

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Eighth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	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, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 6, 2004

**The House met at 10 a.m.**

*PRAYERS*

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**House Business**

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, would you canvass the House to see if there is agreement to waive Rule 23(4) so that a requested recorded vote on the resolution to come up in the second hour will not be deferred to the following private members' hour but will instead take place today, that is assuming that the resolution comes to a vote?

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there agreement to waive Rule 23(4) so that a requested recorded vote on the resolution will not be deferred to the following private members' hour but will instead take place today? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**DEBATE ON  
SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 200—The Criminal Organizations Deterrence Act (Local Government Acts Amended)**

**Mr. Speaker:** On the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), Bill 200, The Criminal Organizations Deterrence Act (Local Government Acts Amended), what is the will of the House?

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense. I have just been corrected. It is not dispense. It will stand.

**Bill 201—The Taxpayer Protection Legal Representation Act (Legal Aid Services Society of Manitoba Act Amended)**

**Mr. Speaker:** On the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), Bill 201, The Taxpayer Protection Legal

Representation Act (Legal Aid Services Society of Manitoba Act Amended), what is the will of the House?

**Some Honourable Members:** Stand.

**Mr. Speaker:** Stand. Okay.

**Bill 206—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act**

**Mr. Speaker:** On the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), Bill 206, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, what is the will of the House?

**Some Honourable Members:** Stand.

**Mr. Speaker:** Stand? Okay, it is standing in the name of the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick). What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House to leave it standing in the name of the honourable Member for St. Norbert? *[Agreed]*

Also, the honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) has six minutes remaining.

**Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to put a few closing remarks regarding Bill 206 before the House. Then I will be looking forward to hearing from members from the Government giving us their view on this bill.

It would be in this sitting, I realize, an unusual circumstance for the members from the opposite side to actually stand up and speak to a bill, but I can assure them that I am indeed looking forward to hearing their remarks. I am, quite frankly, looking forward to hearing them stand up and support this bill, because we all know this is the NDP party that prides itself in standing up for the little person in Manitoba. If there is any bill before this House that speaks to the need to help out those who find themselves in less fortunate circumstances, this is a bill that speaks to that.

Therefore, I would encourage the members opposite to study this issue, to do some research on it

and to get up and speak to it. But I am very fearful that what we have seen so far displayed in this House is that the government of the day, the New Democratic Party, has lost their, shall I call it moral centre, not only on this issue, but virtually on all issues. This party that goes out there and pretends to stand up for the downtrodden in our society, for the little people, instead of doing that, this version of today's NDP, as they like to call themselves, is stamping on them.

It has decided that instead of helping them, it should send out the Minister responsible for Energy, Science and Technology and the minister responsible for post-secondary education, send them out to collaborate and devise a new form of gambling so that this version of the New Democratic Party can go out and pick the pockets of the less fortunate in our society. For what purpose? Does it serve any purpose other than to allow them to stand up and proclaim that they have got a little lower deficit than they otherwise would have had?

Mr. Speaker, it has really shaken this party to the core. No longer can they go out and pretend to stand up for the little person in Manitoba. No longer can they go out and put themselves forward as someone who is going to reach out a helping hand to the downtrodden in our society. All they are doing is looking for ways to fleece those such as the individual who has been mentioned in this case.

What do they do? Mr. Speaker, they increased gambling. They opened the bars on Sunday so that they can open the VLTs to get more gambling revenue. They invest \$100 million of taxpayers' money so they can get more gambling revenue.

Now that does not help the less fortunate in our society. That simply hits them over the head with a sledgehammer. This Government, they know the studies, they know that it is the poor in our society that are more susceptible to run into trouble with gambling. This Government, instead of reaching out to help them out, wants to hit them over the head with a sledgehammer.

This is the Government that also raises every fee known to mankind so again, they can raise revenue without saying that we have raised taxes, as the Premier so likes to say. Instead they go out and they raise \$90 million in new taxes, and a good portion of that comes from people on fixed incomes. Do they go

after middle-income Manitobans in terms of income tax rates? No, they decide to put an extra \$23 on your vehicle registration. So everybody living in Manitoba that is living below the poverty line that needs a car to get to work and to get their family around or lives on a fixed income is faced with another \$23 surcharge so that this Government can impose a little more backdoor taxation on the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in hearing the remarks of members opposite, in particular the backbenchers. I remember in the last session before the election, there was a group of strong backbenchers on the other side of the House and they spoke up virtually to every bill and put their voices on the record. I challenge particularly the member from Wolseley, the new members from Fort Garry, St. Norbert and Riel to stand up in this House and put some thoughts on the record. Let them stand and tell us why they were elected, how they are going to continue the NDP's traditional fight for the less fortunate in our province.

But, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, as with every other day that we have sat, I am afraid that the benches opposite are going to remain silent, and I think that not only does a disservice to the party, but it does a disservice to Manitobans. I thank you for the time.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), I would just like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Faraday School 38 Grade 5 students under the direction of Ms. Claretta Shefrin and Mrs. Evelin Anderson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

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

\* \* \*

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to put a few comments on the record on Bill 206, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act. This act, I think, in large part deals with the conscience of the current administration of the NDP government and the NDP party as a whole.

We have heard constantly that the NDP party and the current government has put itself off, in advertisements and many other ways, as being the social conscience of the little guy.

\* (10:10)

Here we have a situation where the current government is allowing a publicly owned corporation to claw back insurance benefits paid to an individual that was disabled through an accident, through no fault of her own, as others have.

Another example I want to give you, Mr. Speaker, is that when the BSE crisis struck in this province, the Government advertised numerous programs that would have paid, or would have been seen to have paid, \$180 million to the livestock producers of this province.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, when you really look at what really happened, there was an amount of \$33 million that was paid out versus the \$180 million that this Government spent hundreds of thousands of dollars advertising and convincing Manitobans that had been paid out to them, leaving the perception that this Government was truly doing a tremendous amount to help those that could not help themselves. In other words, exercising their social conscience.

What is socially wrong with the approach this Government has been taking is the advertisements, the misleading advertisements, that this Government has used, day in and day out, to try and convince people that this NDP party is the party of social conscience.

What social conscience would this Government want to hide under to try and demonstrate to the people of Manitoba that allowing a public insurance corporation to claw back an amount of money, to claw back \$160 a month of compensation for injuries that this person incurred, through no fault of her own, was the right thing to do? What social conscience can this Government try and hide behind to try and maintain the public policy of clawbacks?

The reason I raised the issue of clawbacks, under the BSE program was a very similar one. Through no fault of Manitoba producers, was there any reason why beef from Manitoba or livestock products from Manitoba should not be able to be exported, except for one thing? The federal government had taken a

position, had taken a position under the Esposito Accord which required the Manitoba border and all other borders, provincial borders, to be shut to the importation of livestock products should BSE be detected in any one of the countries that we import from.

We did that to Japan. Seven years, no questions asked. Well, the Americans did not use the Esposito Accord to close the borders. However, Mr. Speaker, when the compensation programs were announced by the Province of Manitoba, they made a big to-do about a cull cattle program that they said would pay \$12 million to the people of Manitoba. Yet, when I talk to producers today, this Government clawed back through that program almost equal the amount of money that they had announced would be paid to producers from a previously announced program.

Mr. Speaker, what a social conscience this party has. What a social conscience this Government has, to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars advertising a program, then announcing a large amount of money, paying out a very small portion or pretending to, and then clawing back half of that.

Mr. Speaker, this Public Insurance corporation should be reined in. The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation should be reined in. It is this Government's ministers and the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province who need to pull the reins, but the decision needs to be made first in policy by the NDP party and the NDP government of this province.

I think it is important for the general public, for the people of Manitoba to note that what they have elected is not what they got. What they were told they would get has not been brought into this Chamber as yet. The social conscience that this NDP party portrayed themselves as has totally dissipated. It went up in the air in a cloud of steam. Mr. Speaker, it can no longer be seen or heard, because we in these Chambers have yet to hear the ministers of this Government truly bring forward policies that would lead us to believe that their social conscience has truly been brought into this Chamber.

I give you health care. This Government said they would fix health care with \$15 million and in six months. That was a social commitment to the people of this province. What happened? Well, after having now spent over a billion dollars a year extra, and most of it going to the health care budget, this Government has achieved absolutely nothing.

Secondly, they have time and time again told the people of Manitoba they would be the protectorate of those who were less fortunate. This NDP government would protect those who could not help themselves. Yet I read the letter that was sent to this Government and the Minister responsible for Manitoba Public Insurance corporation (Mr. Mackintosh) that says, very clearly, when a Manitoban cannot work because of injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident, PIPP provides income replacement indemnity benefits to compensate for the lost income.

The legislation carefully outlines the benefits available in a way that takes into account whether or not and to what extent a person was working when the loss occurs. We all agree with that. Interestingly enough, it was a Tory Conservative government that put those policies in place to protect the innocent, to protect the helpless and to protect the injured.

Yet what has this Government allowed? Mr. Speaker, this Government has allowed the clawback of \$160 a month from an innocent victim who was disabled and received compensation from Manitoba Public Insurance corporation.

