigger mechanism under the Department of Defence's Jobs and Economic Recovery Initiative, the JERI program, which did pay for a lot of these programs in dollars in other times. But we need to have that opportunity to come forward with the mechanisms under a U.S. farm bill style and a European style subsidization process to make sure that our farmers are not too far left behind.

That is the point that I would like to make here in closing, Mr. Speaker, in this House today. Thank you very much.

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie):

Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour to have the opportunity to rise in this Chamber and to address a topic that is truly so close to my heart. We have heard eloquent words from many members within this Chamber speaking of their own experiences and their thoughts of agriculture and how it has affected them.

For most of my adult life I have been one of those that has eaten and slept and worked agriculture, and it has impacted greatly upon myself. Just recently, in fact 10 days ago, my father suffered a stroke, a man who has dedicated himself to the industry of agriculture. There is no doubt in my mind that the stresses that he has experienced that precipitated this affliction have come in part from this crisis in agriculture.

I can say in this Chamber that my terminology to describe the federal government and especially the federal Agriculture minister and some of his remarks that reflect upon the producers of Manitoba is only one term, and that term is "contemptible." We, as producers in this province, are proud people. We do all that we can each and every moment of our living life to preserve and promote our activities on the farm. The economy of this country and that of agriculture over the last number of years has in fact purged every inefficient operator in the industry that we know as farming. All those of us who are left within this industry are indeed efficient, dedicated individuals to the industry of agriculture, specifically farming.

We are facing a crisis not of our own making. We understand that farming is a direct relationship to weather and the variables that come with the weather daily, but we are unprepared and unequipped to be able to take upon our shoulders in our own operations the treasuries of the United States and that of the European Union. The European Union currently invests in their farming sector approximately \$175 per man, woman and child of the entire population of the European Union, a small price to pay, they say, for the security of food. Each and every one of us must contemplate our day without our daily sustenance, and it is so vitally important to recognize those individuals who are privileged and honoured to provide our sustenance.

We are a proud people and we ask not of others for monies to sustain our operations, but we all must recognize what the farming community is experiencing here. We are engaged in a fight for our life and our farms that are of multiple generations in age. We are very proud to say that we are continuing that legacy

of our forefathers in continuing our operations. We must have federal government participation that recognizes the crisis that is not of our own making, the crisis that is upon us, that has been thrust upon us from elsewhere.

All honourable members of this Chamber, I ask you to support the amendment, the amended resolution which recognizes truly where the responsibilities lie and recognizes where the crisis that we are facing in agriculture has emanated from. Without the amendments, as strongly as they are worded, we fail to recognize these two very vital points. I ask all members here present to support the amendment to the resolution and to go forward with conviction, united. All members here recognize that I am an individual who believes in doing the right thing. Ladies and gentlemen of this Chamber, this is the right thing to do.

I ask, too, in the long term to recognize that we as the farmers of this province attempt to shoulder our responsibilities to support the province and the government in initiatives. However, at this time we are unable to do so. Each and every year, more than \$70 million is contributed by the farming community toward taxation emanating from land that supports school boards, supports municipal government and supports provincial government. At this time, we can ill afford to continue to provide those monies and then come cap in hand, as proud as we are, to ask for those monies to be returned.

I ask the government of Manitoba to consider in their long-range planning for a farming community to look at providing to the producers of Manitoba a lower-cost environment in which we can compete. The provincial government can and should look at all avenues within their mandate to provide that low-cost environment, not only in the land taxation issue but that of the provincial sales tax issue and other regulations that provide for fees that make for an environment which we as producers must shoulder and, unfortunately, because of external conditions are unable to at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for the opportunity to speak here in this Legislature today. I ask all individuals to support this resolution and its amendment. Thank you.

House Business

Mr. Mackintosh: Pursuant to ongoing discussion, I wonder if there is consent of the House not to see the clock for another five minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent not to see the clock for another five minutes? [agreed]

* * *

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have had the opportunity to speak in this House on this issue, and I want to mention from the start how proud and honoured I am to represent the constituency of Fort Whyte for the first time in this Chamber. I will speak more to that on my response to the throne speech.

I think it is very important for this Chamber to have taken the time to debate this issue in the House at this point. It is obviously a very critical issue to all of Manitoba. It extends far beyond the farm community and certainly touches all of us.

As the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer) mentioned, there are very many of us who are touched in one way or another by our roots in rural Manitoba. One does not have to go far, either in a social circle or in terms of business, to find out where issues in rural Manitoba affect all Manitobans. It is critical that we take the time to demonstrate and to show our support for those farmers in this time of crisis, a crisis caused by a natural disaster and also by a lack of support in the long run from our federal government. I think it is critical that this House send as strong a message as possible to the federal government to indicate to them how disappointed we are and continue to be in their lack of support for farmers in this province.

