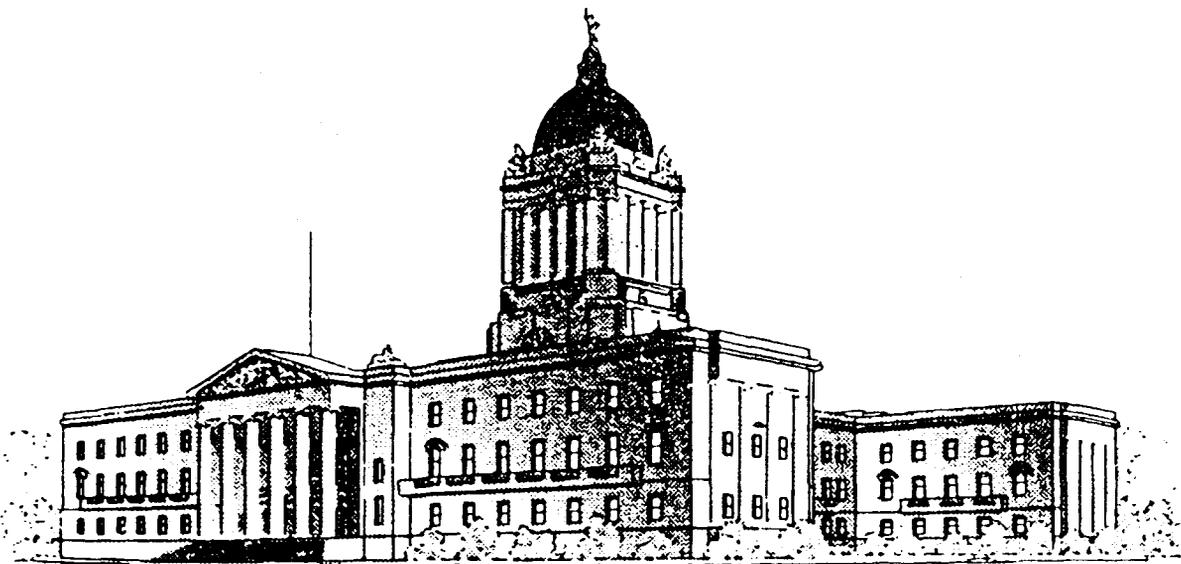




Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Agriculture

Chairperson
Mr. Stan Struthers
Constituency of Dauphin-Roblin



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.
CERULLI, 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.
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.
MIIYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	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.
SCHIELLENBERG, 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, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	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
STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Monday, May 7, 2001

TIME – 6:30 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

**CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Stan Struthers
(Dauphin-Roblin)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Tom
Nevakshonoff (Interlake)**

ATTENDANCE - 13 – QUORUM - 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Messrs. Gerrard, Lemieux, Smith
(Brandon West), Hon. Ms. Wowchuk

Messrs. Cummings, Dewar, Maguire,
Nevakshonoff, Penner (Emerson), Pitura,
Schellenberg, Struthers

Substitutions:

Mr. Aglugub for Mr. Ashton

APPEARING:

Mr. Steve Ashton, MLA for Thompson
Mr. Leonard Derkach, MLA for Russell

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Mr. Robert Radcliffe, Private Citizen
Mr. Tony Riley, Private Citizen
Ms. Dorothy Brown, Prairie Winds Clothing

MATTERS UNDER DISCUSSION:

All-Party Resolution on Federal Support for
Agriculture; Proposition présentée par tous
les partis au sujet de l'aide fédérale à
l'agriculture

Mr. Chairperson: Good evening. Will the
Standing Committee on Agriculture please come
to order. Tonight, the committee will be
considering the provincial All-Party Resolution

on Federal Support for Agriculture. I would like
to inform the committee, that since our last
meeting, written submissions have been received
from Robert Radcliffe, Tony Riley, and Dorothy
Brown. Is it the will of the Committee to accept
these submissions and have them appear in the
committee transcript for this meeting? *[Agreed]*
Copies of these submissions have been prepared
and will now be distributed to committee
members.

Just before we take questions and comments
from members, I have handed out a draft report.
It is the draft report to facilitate the discussion
here tonight. We need to decide where we are
going from here. I would like the members to
take a quick read of that draft, and, if there are
some suggestions that we have, I would be very
open to considering any suggestions that mem-
bers of the committee have.

Mr. Penner, you had a suggestion.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Chairman, I
was just going to ask how long we were going to
accept presentations, written and/or oral. I think
we need to make a decision, maybe, that the
committee's hearings have ended, and, therefore,
the acceptance of submissions should probably
also end at the same time.

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of
Agriculture and Food):** I would agree with Mr.
Penner. There is the issue of completion of the
report, so that we can get on with the completion
of Hansard as well. I would concur that this
should be the end of the submissions.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there agreement amongst
the committee that the submissions that were
distributed here this evening be the last that this
committee accepts? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Just before
we move on, Mr. Chair, I know there may be

other presentations that may be sent in from Manitobans to the minister's office. I still think that those should be received and circulated among the committee, but perhaps they will not be recorded in Hansard. I think that we should make that exception for those that may still be coming in.

Mr. Chairperson: Is that a suggestion that is agreeable to the committee? *[Agreed]*

How does the committee now wish to proceed with the consideration of the resolution?

Mr. Jack Penner: I was wondering whether the minister might want to give us an overview as to where she and her office are at, and how she might see this whole process now move forward?

Committee Substitution

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): I just want to make a committee substitution. With leave of the committee, I would like to move that the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub) replace the honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) as a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, effective immediately. As per the agreement made in the House on April 19, 2001, the House will be officially informed of the substitution in the official records of the committee.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by Mr. Dewar of Selkirk, with the leave of committee, that the Member for The Maples replace the Member for Thompson, effective immediately, on the Standing Committee on Agriculture. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Ms. Wowchuk: I would like to make a few comments to just indicate to the committee as to where the process is going. As I indicated at the last committee hearings, I have been in contact with the ministers from Saskatchewan and Alberta discussing this very issue. Saskatchewan has written to the standing committee inviting them to come to Saskatchewan. Alberta is also in support of having the standing committee come out as well. We have also had a letter from

Howard Hilstrom, who is the vice-chair of the federal standing committee, supporting us on our call to have the committee come to the west. I think that is very important.

* (18:40)

We heard from a lot of producers. I just feel it is time that the people in Ottawa came here and saw first-hand what the situation is. We know that there is a recess coming towards the end of May in the House of Commons. That would be the opportune time for them to visit Manitoba. There have been other farm leaders that went to Ottawa. There were people that went this year, but without success of getting more support from the federal government. I also want to indicate to the committee that Saskatchewan and Alberta are not interested in another delegation to Ottawa. What they want is people to come here. So that is the position on that one.

Hansard is in the process of being printed. You have a summary that Mr. Struthers has distributed for discussion. Then, I think that we have to look at the resolution and see what kind of amendments we want to make. It would be my thought that we would then work on this resolution and make changes that we would want, and then present a resolution to the House. When I say amend the resolution—when we talk about studying—the committee has studied, if we could change the resolution in a way that talks about what we listened to and what we heard from presenters. There are three sections, three THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVEDs that say study and make recommendations. I think, given what the people said to us, that we could from there change the resolution to reflect what we heard from the presenters, and then have a resolution that would go back to the House.

As an example, I will look at the third BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Standing Committee on Agriculture study and make recommendations with regard to an approach to building and sustaining a rural community in Manitoba, including how to produce growth in value-added and higher value agriculture and agrifood industry. We heard a lot about that from the producers. We heard about ethanol production. We heard about there being an opportunity

for sugar beets here in Manitoba. We heard about, for example, livestock industry.

So, if we could take the recommendations and comments that we heard from producers in those three areas, such as long-term sustainability, and build those into a THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that would then be able to be agreed upon and taken back to the House.

It would be my suggestion that tonight we have a bit of a discussion on the draft, and then we talk a bit about how people think those THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVEDs could be amended, and then we would come back a week from tonight to review the amendments and then have a resolution to present to the House that is final result. At that time, the Hansard should be very close to being completed as well.

Mr. Jack Penner: We think that the urgency that we heard many farm people, both men and women, approach the committee with—the urgency that many municipal leaders expressed, and the urgency with which the many business people that we heard expressed—should not be underestimated.

We saw the emotion before this table in many of the presenters. It is not often that you see men and women cry before making presentations to committee, and I think that demonstrated the seriousness of the problems that we are addressing as a committee. We believe that the urgency should not be left. We believe that there were two streams of presentations that were made to the committee. One was longer-term suggestions, and one was very immediate and very sincere and very earnest. We believe that the latter should be addressed immediately, and it should be done by the actions demonstrated by this committee.

We should ask our Premier (Mr. Doer) to immediately head up a delegation to Ottawa that would include members of this committee, that would include municipal leaders, that would include the business sector, as well as leaders of the farm communities. We believe that we should make all attempts to immediately address this issue to the other provinces and approach the other premiers to join in an all-party delegation to Ottawa.

There might be those that say that this might be futile, and that it might become too unwieldy. Let me go back in history just a wee bit to 1984-85 when we had a very similar type of situation in the grains and oilseeds sector. There was a group that met in Regina. It was basically the Manitoba farm organization that headed up the initiation of that meeting in Regina. Out of that meeting in Regina came an agreement that, after the second meeting, they agreed that all of them would go to Ottawa and they would approach the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture to meet with them and to demonstrate to them how urgent the matter was.

Out of that meeting came an initiative, the likes of which western Canada has not seen before or after, I believe—the special grains programs and the large amounts of money that were paid out during that period of time. It was clearly a demonstration by the grain companies, the presidents of the grain companies, by many of the presidents of virtually all the farm organizations in western Canada, and indeed, the governments of all the four provinces that joined hands and approached Ottawa. It was virtually impossible for Ottawa to say no.

I think that sort of action should be taken now. It should be headed up by our Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province. We are the all-party group that first agreed that we should set our politics aside and approach this and hear Manitobans' concerns. I think others have seen now, Saskatchewan and Alberta, maybe even British Columbia—I have talked to some producers in Ontario, and they have watched us very closely. I am sure that many of them in Ontario would join us in our effort, if we just asked them.

So I believe there is a real opportunity for the provinces to stand in a united way to approach the federal government to extend a helping hand in a moment of dire need. I have received numerous phone calls this last week asking what is happening; how come we are not hearing anything from the committee. So I said to them that we had jointly agreed to meet on Monday. We could have pointed fingers, but we did not. We said this is far too important to play politics with. So we said we will meet on

Monday and we will make some decisions, and hopefully, soon after the Monday meeting, you are going to hear of the initiatives that have been taken by this Province.

* (18:50)

We, as a committee, I think, have done our job. We have heard the people. The people have been very sincere in expressing the views that need to be expressed. We are now getting numerous calls from businesspeople in this city of Winnipeg, and indeed in Brandon, asking, what are you guys doing? Why are we not hearing anything? When are you going to approach Ottawa? Even businesspeople out of this city are suggesting that, if you need us, we will come with you to make the case. It is the first time in many, many years that we have seen this strong an approach from a broad, broad sectoral base, that we have seldom ever seen before. I think they have seen the sincerity of this committee, and how they work, how they conducted themselves and how they heard the issues.

So I would strongly suggest that the Premier head up the delegation to Ottawa to try and make, first of all, arrangements with the Prime Minister's office to meet with the Prime Minister as a group, and with the Minister of Finance, and indeed, with the Minister of Agriculture, and ask for that kind of a hearing. We should, secondly, then determine exactly what we should be saying to them—whether it is a prepared document, by a resolution and/or otherwise, that I think needs to be determined on this committee.

The second approach should be that we would draft a long-term position. We have many good people in the Department of Agriculture that could draft a long-term position. It could be brought back to this committee. We could determine whether the essence of the paper would be such that we could all support. We could then ask for an appearance before the Standing Committee on Agriculture in Ottawa, and bring that Manitoba position for a long-term policy development to Ottawa and lay before Ottawa a Manitoba-made plan.

If we chose to, we could then—even before we do that—share that with other western

provinces, and ask whether they would want to join in that kind of effort again to bring to Ottawa that long-term plan—recognizing that the Prime Minister has appointed a committee that will be travelling western Canada. They will not be the Standing Committee on Agriculture. They have been a specially appointed committee that will hear agricultural concerns in western Canada. They will then bring back those concerns to Ottawa, I assume, maybe even to the Standing Committee on Agriculture. I do not know. Assuming that process will also happen, we, I think, could be much, much closer to this whole process if we chose to do so again in a united fashion, such we have demonstrated until now.

That is fundamentally where we would like the proposal that we put before this committee as action that we think could be taken. We believe that this Premier of this province has a very key initiative to play, and a very key role to play, and it should be done immediately.

Mr. Derkach: I guess I would echo the sentiments of the member from Emerson, in terms of the urgency of this matter. I hear the minister talking about the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture perhaps moving through this province at the end of May. If we heard anything from the presenters, it was the matter of urgency in dealing with this issue.