What a disaster this Government is allowing to be perpetrated by the Public Insurance corporation. Mr. Speaker, this clearly tells the people of Manitoba that this Government has given up totally on its social conscience, has laid it aside and is allowing the dollar to rule their decisions.

I think it is up to this Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) to meet with the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance corporation (Mr. Mackintosh) and have the discussion and say to the Minister of Public Insurance corporation that this \$160 will not fix the deficit that this Government is running and therefore say to the minister of the public insurance corp, tell the corporation to abide by the rules and the policy that was put in place under PIP and ensure that the people of Manitoba, if and when, no matter what public stature they have, no matter what financial situations they are in, but when they do have an accident, Mr. Speaker, the policies of the corporation will be kept in place, and this Government is no longer intent on clawing back \$160 a month to try and help them balance their budget.

\* (10:20)

I think this is sad, and it is despicable that the social conscience of this Government, of this NDP government, has been allowed to deteriorate to the point that it has. I would suggest to the people of Manitoba that, come next election, come next opportunity, weigh very carefully what you have been told and what you have been delivered. Because this is a true new NDP government. They have no social conscience.

Mr. Speaker, I ask and I beg this Chamber to support the amendment that is being brought forward here. I would suggest to all of those that sit on the government side, especially those in the backbenches that have not been given the opportunity to serve on Cabinet, that have been discarded from Cabinet, get up. Get up and support this legislation. Get up and voice your opinion. Get up and tell your Government that it is your party's position, that it is your party's social conscience, that needs to be supported and brought back to reality.

To the people of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, to the voters of Manitoba, I say to you, next time you are given the choice to make the choice. Look at who put the policies in place that have protected the innocent. Look at who is clawing back the support that was given to those innocent people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity for putting a few of these comments on the record.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege as well to put a few comments on the record in regard to Bill 206, dealing with The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

This bill has been put forward by the member from River East as a private member's bill. I would certainly urge the Government to seriously take a look at this bill and speak to this bill. I would also urge them, if they feel so inclined and do not want to get up and speak to it at this time, that when this bill is voted upon they vote in favour of this particular amendment. My colleagues have already provided the reasons as to why this is good legislation, an amendment to a good piece of legislation, in the province of Manitoba already put in by our former government in this province, by the Conservative government of the time.

But I believe that there needs to be some small bit of clarity in regard to the reasons around why we should be allowing this kind of compassionate legislation in the province of Manitoba. Obviously, there are a number of circumstances that arise, Mr. Speaker, particularly in this case, with disabled persons in regard to the clawback, as the member from Emerson has just indicated, of some \$160 that was clawed back from an individual who happened to be in an accident.

She was married to a disabled person already. Of course, unbeknownst to her when she had her accident, down the road there would be a splitting of the marriage. Under the normal process of Manitoba she had applied for the 50 percent, or for her share at least, she felt, of a settlement in regard to their personal life.

Upon receiving a very small amount when you look at what is needed in regard to a living today of some \$160 a month, which does go a long way toward supporting a household in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, particularly for this person who had a disability caused by an accident through no fault of her own. Her claim from Manitoba Public Insurance ended up being clawed back. I find that, as an individual in Manitoba, an absolute insult to the situation that this person was faced with.

I also find it a duty of my responsibilities in this House as an elected member of the Legislature for Arthur-Virden, and I would assume that all members from the other 56 constituencies in this province would feel the same way in regard to having some compassion for this particular member. But we have not seen a lot of compassion in this Government over its term, particularly when you are looking at a number of the areas of concern that maybe \$160 is just not enough to be concerned about.

But the Government has dealt with a number of other issues of much greater volumes of dollars. It has been to the detriment of Manitobans as well, whether or not it is \$100,000 for the agricultural industry that was used for advertisements to convince people that their own work in the agricultural field on the issues of BSE that have surrounded us for the past year almost.

*Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

We are coming up to the anniversary of that particular concern. To think that as I raised in the issue in this House last fall that this Government would actually use \$100,000 of taxpayers' own money. I will get to the \$100 million in a moment.

But \$100,000 of consumers' own money in the tax dollars of this province to actually pat themselves on the back and make consumers believe that they were actually pouring \$180 million out into the BSE issue, when we find that the final result was that a hundred million of that was actually a loan of the farmers' own money that was never taken up by them because the farmers did not want to assume more debt on their own in the wake of a devastating period of time caused by no fault of their own either.

We have also got another ad campaign going on to actually promote the Budget on a number of things that I would like to know just exactly what that cost. The Government has also got a \$100,000 advertising program going on in a number of different areas at this time. But the kicker is the \$100 million that I talked about earlier in regard to buying new VLTs in the province of Manitoba.