* (1740)

My own family has roots dating back to the 1800s in rural Manitoba. I myself was born in Elkhorn, Manitoba, and spent many summers on farms in that part of the province, as well as in Pilot Mound and Crystal City, two areas that have been devastated by the recent natural

disaster. Mr. Speaker, our hearts all go out to the people who are trying day by day to find a way to survive through this crisis without the support of our federal government.

Let there be no doubt, this is a federal issue. We have seen over the past years a federal government consistently offload their responsibility in terms of supporting the farmers of this province and indeed across western Canada. Time and again, they have neglected their responsibility to ensure that the pillars of this community who make their livelihood and who raise their families in rural parts of this country have the wherewithal and the support necessary to survive.

It is obvious that our federal government, and in particular Mr. Vanclief, do not have the stomach or the desire to see that Manitobans and farmers across western Canada are supported in a means that is appropriate. I think it is very, very disappointing that the committee that did visit with the federal government this fall had such a negative reply to their request for assistance.

Mr. Speaker, I, like many in this House, have roots in rural Manitoba. I think it is absolutely critical that we band together and show support for the farmers in this province and indeed across western Canada. I also think that it is critical that we take a businesslike approach in our dealings with the federal government. Gone are the days when they will simply hand out multimillions of dollars at the request of any group. I would hope that in our approach to the federal government we can not only be united but that we can present a solid business case that will leave them no option but to support farmers in Manitoba and farmers in western Canada in a manner that will help these farmers survive this crisis. It is not only a short-term solution that we are seeking, but it is the ability to deal with our federal counterparts in the long term to ensure that the farmers in this community and the farmers across western Canada have an opportunity to reap the rewards of their hard work. I think that is critical.

Mr. Speaker, I know we are short of time today, and I will have more to say on this issue in the future. But I would hope through some

constructive consultation that we have had during the course of this debate that we as a House are able to come together at the end of the day and show a united front to our federal counterparts to show them that we are serious in this province, that we need to provide the strongest possible support to our farmers, to those families in rural Manitoba who are suffering both from a natural disaster and from the disaster of the lack of support on behalf of the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, I have learned from the business world that we do need to take account of what our competitors do. I think in this case, as is suggested in the amendment that was put forward by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), that it is important that we look at the competitors. Make no mistake, our competitors are the U.S. and the European governments, and it is important that we look to them, learn from them and provide support in a fashion that can allow our farmers to compete evenly with those other institutions.

House Business

Mr. Mackintosh: On a matter of House business, Mr. Speaker, is there consent of the House not to see the clock until 10 to six?

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent not to see the clock until 10 minutes to six? [agreed]

* * *

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, we are witnessing in this Chamber today in the work that is going on, as the honourable Government House Leader seeks more time for debate, the opportunity for all three parties to come together on a resolution that sends a very clear message to the Government of Canada on this very important issue.

As an MLA who represents a part of the province where agriculture is indeed a very important part of our economic base, I have witnessed in my years in public life in serving that constituency the effects of the international trade war and the lack of consistency in policy on an international basis that has meant that our

producers, who are indeed very efficient in what they are doing, are not able to keep up with the very significant subsidy levels that we have seen provided by the governments of their competitors in the United States and in Europe. I know in this last provincial election, in a number of our all-candidates' debates where agriculture became an issue, the fact is that the Europeans I believe subsidized somewhere to the tune of \$400 U.S. a tonne for the production of grain, the Americans some 68—my numbers come from, if my memory serves me correctly, the Canadian Wheat Board assessment of this particular issue.

When you see those levels of subsidy compared to the Canadian government of some \$8 or less a tonne for the same product, I do not care how efficient you can become as a producer, it is virtually impossible to survive in that kind of market. So for the need of our producers to survive in that environment, the need for a policy by our national government that is going to stand by them becomes very, very significant.

Of course, as a major grain-producing province in Canada, as a major agricultural province, the ability of this Legislative Assembly to send a united message to the federal government indeed becomes very, very important. The difficulty, of course, will be whether or not the Government of Canada is prepared to hear that message. I know in my particular part of the province, we have the only federal Liberal member of Parliament representing a rural constituency in western Canada. On a number of occasions when we have had issues, for example, the closure of the AECL facility in Manitoba, where we have needed a strong voice, that voice has not been there. It has been ignored, and that matter has been referenced by the Premier. I see my colleague who represents the neighbouring constituency of La Verendrye, the former member for La Verendrye joined with us in that battle, and in all cases what we found was our work always fell on deaf ears and we had no real assistance from our member of Parliament for Provencher, Mr. Iftody.