So I do not believe that we can wait for the standing committee to come to Manitoba or Saskatchewan, or wherever they may come, to take action on what we heard from the producers. I think the producers and the people who presented expect us to take action immediately. As a matter of fact, if you were here at the end of the presentations last week, right at the very end of the presentations, there were some of the presenters who purposely waited till the very end of our discussions around this table to understand more clearly what the process that we were going to be following was going to be.

So I have to impress from my personal point of view, and also representing a lot of the western producers, who not only were hurt in 1999, but have been hurt continuously since then, that this is not a matter that can wait for three weeks or a month. It is a matter that has to

be dealt with now. So I have to encourage the minister to take immediate action.

If we have to set aside some time in the House to deal with this matter, we need to do that. We did that before with agreement from the House Leaders that we would engage in an emergency debate. I think this is the second time that we have to address that issue and go before the House with this refined resolution, amended to reflect what we heard, and then to have, perhaps, a shorter debate on that. But indeed, one that would lay out the path that is going to be pursued from this point on.

My colleague suggests that our work is done. As a committee, perhaps we have taken that most important step, and that was to hear from the producers. But I think the work is not finished. We have to now rely on the leadership of the Government of this province to take the next step, to be the people who initiate that new step. I think the minister indicated that she has already done that through communications with ministers in other provinces.

But I think we have to raise that to another level. I am suggesting very strongly that the Premier become directly involved in contacting his counterparts in the other provinces, and that, indeed, an action plan be set down in terms of how we proceed from here.

In terms of who we meet from Ottawa, that has to be thought through carefully, but I think the most important step has to be to meet with the Prime Minister. It is the Prime Minister who has made remarks about the amount of support to agriculture. It is also the Prime Minister who very boldly stands up and awards in excess of \$1 billion to the improvement of a waterfront, and in excess of a half-billion dollars to the arts community.

I am not suggesting that those projects should not proceed. What I am suggesting is that you talk about the most essential thing we have in society, in our lives, which is food. People who toil to produce that food certainly deserve the same amount of recognition that perhaps some of these other projects do that have been recognized by the Prime Minister. So, therefore, I think it is incumbent that the Prime Minister himself takes an active role in addressing this issue. It is for that reason that I have to support

the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) in asking this province to take the leadership role in ensuring that we have an audience with the Prime Minister. Anything less is not acceptable to us, nor is it acceptable to the people of Manitoba.

At the same time, I think it is our responsibility, as legislators in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and Alberta and in Ontario and British Columbia, to meet with the members of Parliament in Ottawa who are sympathetic to our cause and who understand the gravity of this situation. But that can be done at a different level. I also believe that we have to ensure that the Standing Committee on Agriculture in Ottawa afford an audience to the people from western Canada and, indeed, from Ontario to express the gravity of this situation. I think we need to lay out a path. So we need to think about process, we need to think about logistics. That is where, Madam Minister, your responsibility and the Premier's lays. We certainly, I think, as a caucus—although I can only speak on behalf of myself, but, indeed, I think it has been echoed by our critic, the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), in terms of what our position is. We certainly look forward. I think this is a time when we need to lay aside the pure raw politics and start looking at what we are going to do for the citizens of this province.

This is an issue that is not impacting on the farm family alone. It is impacting on rural communities, whether they are the size of Dauphin, whether they are the size of Winkler, or whether they are the size of Winnipeg. It is starting to take its toll. If you read the *Brandon Sun* on the weekend, if you listened to the talk show in Brandon, you will understand that now the situation is becoming one that is of concern to the business people in towns and cities like Brandon.

So, therefore, I conclude only by suggesting that we need to have some expediency to this. I do not think we need to take two to three weeks, or a week, to wordsmith the resolution or the draft. I think that is a matter of hours and then we move on with it. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): First of all, I wanted to indicate that I did want to

put some comments on the record. The reason I asked to take my name off the committee tonight was because of another engagement. Because of the importance of this, I actually asked the group I am meeting with if I could start the meeting later. Without mentioning the group, I can tell they were more than understanding.

I think that the message we received on the committee was a pretty strong one. It is real; there are real problems. I think it goes to the root of a lot of rural communities and the rural economy. I do not think anybody could help but be moved by the presentations that were particularly given from the heart. I would certainly reflect some of the comments made by Mr. Penner a few minutes ago. I took the time, too, to talk to some of the presenters as well, as I know other committee members did. It is real. There is just no doubt about it.

The real question we have to decide tonight is twofold. One is what is our message, and the second is how are we going to get that message across. I would like to spend just a couple of minutes on the message, because I really think that is the bigger picture here. I hope that if there are disagreements on the tactics of how we get that message across, it will not lose sight of the bigger picture, which is the fact that every presenter I talked to wanted us to be non-partisan. I think, by and large, and when I look around this table, it was not easy. There were a lot of people biting their tongues, I think, throughout some of the discussion on all sides. But that is what they want. I think they want that.

I thought there were some themes. The minister has mentioned a couple. I just want to add a few others that I think I would recommend we put into the resolution, because they are all issues. I want to start with one: the Crow rate. Now, I am not going to get into the advisability or the lack thereof of the Crow rate. When you look at what happened to western Canada before the Crow rate and after the Crow rate, take out the two years' buy-out, it was about \$800 million a year that used to go to western Canada that is not there anymore. Now that, I think, is important, because if you are going to benchmark with the federal government any request for additional aid for agriculture, I think

the argument should be: Used to be there, you took it away, and now it is time to put it back. This is western Canada; let us not forget here. If you remember the lobby in Ottawa in January, that was something about the whole country. There were farmers there from across the country. I happened to be there, by the way, meeting with the Minister of Transportation. I will get to that in a minute, because that is why I have some comments on the tactics.

* (19:00)

But start with the Crow rate. Start with a couple of other things. Fuel taxes. I mean, the excise tax is charged on farm use of fuel at the federal level. Now if you want to talk about immediate ways the federal government, which has a \$17 billion surplus, can help the farm economy, start with fuel tax. I would have mentioned the road tax. That did come up. That is not a conflict of interest in a technical sense, but when you are Minister of Transportation, 10 cents a litre comes out of every litre that is purchased in Manitoba, plus the GST. The first money we are going to get back on the provincial road system is going to be this year, first time since 1996. That is critical, too, because the relief on the farm fuel tax will help the farmers directly. Putting money back on the road system will help some of the medium- to long-term issues that are out there, in terms of diversification.

Another theme, and this may be a little more controversial. But I tell you one thing, a lot of people focus this on the family farm and there was a lot of talk about corporatization of agriculture, agro industry and to a certain extent, some of this might be reality. But a lot of people feel the pressure. What struck me is how, over the years, the definition of a family farm has been getting bigger and bigger and bigger. When I hear about people with farms in the range of thousands of acres talk about the corporate agenda, and how they were struggling to keep a family farm, it shows you how far it has gone. When you hear people talk about how there used to be 30 families in an area, and it is down to 5, that has got to be part of the message to Ottawa.

I do not believe all of this is irreversible. In the world of globalization, we sometimes tend to

think you lack control over things. I do not think that is the case, because that gets into the subsidy issue. Europe and the Americans have made a decision that they are going to slow this process down, and they are going to cordon off something called the family farm. It is real. I have seen it in Europe. I have seen it in the United States. So I do not think we should shy away from putting some of those things on the record, because I saw a lot of people there. I do not mean this in a political way, because we have different versions of how we view the world. But I will tell you; you certainly could not tell where people were coming from politically from the presentations. They all had the same basic analysis, and I think that is very important.

The other one I want to put on, and that is disaster assistance, quite apart from agriculture assistance, that came up, certainly, in regards to the southwest. I think it is important. We can get into, as we did, and debate in the Legislature, and the Member for Arthur-Virden's resolution about whatever provincial role there is. There is no doubt in my mind that there is a strong case to be made here that there could be more extensive DFAA coverage. I think that would be very useful because we heard a pretty strong message, both in Brandon and also here—a fair number of people came in from the southwest here—that you cannot just take the agricultural crisis where you have the disaster situation.

Those are just some of the immediate things that could be done, but I think the key one—I get back to the Crow again—is we have to put in the resolution that this is not the West coming cap in hand here. This is the West saying: Look, we have adjusted to the lack of the Crow rate, but we really need the money that would have been there. That would have made a lot of difference. Whether it goes on roads or in farm aid or long-term diversification, that is another issue.

Now, on the tactics, since I have been minister responsible for a number of areas that involved dealing with the federal government on a regular basis. I have been down to Ottawa several times, more than I would care to go down to Ottawa, probably. I have done it on disaster assistance, so has the Member for

Arthur-Virden, so have other members here. I have done it on other issues.

I will just give you one of the reasons why I think our bigger concerns should be to get the federal government to come here. I will give you an example. One minister, and I do not mean this to continue any dispute here because I did get a meeting with the minister. It is Art Eggleton, Minister of Disaster Assistance. By my count, we put in eight requests for a meeting. Now I will not comment on that, other than to say that I have had no difficulty meeting with other ministers—Ron Duhamel, Lloyd Axworthy before. I know the minister I met with was Lyle Vanclief. I met with caucus members of all caucuses. Now, I met with him.

It is nice to actually get a meeting. But try to sit in the minister's office in Ottawa, and explain what is going on in southwest Manitoba when you have been there. I have been there. One thing I know: members of this committee who have much more direct exposure than I have. But there is nothing like getting that person out to see what is going on. The reality is, if you go back over a period of time in the southwest and compare it to, say, the Red River, all the comparisons aside about different programming and whatnot. One thing about the Red River in '97, it got all sorts of attention and we had a visit. We had a sandbag thrown. We had ministers. You know, I really think the difference in the southwest is, I cannot think of a Cabinet minister, a federal Cabinet minister, that has been in the southwest since—Souris, okay. Well, I did come into Souris. I take that back. But, certainly, the Agriculture Minister said, go talk to the Minister of Disaster Assistance. I am not going to be overly critical again. I must admit I got a little bit frustrated when he flew in, unannounced, to Shilo, to look at the military base. It is not that far from Shilo across the way. But I just want to put this there, that, you know, what is missing with Art Eggleton, I think, is to get Art Eggleton to come to the southwest and look at it.

I defy anybody to listen to the presenters here and not understand that at least there is a problem, and it is not being dealt with by financial aid packages, because that is the

general response going back to when, you know, the Member for Morris was the minister.

I know it is good to talk about going down to Ottawa in the one sense, but first of all, I was down there in January. There was a farm rally from across the country. I think it had some impact at that time. That was back in January. Manitoba was well represented. I ran into a lot of farmers from Manitoba. I actually think the real focus should be in (a) getting the message drafted, and (b) getting the federal government here. If we are talking about urgency, it took us about a year to get a meeting with Art Eggleton. Assuming that you can get a meeting in the first place is a big assumption, with Prime Minister or others. But even then, I think the urgency is for the Prime Minister on down to come out to southwest Manitoba—Manitoba generally, the west generally. I think that is how we are going to get the message across. I guess that is my view of Confederation, in a lot of ways.

I will just finish on this point. It is easy, in frustration, to say we should get down to Ottawa one more time, and try that sort of approach. But what really has to happen is for Ottawa to come down here. I have a lot greater faith if we can get any of the federal MPs down here, any of the parties, getting them to understand what the problem is, than us going down there again. I would urge committee members to perhaps focus in on the message first, because I think that is where we can get consensus.

On the second, even if there is some disagreement on tactics, let us not forget here this is bottom-line coming down to making sure that (a) the federal government realizes there is a problem, which we certainly all do here in the province, and (b) comes up with some short-term as well as medium and long-term aid. I cannot stress enough the short term.

I mentioned farm fuels. That was the first one that came to mind. There are all sorts of things that can be done without even touching farm-aid programs, which is an important part of the short term, that could be done just on the tax side, the input costs side. The federal government makes a lot of money off farming.

I think it is about time, just to finish off, where we got people here and we explained a

little bit about Canadian history. I mentioned the Crow rate; I will end off on it. That was part of the birthright of Western Canada in joining. Certainly, in Saskatchewan and Alberta, if you go back to some of the original—the rail line and the Crow rate. We still have the rail line. We do not have the Crow rate any more. It is time to take that credit, that money that we have helped contribute towards bringing that deficit down, and get some of it back. Seventeen billion dollars, I am sorry. We should see that back in Manitoba, and the way to get it is to get them here.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I see it, we have had a lot of very helpful presentations, and I think the issues would break down into short-term issues that we need to proceed with, with urgency, and longer-term issues that we have the flexibility and the time to digest a little bit more and prepare a more lengthy report.

In the short-term issues, I think that as many presenters have made the case, there is a need for an immediate cash infusion of some sort from whatever level of government or governments, and that there are other components, some of which the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has alluded to. The situation, particularly in southwestern Manitoba, for example, in the wake of what happened in 1999 and how it is currently affecting people there.

* (19:10)

I think, in the nature and the urgency of the short-term concerns, we have heard very clearly from many that there is a crisis; that the words severe crisis have been used more than once; that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities put it this way: that this was the most serious public policy issue in the last 50 years. The Association of Manitoba Municipalities is not a body, which is given to hyperbole. They are generally a body that considers facts and circumstances carefully before they speak.

So I think that on the short term, I agree with the Member for Thompson that we need to put together and decide what is our short-term message. But I agree, on other hand, with the member from Emerson, that I think that the most

effective way that we can present that short-term message is by going with the Premier at the head of a delegation from Manitoba. If we can persuade the other provinces to go as well, that would be wonderful. If not, I think this committee should go with the Premier as the head of the delegation, and with representatives from the business community, the farm community, and perhaps the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. I think to do anything less at this point, would be to not take seriously enough the concerns that we have heard. I think that if we go with that sort of a delegation, it will have an impact and it will be listened to.

I think that we need to do some homework, and we need to put together a proposal for the short term, which reflects what we have heard, what the need is. If we are talking dollars on the table, as I think a huge proportion of those who presented suggested, that to go and ask for simply another \$500 million from Ottawa, given exactly the same way as was the last \$500 million, is not precisely what I heard from most people. The way that that \$500 million was divided up—when you looked at it on an acreage basis and on the basis of what was the grain and oilseeds production, as opposed to all agricultural production, Manitoba comes out less well than Manitoba should.

We have to have a message, a concept, an approach, which makes sense and which we can argue persuasively. We may need to spend a little bit of time—we need to do this quickly—but a little bit of time putting together the material to make that case, and to make it really well, because I think we will only succeed if we go down with a very strong case. We have a lot of material on the crisis, but I think we need a strong case in terms of what we are proposing.

I think it is important that the role of this committee—we talked about, to study and make recommendations in terms of both federal and provincial support, I would presume. In order to make the case in Ottawa, we have to make the case in terms of what is being done, and what could be done provincially, in supporting the agricultural community in partnership with the federal government.

So I would suggest there are some key critical things that we have to do. One is, as we

are already debating, what is the process. I think we can divide that up conveniently into a shorter term and a longer term. In the longer term, I think it is an effective approach to present to the House of Commons committee when it comes here, or to other ministers or even the Prime Minister coming to visit this province, but in the short term, I think we have to act. In the short term, we need to put together and decide what that message is. We have to make the case factually, as well as eloquently. In the long term, we have to have a coherent plan for agriculture in Manitoba. That clearly is what this committee was charged with doing with the resolutions, looking at the longer-term vision and plan for agriculture and for rural communities.

We heard a tremendous amount of material, suggestions, ideas. I think there is a wealth of resource that we can use to make that case. The urgency of the short-term case leads me to believe, and believe strongly, that we need to act and act quickly, but we have to put precisely, concisely, that case and make it well. I think that we should go to Ottawa with the short-term case, and then we have a bit more time to make the longer-term case and to present it in various formats, including to the Standing Committee on Agriculture when it is here.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Just to reflect on a few of the comments that have been made, I think we all agree, and there is no dispute around the table, that what we heard from the presenters in every district that we were in throughout the entire province is the severity of the situation we are faced with and what we are dealing with. I think the effective strategy is what we are trying to develop. We have worked well as an entire committee, and I believe we want to achieve the same goal at the end. It is the strategy in the process that we use to get there that I believe we have a little bit of difference on.

When we heard from presenters throughout the entire province, we heard starting back a number of years. You can pick a year, whether it is five or six or seven or eight years ago; this problem did not happen overnight. Some of the impacts and the severity certainly were created through the disastrous flooding that we had in the southwest area. That alone is another

situation. We saw presenter after presenter. One that stands to mind was the young lady from Scotland, and being over here for the number of years that she was, and the amount of dollars and capital that was lost out of her particular situation. We heard that over and over again.

We heard not only from the individual producers, but as the member mentions, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities that came with a well-done presentation. We have heard previous to this on treks to Ottawa from SARM, which sings basically the same message that AMM is putting forth to us. We have taken it to a level through those.

We have been to Ottawa a number of times. Saskatchewan has done the same. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has been involved at a national level, which, I believe, needs to be a part of this solution as well. I believe that SARM needs to be part of this solution and it needs to be immediate. How we contact them and get them to deliver the message with us jointly is what the question is.

I have seen trying to get a meeting. I have seen both the folks across the table here in opposition, as well as our Government, trying to get an urgent meeting with federal representatives. An overnight meeting with whoever you want is not going to happen. I think we are all realists. Whoever we pick to say we are going to do this next week, there is no guarantee that we are going to get a meeting with the people with whom we would like to meet. Certainly, I think and I believe that the most strategic group of people that we can deliver this message to, which is going to have instant impact on, is going to be the federal Ag Standing Committee. I believe that that is a link, a direct link, with senior levels of the federal government. I believe it is a link with the Prime Minister.

* (19:20)

We talk about short-term dollars. Now, when the Crow, and we all heard this and we all know this, was lost was when some massive problems started to happen. We all know that and the federal government knows that. It is the matter of how we deliver that message. The individual producers and the farm organizations said that over and over again.

The member from Thompson identifies the short-term solutions. Some dollars into the producers' pockets is what we need, and we need it right away. The federal excise tax is something that can be done very soon. We can also look at getting people to the source.

I believe that going to Ottawa with a group of people—we can all pick people that would be very, very effective. We know people that would be effective. This committee would be effective. We know from what we heard and the information that we gathered throughout this process, we all have the information. We know the severity of it. We have not only sat through the committee meetings that we have sat through here, we have all sat through it within the districts we come from, and we know the situation.

But I believe, that like a lot of the producers and a lot of the people that met with us, they are asking for an immediate solution. They are asking for someone to pay some attention, someone to realize at a senior level, at the federal level, the severity of the problem that we have here. They are as tired of going hat in hand and with a tin cup banging on the inside perimeter of Ottawa, as we all are.

We speak of the different people, and everybody has mentioned, I noticed here tonight, different people that can put the message across, and groups and organizations that can be effective. I cannot think of any more effective way than having the federal organization, the federal Ag Standing Committee, come into Manitoba with the Premier, and this committee and everybody identifying to them the problems that we have heard over and over and over again with all the committees that we have spoken about.

We spoke about the local Chamber of Commerce and the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, the farm groups and the Keystone Agricultural Producers, a massive rally when we get the people down here to identify the problem and the possibility, and I will throw this out, of actually identifying and having people put on, instead of a sandbag and a photo opportunity, a pair of boots and heading out to the source and to the reality, not only on the farmgates and the

producers, but maybe to Souris, where 13 businesses have closed down, and to a lot of the other areas that you can identify with business and strategic plans here from the members of the business community. I cannot think of a more effective way.

So to take a committee and try to establish a meeting, and try to establish that quickly, is a large task to ask. To get an audience with the people we would like to get an audience with, would be very difficult. I believe bringing people to the source would be the best process. It would be the best strategy that we could follow together in doing it. I believe that that is the most effective way to go. I do not believe that going to Ottawa again—obviously, the minister has tried to contact the other Ag ministers to get them to join on board with us. They feel going to Ottawa again would not be as fruitful as in previous attempts.

I believe the issue is to get our point across. It is imperative that they know how urgent this message needs to be and to bring people to the source, as opposed to driving inside the Perimeter and sitting in an office that is quite comfortable for the members in there. However, I believe that if we can get the local members here rallied up, our M.P.s, certainly, from the Ontario border west, to start doing their job for the constituents that they have been elected to and bring some of their counterparts out here to the sources, it would be the best strategy to use.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I would echo what I have heard around the table here that we all have an appreciation and a much better understanding of the problem that the grain and oilseed sector is facing in rural Manitoba, and in fact, western Canada.

I do not want us to get derailed, at least in my mind, from the urgency and the pointed hand. Certainly, we heard a full range of presentations from the fact that we need help today to people who are suggesting long-term potential solutions, and that is good and useful. But, there are a large number of people out there who are depending on us to represent the urgency of this problem, and to make that point as quickly and as hard as we can with those who are in decision-making positions.

The member from Thompson and the member from Brandon both made good points that are not points I want to argue with, but I would vary slightly in the approach that they make. Obviously, it seems to me that as a reference point, the fact that the amount of money that annually went into this part of the country in the days of the freight rate assistance, is a valid reference point, but I do not think that going beyond that—we cannot mire ourselves in the debate about whether or not the Crow rate should be restored.

We need to remind ourselves that one of the real base causes here is that there is a world price war on, on the products that we are trying to export into the world market. There are a number of ways of dealing with that beyond whether or not we should have freight rate assistance, and I suspect that what we would run into, is that it is entirely possible that producers in Alberta would not support that approach and it would undermine the position that we want to make very saliently with Ottawa.

What my colleagues are saying and what I endorse wholeheartedly is that, as in any government, I would suggest that the Prime Minister has a significant say in the direction that his government is going to go and whatever reaction his ministers may choose to take. I know the difficulty that this puts the minister and our Premier in, but I do not think it should be dismissed as a point that we should take the opportunity to make as strongly as we possibly can. We are quite prepared to stand behind our Premier and the other premiers of western Canada if they can jointly request a meeting with the Prime Minister.

I know that all of the other arguments that are being made here are good arguments and may well be where we will be forced to end up, but if we do not try to get the Prime Minister's attention—he is, after all, the Prime Minister for all regions of this country. He made that argument in the House of Commons not that long ago on another topic. If he truly meant what he was saying, then he needs to, regardless of the elected members he has in this part of the country, take a serious look at what is happening here. He just made announcements in the range for the arts industries, as my colleague pointed

out, in the range of the same numbers of dollars that we are looking for, that our constituents are looking for.

It is not overnight that the grain and oilseed sector has found themselves in the position of needing assistance. This has been growing and growing, exacerbated by weather conditions in a couple of cases, but this was not unforeseen in terms of the depression of the world's grain markets.

If the three premiers could see their way clear to unite with a message to Ottawa, surely the Prime Minister would be in a very difficult position to reject that call. I certainly think that if that opportunity was made available to the Prime Minister and he chose not to hear the pleas of the leaders of at least three, or possibly four, of the largest land mass provinces of this country, that he is leaving himself very vulnerable to being a central only government, and I do not think any government would like to be branded in that respect.

* (19:30)

So I would urge this committee not to dismiss what the minister has suggested, but to crank it up one notch. Let us see if the key decision makers in this country, the ones that I have mentioned, could get together and get the attention of the Prime Minister, who, undoubtedly, will, if he agrees to a meeting, be in a position to provide some indication to the people who are not filling their fuel tanks this week because they do not have an operating line of credit, who are in some cases, as we were told at the hearings, the last meeting we had here at this very table—some people are, frankly, not even cleaning seed at this point. They have not rented the land. They have not made arrangements to seed, although they may well have it in their minds what they want to do. There is going to be some last minute decisions which will compound what we already see happening.

I will close my remarks by only adding a couple more things, Mr. Chairman. One is that, in discussion with very significant businesses in the area that I represent—and we have a lot of diversified cattle business in my riding; I also talked to a lot of people who live and depend more on the grain and oilseeds business—the one thing that just about blew me away is that

businesses that are seen outwardly to be very competent, very successful, and probably will weather the storm in the long run, are telling me that their business has been cut to three-quarters and to half the gross business that they are doing. That will soon start to back up, ladies and gentlemen, into the factories and into our larger centres. It is already evident, and I think it will become increasingly evident, even right here in Winnipeg.

So I encourage the committee to continue with our non-partisan approach to this, but I would encourage us also to crank it up one more notch to the level that I am suggesting. If that fails, the people on the farmland out there will know at least that we set our targets high and we will take it from there.

Ms. Wowchuk: I have listened to everybody and I was thinking about having heard from some 85 presenters and many written submissions. Those people that presented to us affected all of us very dramatically when we heard about the kinds of stories they told.

We are never going to create that same sense of urgency if we go to Ottawa. What we need is for that federal committee to come here. We need those federal representatives to realize that they represent western Canada and that there is a very serious situation here. That is why I feel so strongly that we have to have the committee come here, if they would come. If we could have some people present to them, but have them visit some of the people and have them understand what the real impact of these changes are and these high input costs that producers are facing—Just as we had a human face put on the issue for us, we need for the federal representatives to have that human face put on for them.

The co-chair of the standing committee is interested in coming here. I talked to the chair of the committee. He said he was going to be taking it to the committee. I have not had a response from them, but I feel very strongly that they need to see first-hand how serious the situation is.

With respect to the premiers, I agree that the premiers have to be involved in this. The western premiers are meeting within the next couple

of weeks. This item is on their agenda, and I think that is the forum for discussion with the premiers. There has been discussion amongst them. There have been letters written to the Prime Minister. Maybe from the Western Premiers' Conference we can get a strong message from the West that can then go to the Prime Minister. I think that is one of the steps that has to be done.

I think we now have to look at what we can do. There is a draft summary here of what was presented at the standing committee, and I have also suggested that we would want to make some changes and come back to the committee with recommendations on wording to those changes. I said Monday, but if this Wednesday works for people—that is in two days' time—I would be quite happy to suggest that the committee sit on Wednesday again. By that time, there would be some draft amendments drawn to the resolutions. We could have the discussion on them and then move forward with that to be able to present the resolution back to the House and then have further discussion from there.