So, again, today we pass this resolution. We stand with our agricultural community united, I would hope, as a Legislative Assembly. This process of trying to draft a resolution or an

amendment that serves our purposes that we can all stand behind is one of the great parts of this Legislative Assembly. I have seen it happen on numerous other occasions, and it is one that always tends to come together in the end, and I am glad that that appears to be happening today. But, again, will that message be heard by Ottawa?

You know, it is interesting, Mr. Speaker, that this issue, as others have pointed out, goes beyond just the farm gate. It goes beyond just those people who earn their living directly in the agricultural community. A great part of our wealth in this province, a growing part of our wealth, comes from the processing sector, the diversified sector, and there are thousands and thousands of Manitobans in the city of Winnipeg and the city of Brandon whose incomes are directly related to a strong agricultural community. So it becomes very important for all Manitobans, but we do come back to that issue: will the national government in Ottawa hear this message?

It is significant that the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Gerrard), the member for River Heights, joins us in this message. So if it is ignored by Ottawa, not only will the message of Conservatives and of New Democrats, but also prairie Liberals, be ignored. That is a very significant point. So we welcome very much the Leader of the Liberal Party joining with us and standing as Manitobans on this particular issue and sending a very strong message.

* (1750)

Some of the issues, of course, need to be developed by our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) in making that case. Because I know from the reports that we have received back of our all-party delegation to Ottawa, many questions were put forward by the federal Liberal caucus when our delegation met with them about the detail of what a short-term support program would look like. We appreciate that the Minister of Agriculture, new to her portfolio, going on this trip, may not have had all the time to prepare, but it is important, as we continue to make this case, that we not only have today this united resolution—

House Business

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): House business, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if there might be leave not to see the clock till we have concluded for the day, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent not to see the clock until the matter has been concluded? [agreed]

* * *

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, what a rare opportunity not to see the clock and have the floor. It is one that I do not expect to see many times in one's political career. I will only take a few more moments because I know there are others who want to put some comments on the record.

It is very critical. After we pass this resolution today, hopefully unanimously and one we can all agree on, it is going to be very important for our Minister of Agriculture, who has sat in this House for nine years, many of them as Agriculture critic, to ensure that she is getting into the detail that is needed to present our case.

It is unfair to ask federal members of Parliament outright for support without being able to flesh out the details of how that particular program will look. That becomes the next step, the next challenge for our Minister of Agriculture. I know in the meeting that she did have with our delegation with federal Liberal members of Parliament—again, only one of them being from a rural constituency, but urban members—questions were put: What is the justification for your numbers? How will this money be paid out to ensure an effective program?

If those members of Parliament are going to be our lobbyists, they have to have answers to those questions, because their colleagues, Mr. Martin, the Prime Minister, will ask those questions of them. So the passage of this resolution today does not end this debate. It does not end the problem. It is one step of having a united front from this Legislature, but

the next step is for our Minister of Agriculture for Manitoba to be developing the kind of detail in the proposal that will meet the critics who are opposing this for want of detail.

So we look forward on this side of this House, I look forward, to seeing those kinds of details develop in the days ahead. Her responsibilities do not just end with the passage of this resolution or perhaps another trip to Ottawa, but it is incumbent on her to develop the kind of proposals that the government of Manitoba will make as to how such a program will be paid out, how it will be affected, who will receive dollars, on what basis. We look forward from this side of the House to seeing just that kind of information as well. So her job as minister really begins.

Now, this is one step in this process to take forward, but we look forward in the days ahead to see her develop and strengthen the Manitoba position with the kind of detail that those federal Liberal members of Parliament from Manitoba will need to argue with their colleagues, with the kind of detail that we as Manitobans will need to argue and make our case with the federal government in Ottawa. So we challenge her to get on after today with this resolution, one more tool in her arsenal, to add to that arsenal with the fleshing out of the detail in their proposal that we look forward to seeing as she continues to be our point person as Manitobans in making the case to Ottawa.

So we look forward to that, and we hope that she will be able to come back to this Chamber in the not too distant future with the kind of detail that will have to go to Ottawa to strengthen the case.