I think that we have sympathy to our position to having the standing committee coming here, from the co-chair of the committee. Alberta and Saskatchewan are saying that they are supportive of the standing committee. We do not have support of the other provinces going to Ottawa right now, and I think that for Manitoba to go alone, is not going to have nearly the strength. When I think about Manitoba and Saskatchewan standing alone without the supports of other provinces when we were in our last lobby for funds, that was difficult. To have one province going alone, to me, is just not going to carry nearly the strength as having three provinces invite the standing committee here, make presentations, and also have this discussed at the Western Premiers' Conference, and then move it forward from there.

So I would suggest that we think about that and see if we could come back with amendments to the resolution and have further discussion. I did say Monday earlier, and that was an error on my part. We could be doing it as early—and I would be suggesting Wednesday evening.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I thank the minister for her comments, and I thank the committee for putting the report together that

they have, and the draft. It very succinctly points out what we heard throughout the time, just the logistics of it at least, and the hearings that we had.

I guess I want to say what I said at 2:30 in the morning after the final presentations—the final committee meeting was held here in this very room last Tuesday night—that if there is one thing we heard from the people who are presenting out there today, there are two issues here, very strongly, that they felt needed to be dealt with. One was the immediate cash infusion, let us call it short-term support, but that is what they were calling for, more money. That does not always fix the problem, and in this case, it will not save some of those who are already on their way out this spring, but it may be able to allow them to have a more dignified dispersion from the industry if that is the softest thing we can say about it, or the most compassionate thing that can be said for it.

The second one was, of course, the longer term support that is needed in the industry and a revamping, if you will, of the AIDA program and the kind of long-term stuff. I think the minister knows full well, and agrees. I do not say that sarcastically. The members opposite and the Government today here in Manitoba, I think you all understand that and believe that, that those are the two issues and those are what are needed.

I commend the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for bringing up the issue of western Manitoba and the flood there, because as the Member for Brandon will know—he has talked to businesspeople there, Brandon West, as I did this morning and on a number of occasions. They indicated to me the severity, and we indicated to Mr. Eggleton, when we were there a year ago in Ottawa, that it would take a year for that impact to hit and that we would be back. I was there with farmers at the end of February for that specific issue, not for this immediate cash infusion and not for the long-term program, but for support for that disaster, but I will not go there. I agree we need to deal with that and I would support the Government, of course, if we can get some funding for that particular region out of this effort as well. I think that the message that we heard from these people was the urgency of what we need to deal with today.

* (19:40)

I guess in normal circumstances, I would probably say, well, it would be a great thing to get the committee to come out here to the Prairies and talk to us, a good thing to come to Manitoba to hear what we have heard already, but we would be presenting it to them again as a unified group. We have a unanimous resolution before us again tonight that I do not think needs a whole lot of work. I think there was a good deal of work put into it. The Liberal Leader here, as well, in Manitoba put into that as well as all parties here. I appreciate the fact that we are able to come to a consensus and put that kind of an effort on the table.

I think the fact that we did, shows that we knew what the problem was in the industry, because the people that came in, talked about the need for at least a \$500-million new program, immediate cash funding. They talked about the need for a long-term fix in this process. We had some presentations that actually talked about the value-added that was needed in this industry as well.

The minister of highways from Thompson, Emergency Measures Organization of Manitoba, indicated in his opening remarks today that we go back and look at the Crow rate. I have said many times in this House that that was the beginning of some of the problems that we have seen in Western Canada, particularly, I have always said, in western Manitoba.

When I lobbied to get it changed, it was always to have a buyout, but we will not go into that around this table today. I am not here to debate that with the members today at all, as the minister, quite rightfully, in his remarks stated. We are here to elaborate on the consensus that we can find. I would only say that when he said, put it back, I know that the minister does not mean in its old form in regard to—yes, put the money back—and I would agree with him on that.

It is not a matter of whether the federal government has the money or not. They have a large surplus, and even if they did not, all we are really asking for here in any of these kinds of programs, regardless of the size of them, would be the interest that they have already saved in six years of not paying that Crow support into western Canada. They have already made the

major saving that it was put into place to do. It was put there to reduce the debt of this country, to reduce the deficit to get out of a deficit position purely and openly.

I remember the federal minister responsible at the time. I was in the room as a farm leader, making those comments that we are going to do this. He was the last one on earth that ever would have wanted to change it personally, but his government gave him the direction to do so. Those dollars are there, and I think we can find commitment to do that. I am not going to try and develop the package that we need to do, because I think the resolution does deal with that.

But I think that the urgency of the issue is the thing we heard. The only comment I will make is that it is all well and fine to say that we are going to have the committee come here to Manitoba to meet with us. I would concur with what has been said around the table—and the minister, I commend her for her efforts in trying to get the other provinces, leaders, premiers, ministers, and Ag ministers together to be on side.

I would extend it to B.C. as well, if we could, to try and make it four. Unless we are going to go in the next 10 days, it may be a different premier there. We will let that one fall out. Certainly, they are not going to come while they are involved in an election. But it does impact B.C. very heavily, this issue. So I think that whoever the new government is, whether there is a change or not, it would be incumbent upon us to ask them to come, at least in this kind of a package, if that is what we are going to do.

I applaud the members for their concern, but having been around that federal table, of course, the only one here, I think, with probably more experience at going to meetings in the House of Commons Ag Committee besides the member from River Heights, who maybe did not spend that many times around the committee, but was in the Government, and my honourable colleague from Emerson, as a farm leader making presentations to that committee, are not the ones we need to target here.

I think the minister from highways would agree from the meetings that he has had in

Ottawa that he has had some compassion from the federal Liberal members for both the city of Winnipeg here and Manitoba and Southern Ontario. I have. I know the minister has. But it did not carry the day. It did not carry the day with the Minister of Agriculture at the time that it was needed to get the dollars on the table. I would put on the table that the only person, or group of people, that is going to make the change for what we need is the Prime Minister himself. The Finance Minister and the Agriculture Minister would be peripheral to that. If we can get them into the room and all have a meeting with them at once, it would be great.

But just from the experience that I have had, you will get concurrence for our effort from the House of Commons Agricultural Committee, whether we meet them there, or whether we convince them to come here. My only concern with having them come here is the time it would take to get them to agree to come here, number one. When I think if this is the matter of most urgent public—and I do not know what your MUPI stand for – but if they ever had a matter of most urgent public need, this is probably it, in the agriculture community at least. There are others. But this one, I say sympathetically, that it would be fine logistics-wise and optics-wise to say that we would like to have the House of Commons Ag Committee come, and they may come. But it probably, as the ministers indicated, would not be until later in May or June, if we were to get them here then. Even if they came tomorrow, they are not the ones we need to target the message to. I guess the Prime Minister is the bottleneck. We have seen that in his own party.

The Ag Committee, federally, did come out to the Prairies and did have a series of hearings in the prairies in the fall of 1998, and they came out with an AIDA program. They heard some sympathy for the impacted livestock industry at that time, the hog industry in particular, and there was some response, but we have heard many, many presentations on what the AIDA program did for us, and everybody asked for it to be changed.

So I think that has to be part of our long-term vision. But if we are going to help those farmers that need it yesterday—if it had not been

raining right now, there is not a farmer in Manitoba, hardly, that would not be out in the field trying to seed today. That is the urgency of this situation.

So I would beseech the members of this committee, on all sides, to put a plan together to try to involve our Premier. I would concur with my colleagues who have said that we would back our Premier in trying to get that meeting with the Prime Minister one more time. I know you were successful in getting the one before—he and Mr. Romanow. We may differ on the results of that particular meeting at that time, but we are going in this time with an all-party resolution, or we could hopefully develop the resolution that we have to asking for what is needed.

Three weeks have already gone by since we began this process, and in political movement circles, that is very quick, I agree. But to the average person out there in the country who is saying, why did we not do this last fall, or I cannot find the dollars to meet the increased fertilizer needs—the minister knows well what has happened to the increased costs of fuel, so I will not go into that. But that is the urgency that is needed out there today.

I think what the members on our side, at least what I hear my colleagues saying, is that we would be in concert to go and back the minister and her Premier to go to Ottawa and try to find concurrence with the other ministers. We may not be able to make a big enough wave in the ocean if we go it ourselves. But if the minister's indication to us is that the other premiers and the other Ag ministers are looking at this, perhaps there is a way that we could get some response from them by Wednesday, to let them know the urgency of this. Their farmers are going to the fields due to the compliance of this committee, and I thank them for it.

I was able to drive from Calgary to Lethbridge for my daughter's graduation a week ago Friday, and virtually all the land in Southern Alberta is seeded. It is so darn dry out there that there is an urgency there as well. They came up with \$10.26 an acre for the farmers in Alberta. I do not think it would still be below the Alberta government to want to come and get the federal government to participate in a bigger share of

that, or in some other program in redesigning one.

So I will just leave it before we get into what we could do. I just wanted to lay out some of my—if I have any experience in this industry and anything I can offer this committee, it is the fact of knowing a little bit about how that Ag Committee works in Ottawa. I think we can predict what the reaction would be. Even as I say, if they came tomorrow they are not the ones that we have to convince about getting immediate infusion. We can work with them, though of course, I think, on a long-term program. So I guess I see it as having two different issues that maybe we can deal with on this. I think the one that the farmers want us to deal with most urgently is the immediate cash infusion, and draw the examples of parity that many people talked about in presentations to us with getting kind of some level of reference to the American farm programs.

* (19:50)

I would only urge one final time that the committee look at keeping the message to getting the other premiers onside, the other Ag committees, and even extend it to the municipal groups and other provinces as we have offered our own here, as well as farm leaders and business people. I only say that because if you have four provinces, four premiers, four Ag ministers, four groups of business leaders, four municipal groups, a bunch of the farm groups going—even if they only have one representative each in some of those business groups and otherwise—to Ottawa, that kind of public acknowledgement that we are willing to meet with the Prime Minister at any time, or at very short notice, should get some national attention, and puts him in a spot where, I think, you know, without putting him in a corner, it shows the urgency of the situation, and then it is up to him to make a decision. Thank you.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Chairperson, I was sitting here listening to all of the discussion that has taken place, and I was trying to frame in my own mind what I would say when given the opportunity. So I tried to put myself in the position of the group of people that stood out there and made the presentations to us, and

pretended that they were standing there listening to us talk tonight. I know that most of them that stood up there at the podium complimented us and congratulated us on being an all-party committee of this House and that we would jointly address the situation of additional farm aid in the short term and a long-term safety net for the future.

The questions I guess they asked us most often, not directly, but certainly by innuendo in their presentation, were that we hope you can give us all the help that you can. Yet, when I am listening to the presentations here tonight, I see that there is help being put forward, but it is being put forward with two definite different paths. I guess I said, well, what would they say? I think that if they were to make a recommendation to us here tonight and say that if we really were interested in helping them all we can, that, sure, there is a great idea on that side of the table about inviting the standing committee to come out here, inviting the Minister of Agriculture to come out here, inviting the Prime Minister to come out here and have a look and talk to people out here. They would also say that there is also a great idea on this side of the table of travelling to Ottawa and asking for a meeting with the Prime Minister and asking for a meeting with the Standing Committee on Agriculture in Ottawa and meeting with the Liberal M.P.s in Ottawa to tell them the story.

They would say, I think, Mr. Chairperson, why do you not do both? It is not out of the realm of possibility. You indicated to us at the committee when we were producers standing out there that you would not leave a stone unturned to help us. Then let us do it.

So I ask the committee to consider both of these options, because if we do it and fail, then we can say we tried, but if we only do half, I do not know what we can say to those producers. Thank you.

Mr. Penner: First of all, I am encouraged by what I hear around the table. I heard the Minister of Transportation enunciate his concern about what had been done during the debate of the Crow, and the decision the Government had made to remove almost \$800 million annually

from western Canadian, not all Canadian, but western Canadian agriculture, and his concern in regards to that.

I heard the minister, at the same time, talk about the need to remove taxes off farm input costs. That encouraged me extremely, because that gave me a clear indication that this current Manitoba administration is looking at removing further taxes from farm input costs, such as building costs and others. That is a possibility to encourage for the diversification, and that of course, has been requested by the farm community.

I was encouraged to hear presenters, on both sides of the House, indicate their desire and willingness to engage the Standing Committee on Agriculture, and that we would encourage them to come down here and have a listen. I also heard discussion about the huge increases in cost that farmers were incurring. I heard from some producers this last week, when they had received their cash advances, had taken it to the bank and the banker had said: Thank you, we are going to apply that against last year's expenditures to pay down your debt of last year's input costs. That leaves them with a negative for this year's input and draws on the next year's income. In other words, spend next year's income to pay your last year's cost, which leaves them with nothing for this year, with no line of credit.

Therein lies my concern. We are expecting a group in our society, first of all, to spend a large amount of money to buy themselves a job. That is really what farmers do, and then we tell their spouses that that is not good enough. Even if you invest half a million or a million dollars to buy yourself a job, and take 10 or 12 or 20 years to pay that off in order for you to be able to try and provide a living for your family, and when that fails, your spouse has to go to work and find a job outside of the farm to help you support your family, put your family through school, and indeed help put in the crop.

Then, when that fails, we have the audacity to talk about delaying further action, delaying action that we, I think, should take immediately. Our Premier (Mr. Doer) should immediately get on the phone as soon as this committee ends its hearing, and tomorrow morning, the first order on his business should be to call the Prime

Minister's office and say: Our committee has concluded its hearings and this is what we have heard. We have heard that there was a shortfall in cash income this year ranging in the realm of what the Department of Agriculture has laid out, and what the shortfall is between cost of production and the actual incomes. That range is between \$20 and \$70 an acre. Most farmers, that we heard come before this committee, said that we should be asking for between \$40 and \$60 an acre, if it were, in fact, an acreage payment. Nobody said it should be based on acres. In my view, I do not think I heard that, although some encourage that. But they were not that firm. But that is, roughly, what the cost would be to the general treasury. I think that conforms to what the Department of Agriculture has put out, in fact, as to what the losses had been this last year. That does not include, Madam Minister, the increases in fuel prices, in fertilizer prices, in seed prices and everything else that farmers have to buy before the crop can be taken off. Yet we have a recommendation before us that says that we should wait for another tour of Manitoba by yet another committee.

* (20:00)

We have everything that has been said, a hundred or better presentations made by a hundred or more people in this province that tell us virtually the same story. The story is there is a severe cash crunch, and it needs immediate attention. We cannot delay the action, because many of those farmers that appeared before us are not going to go out to the field. They are not going to go. There were tractors parked in my community this last week that should have been rolling because the land was in a condition to be planted. Yet they were not planted. I honestly did not have the nerve to drive into the yards and ask, why are you not seeding, because I think I know the answer. Because the banker told them why they are not seeding.

So there are some other options that we could address. That is we have an agriculture credit corporation in this province that could be utilized to extend further credit to farmers to put a crop in. That is an immediate action that could be taken to give them that assurance that while we are listening to yet another federal committee, and while we are waiting for that committee

to tour this province, and while we are waiting for their results, and while we are waiting for them to meet with their Prime Minister, there is something we could do. We could extend that MACC loan guarantee to the banks, and say to the banks: You will get your money back.

Those are all things we could do, yet they are not within the purview of this committee. We can only recommend, or we can make many other recommendations if we chose to; yet they would only be recommendations. It is the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the minister and the Cabinet and the Treasury Board that must make those kinds of decisions, and they have the latitude to do that. Yet, we choose not to as a joint committee, and I respect that, to do those kinds of things. We choose to direct the attention to where the general public that appeared before us thought we should direct our attention. That is, in large part, the federal government's responsibility, because these are trade actions we are facing, and they are based on very fundamental decisions.

The Europeans have decided that they will keep 9 million people in rural Europe. That is cheaper than putting them in cities. So they made that decision. The Americans have said 50 percent of our food costs will be borne by the taxpayer, not across the food counter. So now the farmer receives 50 percent of their income directly from Uncle Sam. Are we going to allow our farmers to be cut loose in that same economic environment? I think not. I do not think we can afford it. Many people have said, well, we will just let our farm community go. Well, we met last week with four executive members, CEOs of four grain companies situated right in Winnipeg. That is where they have their head office. I am not encouraged by what I heard. They would love to stay here and they would love to do business here, but if they see the decline in production based on the decisions that governments have made so far, there is, I think, a real serious threat to that industry. There is no question there is a real serious threat, because if half of our producers are not going to put a crop in, then that means that, at the optimum, there can only be half a crop. That means there will only be half the handle. That means there will be only be room for half the industry. I mean, that is pure common sense.

So let us look at the reality of the situation and the urgency of it before we make decisions at this committee. I urge all of you committee members, even those of you who reside in the city of Winnipeg, you have far more to lose than we in the rural areas do, because you will lose your industries. Without question you will. Buhler Industries is an indication of what happens when the farm community has money to buy. We can blame it on unions; we can blame it on new ownership at Buhler; but the reality is that there is not money to buy new tractors. There is not enough work for the amount of tractors that are currently required, and therefore, there are no jobs. That is the problem.

Look at some of the other industries that you are seeing go down in this province as we speak, a clothing industry. We say, well, a clothing industry is really not affected by farmers, is it? Two hundred and forty jobs went down this week in the clothing industry in this city, and in my town of Altona, fifty jobs. They just turned the lock on the door. Well, when there is not money to buy, then there is also nothing to sell.

You know, it reminds me a bit of the trip I took to Ukraine. They said, when we were all under Communism we all had money, but there was nothing that we could buy, because there was nothing in the stores. When we came out of Communism, the stores were full. We could buy everything. They said, we loved it, but we have no money to buy. That is where we are fast approaching rural Manitoba. There is not money to buy. We are now using cash advances on next year's crop to pay for last year's inputs. I know for some of you, it is almost unimaginable that that could happen, but it is.

So I say to you, Madam Minister, waiting for another committee to do another tour in this province and waiting for them to approach their Prime Minister, and waiting for them then to make the decision, in my view, is not an option for most of the people who appeared before this committee. That is not an option.

What we need to do is that your Premier (Mr. Doer) and my Premier need to join hands, and you and I need to stand beside him when he joins his hands. We need to encourage him to make the call to the Prime Minister and beg him

to open his door to us, and before the week is over, we should be in Ottawa making the case, because that is how urgent it is. It cannot wait any longer. We have waited far too long in this process.

This committee should have met at the beginning of this last week to make the decision that we need to make tonight. We should not wait again till next Wednesday. We should make the decision tonight about what we are going to say.

Madam Minister, this message is very simple to Ottawa. Manitoba farmers need a major cash injection in order for them to be able to just survive till this fall, to put a crop in the ground and take it off, just for them to be able to take another chance at the roulette wheel of fortune in agriculture.

So I say to you, Madam Minister, take a long, hard look at what you are really facing, and the picture is not pretty. The alternative is not pretty. So I encourage you, and I encourage all members of this committee, to make the decision tonight to draft a position that needs be a very simple one. We just need to determine the amount that is needed to go to Ottawa with. That is a very simple decision for this committee to make. I encourage the minister to encourage the committee members to come to that point in their conclusion and do it tonight, that we can give a clear message to our Premier (Mr. Doer), and say, Mr. Premier, we need you to make the call now. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Chairman, just to put a few more comments on the record after having heard from many of the other members of this committee. As I see the situation, we are presented quite clearly with a crisis in agriculture in Manitoba. We had this presented to us and point after point provided in considerable detail, not only the circumstances of producers. One presenter talked about the auctions. Other presenters talked about what was happening in the seed and the farm supply companies.

We had a presentation provided this evening from an entrepreneur in Deloraine with a clothing company who talks about how her gross sales have gone down on an annual basis,

something like \$52,000 a year since 1998. Clearly, the impact of the 1999 flood and wet weather disaster and the subsequent commodity prices have had a tremendous impact in that area and in that community. We heard about the many businesses which have closed in Souris, in communities like Minnedosa, which I have visited. Business after business has been closing. The estimate of the mayor some weeks ago was that 40 percent of the businesses in the community of Minnedosa were at risk.

We are not talking, you know, small things. We are talking a major crisis. We are talking as Wayne Motheral, the president of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, indicated, perhaps the most serious policy issue in the last 50 years. I mean that is going a long way. It is not something that we should be taking lightly. It is not something that we should be content with presenting to the federal agriculture committee. It is a matter that we need to take directly to the Prime Minister with a sizeable delegation.

I would suggest, Madam Minister, if you are concerned about not having enough eloquent speakers to convey the kind of passion and feeling that we felt in the presentations we received, that there would be some obvious people, a little girl from just south of Deloraine, as I remember, for example, who might well accompany such a delegation to take some of that passion in a major way with us to Ottawa.

I would go further in talking about the current situation in the farming communities around Manitoba. I think having set in place this committee, having visited in Dauphin, in Brandon, in Beausejour, and heard presentations last week in Winnipeg, because we have an all-party effort, we have created a level of expectation that we have to meet, at least in making an all-out effort over the next 10 days to two weeks.

* (20:10)

As other members have pointed out, many farmers are going into the fields. What is apparent is that some farmers, and some significant proportion in some areas, are holding off, and they may be holding off in the hopes that something may come from our efforts.

Whether or not assistance comes quickly as a result of these efforts, it is pretty important that the producers have a clear understanding very shortly as to whether or not there will be a short-term additional cash assistance, and that means that we cannot wait for the agriculture committee to come here.

It will be, I suspect, difficult for them to travel when the House of Commons is sitting, but I think the critical thing is that is not the primary place where our message needs to go. Our message needs to go to members of the federal Cabinet. Our message needs to be as strong as we can possibly make it.

I think we may fail, but we must not fail to try. We must make every effort, because for our producers in Manitoba, this is extraordinarily important. It is not only important for producers, it is important for rural communities. It is important for Brandon and it is important for the city of Winnipeg, because we are still in a major, major way an agriculture dependent province. The agricultural industry and the way this flows through into manufacturing and, as we have already discussed this evening, clothing, et cetera, stores, that it is important on behalf of all Manitoba citizens we do the most we can possibly do.

I, for one, would be tremendously disappointed if the minister was content to present this material to the federal Committee on Agriculture when it comes here. I think we can do better. I think we must do better. I also think that we have to put some real effort and focus into precisely what we are going to ask for. I think we have heard discussion about \$500 million. We have heard discussion of \$40 to \$60 an acre and various other options, but if we are to be effective then we have to come to a clearer consensus on precisely what we are asking for, why it is rational and what all the evidence is. We have a lot of it, but I think that some of it needs to be brought together in a way that is going to persuade national policymakers, and that now is the time we must make this effort. It is very important to Manitobans that we make this effort. I hope we can get agreement from the committee that this is the direction in fact we must go.

Ms. Wowchuk: I just want to address a couple of issues. The Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack

Penner) talked about the provincial sales tax. The Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was talking about the opportunity that the federal government had to remove sales tax on fuel, an excise tax on fuel.

* (20:20)

The Province right now exempts about \$170 million annually in a variety of taxes to the farming community, and I am very happy about that exemption, but the federal government, if they had the political will on a lot of these things, could address this. There was a discussion that the \$500 million that the federal government put forward will be recovered by the federal government in less than two years across Canada through the collection of the excise tax on fuel. Now, if that excise tax on fuel were removed, that would have a tremendous impact on producers. That would be money that would be in producers' hands, not money that they were continuing to pay out.

With respect to the additional \$500 million, I have to agree with the member that if there was the political will to have that \$500 million come to farming, we would not even be having this standing committee meeting. It was a position taken by five provinces, along with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Quebec farming organization, asking the federal government for an additional \$500 million. The federal government has ignored that request, so there is not much political will on their part to address this whole issue.

We talked about meeting with the Prime Minister, and I wanted to just share with the members the last time we had a delegation to Ottawa. The Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) was there, and he will remember, that at that meeting, it was only the two premiers that were allowed to meet with the Prime Minister. The rest of the delegation was not able to meet with the Prime Minister. It was only the two premiers.

So what are our options? Even if we get a meeting, the Prime Minister is not going to meet with us. That is why I am suggesting the Standing Committee of Agriculture. Now, the member said, just another tour. Well, I am sorry,

I do not think what we did going out to rural Manitoba was just another tour. I took this very seriously, for this standing committee to go out to rural Manitoba and listen to the farmers, and I hope nobody thought of this as just another tour. I think inviting the standing committee from the federal government to come here immediately, I do not view that as just another tour. I view this very, very seriously.

Point of Order

Mr. Jack Penner: I just want to correct the minister, if I might. There was no mention of just another tour by what we have already done. People have phoned me and told me that they hope that we do not need to do another tour, that they do not have to go and make more presentations to another committee touring on behalf of agriculture.

Therefore, I say to the minister. Let us be careful that we do not use that language unnecessarily, because we did the right thing. We went and listened to the people. We heard the people and the people expressed their views. The people are saying now very clearly that they hope they do not need to do that all over again, just to impress another group of people on another agricultural tour.

Mr. Chairperson: On that point of order, I would rule that it is not a point of order. It is a dispute of the facts.

* * *

Ms. Wowchuk: I was not meaning to offend the member. What I was saying was, I do not view inviting the federal standing committee to Manitoba as just another tour. I take this to be a very credible group of people who have been appointed by the federal government, and they have a role to play in this. I think it is an avenue for us to get our message through to the federal government.

Mr. Pitura talked about what the message is, and while we may not agree on how we are going to get the message there, we all want to send the same message. This is a very serious situation that we are facing here, and we have to find a way to communicate the message that we

heard from the presenters. We have to find a way to communicate that, and that is why I have made some suggestions on the resolution.

But I also want to emphasize again that there has been discussion about the Premier's Office and the Premiers' need to get involved, and I tell you again that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has looked for support in other provinces for this, and there has been no indication of support for a delegation to Ottawa. That is what the other provinces are telling us right now, but there is support from other provinces to have the Standing Committee on Agriculture come here. That is what we have now. That is what we have to work with.

Again, I think one of the avenues for us to get this message to the federal government again is through the Western Premiers' Conference. We can continue to work on these issues, but there are other things. You know, we talk about how quickly the money can flow. The only way money can start to flow tomorrow, which we would all like, is for the Prime Minister to say yes, it is going to flow tomorrow. The message has been sent there.

An Honourable Member: No, it has not.

Ms. Wowchuk: The message has been sent to the federal government on this, so I am telling you that we have to look at other avenues.