Mr. Speaker, I hope as well that the government in Ottawa will not have a deaf ear to Manitoba farmers, to prairie farmers or to agriculture. This is an important issue of national unity, and it is their chance to say that they do listen and hear, listen to and hear and understand the needs of a very significant part of our country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to put a few words on the record. I understand that other colleagues wish to do the same.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak on this very important issue about the dilemma that is occurring in rural Manitoba. I grew up in rural Manitoba. [interjection]

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the indulgence of the House and ask for leave to withdraw the amendment that I moved previously to the bill dealing with farm net supports and the resolution of the farm crisis.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the honourable member for Emerson to withdraw his amendment? [agreed]

House Business

Mr. Mackintosh: On a matter of House business, I understand there have been discussions, and I wonder if there is leave of the House to allow by leave the introduction of a new amendment now to the main motion.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to introduce a new amendment? [agreed]

* * *

Mr. Jack Penner: I would move then that the motion dealing with the resolution on the Manitoba farm crisis be amended by adding after the final BE IT RESOLVED clause, and it would read:

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba strongly urge the federal Liberal government to work with the national safety net committee of provincial Agriculture ministers to develop a long-term safety net program and to provide stability for producers to deal with supports provided to Canada's trading partners.

I would move that, and it would be seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk).

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to adopt the amendment? [agreed]

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the resolution proposed by the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk) as amended. Is it the will of the House to adopt the resolution?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: The motion as amended. Agreed? [agreed]

* (1800)

Formal Vote

Mr. Mackintosh: Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yeas and Nays has been called.

Call in the members.

Before the House is the resolution as amended proposed by the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Aglugub, Allan, Ashton, Asper, Barrett, Caldwell, Cerilli, Chomiak, Cummings, Dacquay, Derkach, Dewar, Doer, Driedger, Enns, Faurchou, Filmon, Friesen, Gerrard, Gilleshammer, Jennissen, Korzeniowski, Laurendeau, Lemieux, Loewen, Mackintosh, Maguire, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mitchelson, Nevakshonoff, Penner (Emerson), Penner (Steinbach), Pitura, Praznik, Reid, Reimer, Rocan, Rondeau, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Schuler, Selinger, Smith (Brandon West), Smith (Fort Garry), Struthers, Tweed, Wowchuk.

Mr. Speaker: The resolution is accordingly carried.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I would have voted with the mover of this

resolution except that I was paired with the Minister of Industry and Trade (Ms. Mihychuk).

Mr. Mackintosh: Would it be appropriate for the Clerk to announce the vote?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, please.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 50, Nays 0.

Mr. Speaker: The hour being after 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

November 30, 1999

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	Praznik; Caldwell	91
		92
Tabling of Reports		
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Annual Report 1999; Culture, Heritage and Citizenship Annual Report 1998-1999; Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Annual Report 1998-1999; Manitoba Film and Sound Recording Development Corporation Annual Report 1998-1999; Manitoba Arts Council Annual Report; Centre culturel franco-manitobain Annual Report; Manitoba Liquor Control Commission Annual Report; Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Annual Report; Manitoba Lotteries Corporation First Quarter Report, April to June 1999; Status of Women Annual Report 1998-1999; Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Second Quarter Report, April to September 1999	Post-Secondary Education Derkach; Caldwell Gerrard; Caldwell	86 88
McGifford	School Boards Schuler; Caldwell Fauschou; Caldwell	91
	University of Manitoba Gerrard; Caldwell	88
	Youth News Network Praznik; Caldwell	92
	Members' Statements	
Annual Report Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation 1998-1999; Annual Report, Manitoba Farm Mediation Board 1998-1999; Annual Report, Department of Agriculture 1998-1999; Annual Report, Manitoba Crop Insurance 1998-1999; 1998 Annual Report, Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, University of Manitoba; Report, Agricultural Credit Corporation Certification Agency	Seniors Mall-Walking Program J. Smith	92
Wowchuk	Christmas Cheer Board Aglugub	92
	Most Giving Towns Dyck	93
Public Accounts, Vols. 1, 2 and 3, 1998-1999	Radisson Community Organizations Cerilli	93
Selinger	North End YM-YWCA Loewen	94
	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Oral Questions	Government Motion	
New Democratic Party Filmon; Doer	Manitoba Farm Crisis Pitura	94
	S. Smith	97
Education System J. Smith; Caldwell	Tweed	101
	Lemieux	104
Gerrard; Caldwell	Derkach	106
Tweed; Caldwell	Schellenberg	112
Gilleshammer; Caldwell	Rocan	113
Jim Penner; Caldwell	Gerrard	116

Schuler	117
Doer	120
Enns	124
Maguire	127
Faurschou	130
Loewen	131
Praznik	132
J. Smith	135
Jack Penner	135