So I am saying, and I have said it before, when we heard from these people, heard a very compassionate story, it is time for Ottawa and the federal government to come and hear firsthand from the people who are suffering, the young girl that you talk about, Mr. Gerrard, and others, to be able to get the message and for them to see firsthand what the situation is.

Again, I want to move this along, if I can, Mr. Chairman. I have said that we have a draft here of a summary of what we heard from the presentations. I would like to recommend that we look at the resolutions and that we come back on Wednesday with some amendments to these resolutions and have further discussion, so that we can then present our report to the Legislature from this resolution, and then continue to work on the other fronts that have been recommended

by this committee, and that is, communication with other provinces and communication with the federal government.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I sense a real reluctance on the part of the minister and some of her cohorts, colleagues, with regard to taking this directly to the Prime Minister, and I think this is coming out of the Premier's Office. I think it is sad that part of this committee now has decided to take its own route rather than the route of the producers who were before this committee, because if I heard anything from the committee, whether it was from the president of the Keystone Agricultural Producers, whether it was from the grassroots organization, whether it was from individual producers, or indeed from the other organizations that were here presenting—

Mr. Chairperson: A point of order, Ms. Wowchuk.

Point of Order

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, the member, in his comments, just indicated that he thinks there is a lack of direction from the Premier's Office. I think it is unfair for him to attribute comments to the Premier (Mr. Doer) in that sense.

He also talks about Keystone Agricultural Producers and their involvement. Well, I would like to set the record straight that it was with the support of Keystone Agricultural Producers that we made the decision to invite the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture to come to Manitoba to hear first-hand. It was in a discussion with the Premier and the Keystone Agricultural Producers that that decision was made. So I would not want the member to be attributing comments to the Premier when he is not in the room.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Derkach, on the same point of order.

Mr. Derkach: Well, to the same point of order, Mr. Chair, I was simply indicating what was said at the hearings. If we need to substantiate that, there is a record of what was said. As a matter of fact, I read the presentation made by the Keystone Agricultural Producers this afternoon, so therefore, I know of what I speak, and to that point of order, I had not finished my comments yet.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there any more advice on the point of order? The point of order is strictly a ruling on the rules that we have in place.

Mr. Jack Penner: I find it very interesting, Mr. Chairman, that the minister would now attribute the reference to the Standing Committee on Agriculture as being the brainchild of the general farm organization of this province. It was implied by her reference of a meeting that she had with the president or members of the Keystone Agriculture Producers. She implied that they, in fact, might have advised her to invite the Standing Committee on Agriculture. Or am I misrepresenting the facts here? Or was it the minister advising the Keystone Agriculture Producers that she would prefer to invite the standing committee to appear here, and they concurred? Which way was it?

* (20:30)

Mr. Chairperson: This is turning into a debate. It is not a debate. It is a point of order. I will rule that there was no point of order. It is a dispute over the facts. I want to remind all committee members that points of order need to deal with the rules. It is not a debate over the content of the topic here tonight. I think everybody understands that.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Derkach, to continue with your remarks.

Mr. Derkach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. May I continue? I heard very clearly, and as a matter of fact, the comments that were made by numerous producers—whether they represented organizations or whether they represented themselves, as individual producers, or Manitobans—that this matter had to be presented to the Prime Minister. If you listen to the presentations, they were not talking about a standing committee on agriculture which would do another road show in Manitoba. Nobody—but nobody—mentioned that, except for the minister.

Mr. Chair, to indicate that, somehow, what we heard of the committee hearings was a plea to bring the Standing Committee on Agriculture

back to Manitoba is just not accurate. It does not reflect at all what we heard.

So, Mr. Chair, what we are trying to put on the table here is a reflection of what we heard from producers and the people who presented to this committee. Now, I have to say I was not at the committee in Dauphin, nor in Brandon, nor in Beausejour. So, in fact, if there were calls for the standing committee—the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture—to come to the province at those meetings, I did not hear it. But I did not hear, and I was present here at the Legislature when the committee presented—and there was not one single comment made with regard to having yet another road show by the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture.

What was demanded, and what was requested, and what was pled for was that we, as a committee of all parties of this legislature, approach the federal government—i.e. the Prime Minister—to indeed act on the request of putting more money into agriculture immediately, as the first step.

Yes, we heard about other issues such as drainage. We heard about such issues as a longer-term safety net program. But the most immediate concern was for an immediate cash injection, this spring, to be able to get producers through this period of time when they have to put their crops in. A month from now, the crops have to be in. It is not going to help if we start talking about a standing committee meeting in June or July. That has to happen almost immediately.

Mr. Chair, from our side and from what I hear from Doctor Gerrard, there seems to be a will to indeed move on this rather quickly. My colleague, Mr. Pitura, put it quite succinctly when he suggested that we do not have to take simply one action. But we can actually make a request of the Prime Minister to meet with him; invite the other provinces to join our Premier (Mr. Doer) to do that; and secondly, then allow that Standing Committee on Agriculture to come to Manitoba—or wherever—to hear presentations, if that, indeed, is something that needs to be done, probably, for the longer term kind of approach that needs to be taken with regard to agriculture support.

So, Mr. Chair, I guess what I am hearing tonight is not in step with what I heard from the producers. I will stand up and say this publicly, that it is not what we heard from producers. I cannot help—and I guess my comment stands. I do not think this direction is coming from our minister. I think this is a direction that is coming from the Premier (Mr. Doer) to his minister, who says: Ask for the standing committee, not for a meeting with the Prime Minister. Otherwise, why are we not going to the Prime Minister? What downside is there?

Yes, there was a meeting with the Prime Minister. But I say that if you have other premiers of other jurisdictions joining you, and even if you do not, with the organizations—and the minister referred to the young woman who presented to this committee. You take some of those people with you to Ottawa, so that they can face the Prime Minister eyeball to eyeball. If they cannot make their point, then this country is in a sad state of affairs. Because I think all of us heard the compassion that these people had for their livelihoods and for their families. They were not asking for anything but a level playing field with other jurisdictions. If we cannot take that simple message to Ottawa, directly to the Prime Minister of our country, then, Mr. Chair and Madam Minister, we are not doing our job.

I am sorry. I will support a resolution that asks for the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture to come to Manitoba, or to come to the Prairies to listen. However, I cannot support a resolution like that if it does not include an action which calls for our Premier to lead an all-party delegation to Ottawa. My Leader will stand right alongside the Premier (Mr. Doer) to face the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), in Ottawa to ask for the support that our producers deserve. Nothing less. That is all I am asking of this committee, to think about it. Let us take our ideological blinkers off here, ladies and gentlemen, because there is no place for it in this all-party committee.

Mr. Cummings: Well, Mr. Chairman, I am not sure if I can match the eloquence of my colleague from Russell, but I want to reiterate what I was trying to say when I previously spoke to this resolution. That we want to bring forward

out of the committee the absolute urgency and the fact that we have to, in my view, elevate it to the highest decision-making level in this country. That requires that those who are the leaders of our western provinces be involved. I am sure that there are many times when all of us have indicated to friends, relatives and family, you will never know what the answer is until you ask. Or you will not achieve anything if you do not try.

My colleague said it very succinctly. I believe there is a will to support the request for the standing committee, but it has to be coupled with a predisposition and a previous move to the Prime Minister, which calls me to put another comment on the record. If this falls into the realm of partisan comment in this committee, then I am sure that the minister and her colleagues will call me to order. Frankly, I think we have pre-empted ourselves in the route that we have gone by making an announcement the other night that we had invited the standing committee. To some extent, we weakened our hand to ask for that one-off meeting as quickly as possible with the Prime Minister. There was some outrage expressed on our part at that time, albeit we wanted to maintain unanimity in this committee. I really urge the members of the Government side of this committee, not to think of this as a win-lose, or putting their Premier (Mr. Doer), our Premier of this province, in an awkward position. We are saying on this side of the table—I believe you heard almost all of us, including the third party, indicate that we would support that direction.

* (20:40)

So we are all in the same boat. If there is a fear of the Premier being put in an awkward position and being forced to take no for an answer, and I hope that would not be the possibility, but if that is what the fear is, then, by golly, every MLA in this province, every grain and oilseed producer in this province, and I would guess a large percentage of those who are interested observers with a vested interest as consumers and as residents of this province, will all be angry. We will not be angry at the Premier, we will be angry at the Prime Minister. But we need to come out of this committee with a willingness to put the question to him.

Mr. Gerrard: Just briefly, several points. I think that there needs to be a decision as to which direction we are going to take this. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and the Government will need to show some leadership and decide whether they are going to put a motion tonight and settle this, or whether, in fact, you are going to take this back to your caucus and bring this back to be settled Wednesday night, if that is when we are meeting.

The motion, I think, should have not only where this is going, but should have some indication of what kind of time frame. I think that is important for all committee members, and it is important for the farmers. If it is going to go to the federal standing committee, then that is one thing. If it is going to the Prime Minister, that is another, but in whichever direction, the motion should indicate what kind of time frame we are going to act in, so that people in Manitoba will know.

I think that taking aside the process issue of how this moves forward, and maybe before I fully move off this, I will make one more point and that is, that we have both the Standing Committee on Agriculture, and we have this new federal committee, which is going to report next fall. I think that farmers and presenters at the committee meetings indicated that they were not very happy with a report next fall, given the urgency of the situation. Given that you have two committees, I am not convinced that you are going to get action from the standing committee federally on agriculture before next fall, even if it is different from the committee which is touring the country. I think that this is a matter that needs to go straight to the Prime Minister and that we need to make that effort. But that will have to be your judgment, since you have the majority of votes on this committee.

The second point, and that is back to the Member for Thompson's (Mr. Ashton). What is our message? Here again, we clearly need some work. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has talked about the additional \$500 million that was part of the original resolution. I think there was varied enthusiasm for that number, and that as we heard presentations, there was indeed, perhaps, much more

enthusiasm for a number that was put in terms of \$40 to \$60 an acre. But I think that the issue here is, if the Minister of Agriculture has already done some homework and found that there is not much appeal to the \$500 million, it is up to the Minister of Agriculture to show some leadership in putting forward alternate approaches, because the huge majority of producers did talk about a cash infusion of some sort, urgent assistance for farmers. I think there could be a variety of ways that this could come together, and it really is up to the Minister of Agriculture and the Government to kick this off with some concrete suggestions. We have been around, and we have been here now for, oh, something more than two hours. I know that it may be the intention to bring something on Wednesday, but it certainly would help move things forward if the minister was ready to put some more details, or some more ideas, on the table that could be discussed or thought about between now and Wednesday.

Let me add one more note, and this is from a farmer in an area of Manitoba that is quite badly affected. He was recently talking to his banker. Although he is a mixed farmer and not in this situation, his banker made the comment that none, I say none, of the producers who were farming and producing only grains and oilseeds, had come to the bank this year for their normal loan. That was rather an unusual comment or situation, because that would be very, very different from the normal circumstances. What it is likely to indicate, is that those who are farming grain and oilseeds in that area, are in an extraordinary cash crunch, not able, because of the way that they are financed, to go to the bank for any additional dollars.

As we have seen some comments today of producers who are not out in the field, I think it is important that the minister and the Department of Agriculture, on an urgent basis, get a little better handle on the situation around the province and the circumstances among producers, because this crisis may be even more urgent than many have given credit. We certainly heard that. Certainly, from the department's perspective, it would be critical to have the most current information available and to be able to present this factually, with eloquence and with support, to whichever form the minister chooses.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Chairman, I just want to make sure the committee is clear on the comments I made previously, a good hour ago.

I am not against the Prime Minister coming to Manitoba. I am certainly not against the Ag Standing Committee coming to Manitoba, if we could convince them to do it, but I think it would be part of my honourable colleague from Morris's suggestion that if they come, the committee, particularly, would be the peripheral player in this process, not that the issue still lies in the Prime Minister's hands. My honourable colleague for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) and I were having a discussion here about the differentiation between the committees that are out there today in the federal realm, and while we are an Ag committee that just spent some time doing hearings in Manitoba in this process, I indicated that the federal committee has been out here before, some three years ago, two-and-a-half years, over three years ago, the fall of '98, and they may come again someday. But, right now, we have a federal Committee on Agriculture in Ottawa and we have a Prime Minister who has not—I mean, one thing we heard in this whole process, many times, was: Does Ottawa just not get it?

* (20:50)

I will comment on those remarks right now. The people that I talked to or who talked to me on this issue feel that way because the federal Prime Minister just put a committee together this spring to travel across Canada, not just the Prairies, on an agricultural basis, with the member from St. James, Charleswood, Assiniboia, Mr. Harvard in this case, being the Manitoba representative, the former Ag House Committee Chairman, and three senators from Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, to look at what is needed in agriculture and report to the federal government in the fall of 2002.

I will tell you—and I do not think I have to tell the minister—what is being said about that committee in the country. It is chaired by Mr. Speller, a respectable individual who has also been the House of Commons Ag Committee Chair, and I made presentations before Bob as well. He is a member from southern Ontario, the Windsor area, Chatham, who indicated to me at

a meeting last summer that—you know, he says, those issues in western Canada, they are so complicated. He says: I cannot understand western issues, and now he is the person that the Prime Minister has appointed to be the Chair of this committee. So I differentiate between that group and the House of Commons Ag Committee.

The honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has indicated that what is the likelihood of the House of Commons Ag Committee coming out here to hear presentations when they already have a committee that is coming out to do that very thing.

We do not know when they are coming. I do not even know if they know what their mandate is yet. I am sure the minister has been in discussion with the federal minister on this, but we have had some discussions with Mr. Speller, and I do not have a clear direction of what he thinks the agenda is going to be and his plan yet. I think the House of Commons Ag Committee would be—I do not know if they would feel like they were superseding the work of the committee that the Prime Minister has already put in place and stepping on the Prime Minister's toes if they come out here. I do not know all of those logistics. I am just laying them out.

Just a couple of comments: I have a couple of quotes here on things that I hear in the country on this federal process chaired by Mr. Speller. Many farmers have indicated to me that they call this a "travelling road show." Another quote is: "a make-work project for back-benchers." Another quote is: "If they are serious, they would act by now because certainly they have heard from farm groups and individuals all winter about what the problem is." The other quote is: "What have they been listening to?"

I guess the only reason that I was so passionate, if I could use that term, in my plea of the minister and the committee before about trying to take this directly to where it needs to go to get the impact that the producers who came and took the serious time to make the presentation to us want is, because we do not—I mean, I ask the committee: Do we want to be painted with the same brush that that committee is being painted with? I have a great problem

with saying we need to listen to this same committee, so that we can go home and get tarred and feathered with the same brush, all of us on both sides of the House, all members, for saying: Well, do you guys not know that the guy who is the stumbling block in this whole process is the Prime Minister?

Farmers came and appeared before us. Many of them appeared before us through desperation, as we saw in some of the presentations to us. They also said that they came because we are basically the only show on the road. You came forward. You were the only show there. You are in Manitoba. It is nice to see you getting out and around. Maybe you could have done it sooner, but we were there and we heard them. You saw, I would call it depression, seriousness with many of these presentations. They indicated they came before us because they felt they had exhausted most of the other routes that they have. I mean, you saw the desperation of some of these people. We may have been the only game in town, if you want to put it that way.

I guess that is all I have to say on that, Madam Minister. In regard to my colleague from River Heights and others here, I guess I would only say that there are farmers out there who do not have their business plan in place yet, and they may not have gone to the banker because they are afraid to go. They see a little bit of light at the tunnel. They are hoping that their CMAP payment shows up real quick. There is a Wheat Board payment that if they had an automatic account is already in there or will arrive this week, and the adjustment payment, anywhere from, say, an average of eight bucks. We put \$115 million in the Prairies on the call that is out there on the wheat today, maybe a little more if it is up to 80 percent now, and the interest-free cash advance they can use.

They have indicated to me that they need those three little pots of money in their own operation to pay off last year's accounts to get enough credit or equity built up in their operation to go to the bank to get the line of credit they need this year. They know it will be late in the middle of May, if they can put that together. They should be out seeding now, but if those all arrive by the end of this week they can still, perhaps, get enough funds from their

banker to put a crop in the ground this spring, albeit two weeks later than it would normally be put, even if it is three weeks later. So what they are doing is staving off elimination, if you will, trying to protect their assets for one more year and roll the dice again and hope that the commodity prices increase or they get a bumper crop or a high quality crop. That is how close this thing is to the line in some of these operations right now.

Having said that, I guess I can only make the plea again that we do not get painted with the same brush as the federal government, that we do not allow ourselves to fall in that same trap as, I think, they have themselves in, by not listening to people. I know the federal government has lots of issues on their plate, but this is a serious one, this is the one that is the nuts and bolts of agriculture.

If you look at groups like the Ontario Corn Producers, the Ontario Wheat Producers Marketing Board and the Ontario Soybean Growers, I think you would find that they are basically all on-side with the kinds of process that we are working with here tonight. I certainly saw it in the last issue of the *Corn Producer* magazine that I got just over the weekend. It was delivered to my home. You can look at the resolutions that came before that group in their meeting this spring, and they are virtually on-line with the parity ideas and the programming that we are looking at here and trying to come forward with.

So I beseech the committee to take that approach of, first of all, going to the Prime Minister, because I think that is where the province of Manitoba, at least the farmers of Manitoba, want us to target our efforts, from the consensus that we heard around this table. Thank you.

Mr. Smith: The Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has identified a couple of points that I want to expand on. Just listening to the conversation around the table here tonight, I do not think it is disputed. I think we can all agree that we identified what the many, many people came and presented to us. We know the crisis that is out there. We know the problems that are out there. We all agree that we want to assist in the best possible way that we can.

One of the problems that I have in the flavour of the direction that the comments are going here tonight is some of the speculation or surmising and assumptions made by members of the committee that anybody on this committee is getting direction, other than dealing with ourselves and in our committee. I am sure members opposite have maybe mentioned to their caucus some of the discussions and some of the things we have had come up throughout the committee. I am sure that their leader did not come back and say you will demand that we do things in one direction. Well, I am sure that did not happen. I would hope and assume that is not the case. Certainly, that is not the case from this side. I think we all want to come up with a solution. I know the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) mentioned that there have been some excellent ideas put from both sides on this. He had mentioned the possibility of going all ways on something. I think we are coming very close to that. I am looking at what our minister has mentioned in the upcoming western premiers' meeting, where the Premier (Mr. Doer) will get from this committee, in a resolution, what is produced from us.

* (21:00)

Certainly that seems an optimum time for me to present and get support of western premiers on this important issue. It is something that I believe would develop incredible strength, maybe not as timely or as quickly as members opposite are asking for, but I believe the strength would be there. We realize the urgency. We all know the urgency of it. I think what has been suggested, and what has been mentioned by members opposite, is a very good idea. In taking all ideological blinkers off, I choose not to believe, by any stretch, that the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture—and although I have heard it described that way myself—is a travelling road show. I choose to believe that it is a committee that is established that will have a serious impact on the decision makers at a federal level.

I believe that standing committee being invited out here has a far greater impact on a timely matter. I agree with the urgency. I do not agree with July or August. It is too late. I agree with May, and having the standing committee

come out to our province and have the support—we have already, as well, heard it is not an argument that the minister from Manitoba certainly wants to take our resolution. It is a good resolution. We all agree—with some adjustment—that what will be in it is exactly what we want to present. I believe that the people that came to present to us—that stood at this podium, and looked us all in the eye, and told us of a crisis that we know about, but got on a personal level—are certainly asking us and demanding that we take the most effective, realistic route, in the way that we can present exactly what we want to develop and finalize here over the next couple of days, and hopefully, meeting over the next couple of days, it will be a finished product and delivered in the most effective route.

To say one is better than the other, this we or them that we have had presented here tonight—I believe the solution has been met in many ways at the suggestion by the minister. No. 1, the other agricultural ministers have already said, no, they are not interested in accompanying Manitoba with a resolution to pursue and take it past the borders and travel out of their province, and go and do what we have all done before. A number have been to Ottawa and done that. I believe there is a time and a place, and in the long term, I believe, maybe it is a good solution that we can go out continually over a number of times on a long-term solution. But I believe the suggestion that has been made in having people come to the source is exactly what we need to do.

The people who have presented have asked for the most efficient route. I believe the most efficient route is having Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba appearing in front of the standing committee, in Manitoba, and presenting not only for the people on behalf of the people what we have had—and we have all got volumes and stacks of it—but actually getting the support from our western colleagues to come here to our province and present. I do not believe, as some others have suggested, that committee falls on deaf ears. I believe that may very well be the route that quickly leads to the severity of the problem we have here to the federal decision makers to identify the problem.

The process does not need to be something that is thrown quickly together in the hopes and

dreams of accessing and getting the people to pay attention that we would like to in Ottawa, but actually using a system that has been put in place by the federal government to identify the needs of agriculture in this area that, I believe, are listened to very seriously. I know the Liberal member would certainly, I would believe, tend to agree with that, using a process that not recreating the wheel, in fact, using process by competent people—I hope we would all agree are competent people sitting on that committee, knowledgeable people sitting on that committee—that are people that have the ear of the representatives we would like to meet with.

So in saying that the folks that appeared in front of us would get disservice by picking one way over the other, I do not believe, but I do believe that, realistically, the most effective way of taking this through the pecking order, if you will, to the years that we would like to get to in the quickest, most efficient way, would be done through the committee, through the federal committee, and concentrate our strategy on what we want to present, and how we want to present to them, as opposed to where we are going to go, and the possibility of what might be. I believe the possibility is real that this Ag Committee would take us very seriously, and be here in a very timely manner to try to hear our concerns.

I think we would have the support of agriculture ministers west from Ontario, and possibly Ontario, but, certainly, all the Ag ministers west in what they are saying and what we are hearing from them is it is about time that Ottawa got out of Ottawa and came to the source and saw what is real.

I believe in the many presentations. We could not take everybody that we had here present in front of us. We certainly would be limited in the amount of people. Maybe if it were only 50 people that we could take with us, I think we could have 500 here, a lot more of what we saw, to appear with human stories, with a human face, and have the impact. I think if any of us really think about it, if we were sitting in Ottawa and someone came from elsewhere without that human face, and without the numbers that are needed, I believe it would have an impact on every single one of us regardless of who we were coming out here, and living the

experience, seeing the experience, and hearing from a huge number of people that we would be able to congregate, and have right here in our province with the support of higher levels of government right across the western provinces, premiers, Ag ministers, and ministers and members of this Legislature, collectively together, with, as the members here opposite have mentioned, Leader of their Opposition, standing shoulder to shoulder with the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province, all three parties representing the people of Manitoba, and, hopefully, all the same from the provinces west.

They have asked us to take the most efficient route. I believe we all want to accomplish that and get that. I believe that the upcoming western premiers' conference and meeting, certainly, is a route that is very, very near. All of the premiers, I believe, that take our message from our Premier (Mr. Doer) to the other premiers—this is by far, the most efficient, effective message to get the premiers on board with the issue and to deal with an effective strategy.

So, with those few comments, Mr. Chair, I will leave it at that.

Ms. Wowchuk: We have had a lot of discussion here, and I have heard about the issue of the federal standing committee coming here or going to Ottawa. I want to tell you that the decision to invite the federal standing committee to come here was not taken lightly. What we talked about was: What would be the best way to get the message to the federal government?

We all indicated that there is a strong message and by having people come here, we could put a human face on the issue. There was certainly the discussion about the standing committee that the Prime Minister has appointed, versus the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture.

We agreed to go to the Standing Committee on Agriculture, and in fact, when I had discussions with the Chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, he said: You know, that committee is not the road to go, because we are not even sure when they are going to be travelling—what they are going to be doing.

So the people are talking about two committees. Very clearly, it was the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture that we talked about. We have certainly talked about this back and forth. We have all agreed that there is a message that has been given to us, and here we are arguing about what method we are going to be using. I can tell you that there has been correspondence between our Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Prime Minister. I would be quite prepared to share that correspondence with you as well, where the Prime Minister has indicated to the Premier that he is not interested and there is no further support.

So if anybody is implying that the federal government and the Prime Minister are not aware of the issue, that is not accurate, because there has been correspondence on this matter between the Premier and the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has outlined what they are prepared to put into agriculture. The Premier has written to the Prime Minister, as well, outlining what the Province does with tax credits, and looking for the federal government to offer some of those kinds of tax credits to our farming community as well.

So those issues have been raised with the Prime Minister. It is not a new issue to the Prime Minister. What the issue is, is how do we get federal representatives to come to western Canada and hear first-hand what we have here, so that we can influence them to make a decision on this very urgent matter. We know that we have agreement and support from Saskatchewan and Alberta. We know we have support from the vice-chair of the federal standing committee to have the federal standing committee come to Manitoba and hear directly from Manitobans.

We know we have support on those. We do not have support on the other issues of a delegation to Ottawa. We know this is an issue that is going to be discussed at the premiers' conference. So when we look at all of this, I was hoping this evening we could look at this draft statement that was written out and we could have discussion on that. We could have some discussion on the resolution of what kinds of amendments we could put forward—that we could have discussion here at the committee so we could then prepare a resolution to present to

the House, because we do have to report back to the House on this resolution.

I think that we have had a lot of discussion. I think what we have to do is maybe step back for a moment. So, Mr. Chairman, I would move that we adjourn at this time and come back on Wednesday for further discussion on this resolution and the report put forward by the Chair. I would further move that from this committee we call on the federal standing committee to come to Manitoba, and hear directly from the people; to receive the report from this committee and to hear from producers.

So, Mr. Chairman, I am not sure. I have made two motions there. Maybe I could not do that, but I would like to ask for your guidance. One is that we adjourn and move to come back on Wednesday to review the report and the resolution.

Mr. Chairperson: If we could just take a minute to see the motion as it is written.

Mr. Jack Penner: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Point of Order

Mr. Jack Penner: Before we entertain, Mr. Chairman, a motion for adjournment, I just want to make note that I had my hand up before the minister put forward a motion of adjournment. I would suspect that the Chairman might want to recognize the indication of another speaker before adjournment is considered.

* (21:10)

Mr. Chairperson: On the point of order that has been brought forward, I have three people on the speaking list, and would have recognized all three people if a motion of adjournment had not come forward. A motion of adjournment is non-debatable, and I simply need to put the question on that. If there is not a will to adjourn, then we will recognize the people who I have on the list, but a motion to adjourn is not debatable.

Point of Order

An Honourable Member: Another point of order then, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Penner, on a point of order.

Mr. Jack Penner: I find it extremely regrettable, that having had the good will of the committee and the agreement of all parties in this House to put forward a resolution and to listen to the people of Manitoba on a matter that could not be indicated as more urgent—

Mr. Chairman, I find it absolutely astounding that the minister would now, by motion, want to push closure on the hearing tonight and the debate that is going on. I thought we had an absolutely healthy debate, and I thought the discussion around this committee had been orderly and conducted in a manner that was most appropriate. We now find that the minister will attempt to force closure and bring her will to the next meeting, the following Wednesday. It certainly does not, in my view, bode well for the intent, and leads one to believe that the motives that the minister brings to this table are questionable at best.

So I would strongly suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the minister reconsider moving her motion at this time, or bringing forward—that she might, in fact, want to withdraw the motion until the three speakers that had indicated—and the hour is not late. Three speakers had indicated a desire to put some words on record that they might, in fact, be heard.

Mr. Chairperson: On the point of order brought forward by the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), is yours on the same point of order, Mr. Smith, or should I be ruling?

Mr. Smith: I was just going to say the point of order is no point of order. Go ahead and rule.

Mr. Chairperson: On the same point of order, Ms. Wowchuk?

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I did not mean to offend the member in any way, but I did have a discussion with two of his colleagues prior to bringing forward the resolution. It was suggested by both of them that perhaps we step back, and on Wednesday, come forward with further discussion. That was what I was putting forward here.

Mr. Chairperson: I want to thank all three members for their advice on that point of order. I must rule that it is not a point of order, and that we need to deal with the motion of adjournment that has been put forward by the minister.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Is this a point of order, Mr. Derkach?

Mr. Derkach: No, Mr. Chair, this is not a point of order. It is just to try and establish—

Mr. Chairperson: Order. We do have a motion of adjournment before the Chair that I have to—

Mr. Derkach: Can I get clarification?

Mr. Chairperson: Is it a point of order, Mr. Derkach?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, it is a question of clarification.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Derkach, I can only recognize you if it is a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Derkach: There is always a way to get to speak, I guess. I know that the minister had an informal comment made by myself and by my colleague with respect to perhaps stepping back. However, at the time, my colleague, the member from Emerson (Mr. Penner), had a recommendation that he would have liked to put forward for consideration until such time that the minister returned. I think had the minister known that, she would have probably waited with her motion to adjourn until she heard the recommendation. It does not bind her. Nothing binds anyone at this point in time. It is just a suggestion, Mr. Chair.

I would simply ask that perhaps the minister would take a moment to listen to what my colleague, the member from Emerson, has to advise, and then she can consider this until Wednesday and come back with a response, or come back with further discussion after that. It certainly is without prejudice, and the minister does not have to feel that it is something that we are going to be pressing or insisting on.

Mr. Chairperson: I will rule that Mr. Derkach did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Derkach: A darn good point, though.

Mr. Chairperson: That may be.

It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) that the standing committee adjourn and return on Wednesday to discuss the Chair report, and review the resolution, and make necessary amendments to return the resolution to the House.

This motion is in order, and being a motion to adjourn, there is no debate, so the question before the committee is: Shall the motion pass?

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of passing the motion, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Yeas have it and the motion is accordingly passed. That being said, committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 9:16 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS PRESENTED BUT NOT READ

I am pleased to have the opportunity to present this brief to you. Because of the busy time of the year, I will be putting this in point form.

1) Family History

- The Radcliffes have been farming this land for over 100 years.
- I am the third generation on the farm.
- My grandfather homesteaded this land in 1898. He actually lived in a sod shack for a time until he was able to build a house.

- My father farmed the land, and now I am farming since 1972.
- My son would like to take over someday; however, this will not be possible without some timely help from the federal government.
- I also have a new grandson who someday might like to farm.

2) 1999 - Year of the Flood

- This was a year that devastated our farm.
- Never before has there been a year when we were unable to plant a crop.
- Even though the provincial government provided \$50 per acre, it was not enough to pay the bills; e.g. \$50 an acre; cash rent \$33 per acre plus weed control \$20 per acre.
- Nothing left to make payments with.
- Nothing to live on.
- Our farm (2700 acres) unable to seed 1800 acres and lost over \$100,000 that year.
- This amount is still carrying forward on our operating loan.
- NISA and AIDA did little to alleviate the situation.

3) Year 2000

- Low commodity prices
- Unable to sell crop (e.g. Durum wheat)

4) Year 2001

- Still carrying forward \$100,000 operating loan from 1999.
- We are currently mortgaging some of our land to try to get enough money to seed another crop.
- High fuel and fertilizer prices make it difficult to carry on.
- Many farmers have left farming in the last two years, and many more are right on the edge.
- This makes it difficult to keep schools, businesses, et cetera, going in a small community.

5) Future?

- My son started farming in 1999.
- Lost his first crop due to flood.

- He did not qualify for AIDA for some strange reason.
- He must work off-farm to support his family.
- He is considering leaving farming next year for good, after his 3-year lease on land is done.
- No one to carry on the farm and no one to sell it to. We are all in the same boat, and that boat is sinking.

We feel that it is imperative that the Government support agriculture and rural Manitoba. The consequences of the current lack of government support will be the demise of rural Manitoba and Canada.

Thank you.

Robert Radcliffe
Waskada, Manitoba

* * *

Address to the Standing Committee on Agriculture:

Hello, Committee Members. Thanks for going the democratic route and asking the people for a solution to the economic disaster affecting the Canadian economy. There are many things to be said about the economic disaster facing farmers and their service industries, but I want to dwell on the cause of the disaster. Correct the cause, and the symptoms will disappear.

The law-breaking federal government is where the whole trouble starts. The BNA Act has been adopted as our Constitution. Section 91 gives the sole right to create the country's money supply to the federal government. In 1913, the federal government of the day illegally gave a portion of that power to the private banks. Over the years since then, the private banks have been taking an ever-increasing portion, and it now stands at 98 percent. It must be understood that this debt money system is well organized by the private banks and the federal government, and it is a crime. Therefore, this organized crime is much more dangerous than the Mafia because the public knows the Mafia are crooks, but they mistakenly assume their elected government is a

power that can be trusted. Even with overwhelming evidence to the contrary, many are in a state of denial.

Every time someone borrows money from a bank, the bank is creating new money as credit to the borrower's account, on which they can now write cheques. This chequebook money is all interest-bearing debt money owed to the banks. The banks never create interest money. It does not exist. It is impossible to pay interest, so borrowers pass the interest costs onto their customers, in the form of higher prices. This is done from one business to another, until it gets to the farmer. The farmer has no pricing mechanism for passing it on, so they have increased the size of their farm, take off-farm jobs, and, on occasion, accepted deficiency payments from governments, just trying to stay alive. Any increase in net income from larger farms has pretty much ended now. In fact, it was the final blow that sank many farmers. The off-farm jobs are coming to an end, too, because it depopulated rural areas, causing the closure of many businesses for lack of customers to keep them afloat.

The bankers' interest-bearing debt money system could have gone on for some time yet if workers and farmers had had a legislated parity price formula law put in place to keep their purchasing power abreast of the ever-increasing inflation caused by the compounding interest on the debt money. The eventual limiting factor would be the lack of a number, as yet not invented, to go high enough to state the inflated price of consumer goods and services.

There is only one logical solution to this banker/government financial disaster that is being deliberately imposed on the Canadian people. We must stop acting like helpless children who cannot do anything to defend ourselves from a ruthless monster. In a democracy, there is only one way to go, put it to practice. Forget party politics and seek and spread the truth out to the people. Democracy is people rule, not elected dictatorship. It is economic equality for all people. We need to point out to the people how foolish it is to expect political parties that are financed by banks and transnational corporations to serve the needs of the people. They cannot serve two masters.

Municipal and provincial governments are being put in an impossible position by this law-breaking federal government. To avoid being tarred with the same brush, the municipal and provincial governments should call the troops together to educate the general public as to where lies the problem.

I believe with these two levels of government leading the way, it is reasonable to suppose that the Chamber of Commerce, the churches, farm organizations, businesses and many other organizations would come onside to bring the people out en masse to force the feds to obey the law. Our people need to know such things as Section 52 of the Constitution states "the Constitution of Canada is the supreme law of Canada, and any law that is inconsistent with the provisions of the Constitution is, to the extent of the inconsistency, of no force or effect."

The Constitution is the single most important document in Canada, that we Canadians have, to legally protect us from corrupt governments. The problem is most people have not even seen the book, let alone read it. The police, the courts, the army, the schools, the universities, the CRTC and CBC are all controlled by the corrupt federal government, so we get nowhere appealing to them for help. That leaves we, the people, the task of policing our governments. It is not at all hopeless. Armed with the facts, we, the people, will become an unstoppable force.

This corrupt money system is like a religion to many people, not to be questioned. The racketeers that are in the business of enslaving the people under the debt money system, try to con the people into believing it would cause inflation if the federal government created the country's money supply. Of course, the opposite is true. The debt money system has caused billions of dollars in interest inflation. Just on the federal debt, they are paying \$117 million a day, and then the feds want us to believe they are doing great things for the farmers by offering \$500-million farm aid.

If they really wanted to help the farmers and the country as a whole, they would create the country's money supply, pass a parity price law

assuring every worker engaged in essential goods and services production a full earned income from the marketplace. It is not because they do not know any better that they have not passed this legislation long ago; it is because their transnational masters will not allow it. These pirates want their nation's productive workers and the world impoverished and clawing for survival. Desperate people are easy to manipulate into doing whatever the pirates want done, often jobs that are harmful to their health and the environment.

Governments at all levels have been known to be persuaded to accept toxic waste dumps, radioactive warheads and intensive livestock operations, et cetera, just for a few corporate crumbs. Money creation is the great manipulator, and when in the hands of organized crime, we can expect no money from them.

NAFTA is not about trade, as the pirates would like all the sucker fools to believe. It is about the takeover of our governments, our countries, so the global pirates can dictate our every move. It is only one segment of the intended world dictatorship.

Political parties are playing right along with these pirates' agenda, instead of standing up for the people they claim to represent. The arrogant politicians have the gall to say they have a mandate to make heavy decisions, and if you do not like it, vote for somebody else next time. In a true democracy, politicians are to serve the majority, guided by policy that has been ratified by the majority. When in doubt, ask the people; they will let the politicians know. It is easy to expose the politicians that are against democracy. They are the ones that oppose referenda and recall. Mike Harris says civil servants should be fired if he sees a need, but he neglected to include himself in the same loop. Treason by politicians does great damage too.

My suggestion to the Standing Committee on Agriculture for pulling our country out of the present nosedive the federal government has put it in, is to make an appeal to the other provinces to take a firm stand with Ottawa, force them to obey the law. Stop co-operating with them, as has been the case. If the other provinces will not listen to reason, separate. Maybe Saskatchewan

will come in with us. We have Churchill for a port, we can print our own money, debt-free, and without that interest burden on us, we can sell our goods at a profit, well below any other province or country.

We must try to salvage as much of Canada as possible. I can believe that when other provinces see what we can do for ourselves with Ottawa off our backs, they will be encouraged to go the same route. We do not need any more proof of who is the enemy, do we?

Tony Riley
Box 40, Strathclair, MB R0J 2C0
April 28, 2001

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RE: Submission—Public Input on All-Party Agriculture Resolution

The Manitoba agricultural economy is in crisis, and this is directly affecting our communities, our businesses and our people's lives.

Our rural economy and communities depend almost entirely on the agricultural industry. Because of the loss of the Crow rate, the farm disaster in 1999 (uncropable saturated farmland from excessive rain/no income) and the farm crisis (low commodity prices/high input costs/foreign farm subsidies), farm families have limited or no income. This is reflected in a serious downturn in sales as experienced by local businesses.

The majority of our business customers are farm families. My annual gross business sales have dropped by over \$52,000 since 1998. I, like other small business owners in the Deloraine area, have had to refinance my business operations to keep afloat. This need to refinance is a direct result of the disastrous farm economy.

Our small communities seem to always be under continued economic threat. We struggle and worry constantly about losing our communities, our schools, our hospitals and our livelihood. The farm disaster, along with the farm crisis, is almost too much to bear. Be assured that not all Canadians want to live, work

and raise our families in cities, and that is why we fight to survive. We want to raise our families, educate our children, care for our elderly and sick, and grow old in our small communities. The lack of commitment and action by the federal government to help farmers seriously threatens our rural life. It is important to remember that without farm production from the rural areas, cities are not sustainable.

I support your committee's efforts in demanding that the federal government address the problems facing producers in the farm sector and take immediate action to ensure long-term

stability in the agriculture economy. The problems facing farmers are beyond their control, and until these issues are dealt with at a federal government level, we will all be living in a crisis situation in rural Manitoba.

Sincerely,

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