I guess this Government's plan is a gambling plan. They are going to gamble with Manitobans' futures. They are gambling that will be the plan that will give them the economic development to perhaps be able to come back and create the ability to pass legislation like this, that would allow \$160 to go back into the hands of an individual that was disabled through an accident of absolutely no fault of her own, and, of course, in a situation where the money that she has received after a separation from an already disabled husband has been clawed back by the Manitoba Public Insurance corporation.

I find that to be an atrocity in this province that I would hope is at least only one case, but I am sure that it is not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure that there are other cases like this out there in Manitoba today. I know that we really should be, regardless of those circumstances in a no-fault circumstance like this, absolutely supporting these people in regard to having these small amounts of funds to help them maintain their day-to-day livelihoods in the province of Manitoba.

I do not hold a lot of faith in this Government being able to see through this, but I sure hope they have the ability to do that. I want to just say that this

Government has not been able to make tough decisions and at a time when everything has been flowing their way, particularly dollars from a number of sectors. They have got a time when Canada is increasing its gross domestic products. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is increasing its revenue activity and, of course, they know how to spend it. Because they have had a billion and a half dollars in income in their own Budget estimated this year, higher than what the previous government ever had to spend in any year that it was in government.

I find that it is very easy to make decisions when dollars are flowing your way, when they have got the lowest interest rates in history in the province of Manitoba with a Bank of Canada prime rate at just over 2 percent. That should encourage development. Governments do everything in their power to try and bring budgets under control. We certainly know that. But when you have got the lowest interest rates in the history of our province, in modern times at least, then you should be able to do things like provide \$160 for individuals who have been impacted by a clawback from their own Public Insurance corporation. I think that there needs to be some direction in that area, and I would encourage the Government to pass this legislation.

I would also just like to say that this Government, I know that they have come out in this Budget and said that they are going to, through attrition over a number of years, reduce civil servants by 400 people. *[interjection]* It is tough. It is hard to make those decisions.

\*(10:30)

But when I look at today's news announcements of another government in Canada, of the province of Québec, where they have just announced that over the course of the next 10 years—and this is a very difficult circumstance for any province to do. But it is a tough decision they made and he made this as a promise in the election campaign that they would not freeze health and education budgets, but they would freeze all of their other budgets until they got their deficit under control in the province of Québec.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, following up today on that announcement on that government election victory of some year ago, we see the Premier of Québec, the Honourable Jean Charest, president of the chamber of Québec, bringing out a 10-year plan

of attrition in the province of Québec, that over that 10 years would save them \$700 million. It basically looks at an attrition process that over the next 10 years one in five civil servants in that province will not be replaced.

Basically what he is saying is we can work the operations of our government in the province of Québec today with 20% fewer civil servants in the next 20 years than we have today. *[interjection]* I do not know what percentage exactly the 400 that this Government is looking at reducing in Manitoba. But I would urge them to take a serious look at it. Because when they have got increased transfer payments flowing into this province at a rate that has been unprecedented, virtually as much coming in as was being cut under the Filmon years, with the 15 billion that the fellow that is going to go out and run for Prime Minister today and in a few short weeks call an election, Mr. Paul Martin, cut \$15 billion out of transfer payments on health care in the country of Canada.

Manitoba was very hard hit by those actions. And finally, after four years, when they get down to having used up all the pots of gold at the end of the rainbow, this Government comes out and says, "Well, you know, things are getting tough now. We had a tough time balancing the books this year. We are not going to do it under generally accepted accounting practices, but we still have a deficit basically, according to the Auditor General, of \$58 million in this province."

I just do not think that is good enough for the citizens of Manitoba at a time when we have seen record low interest rates, record transfer payments from the federal government, record amounts of economic activity in some certain circumstances. And certainly they are not all happening here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am talking about an across-Canada base. All provinces are having to make these decisions and it is only an accountable government that understands that even under tough circumstances you have to make these decisions for the betterment of the future of our children in this province and disabled people like the persons that are impacted by the bill that the honourable Member from River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) has put forward in the Legislature here that I am urging each of the members of this House to vote in favour of as we move down the road.



Let me give you another example. The New Democratic government in the province of British Columbia almost broke that province. The new Liberal member, the new Liberal Premier, is coming in and having to make some very tough decisions in regard to where the future will be in that province. And he is not very popular for doing that, from what I understand. But you know, neither was the NDP Premier at the end of it when people in the province realized that that province was going broke.

One prime example is the ferries that cost some \$400 million to build that were never used. They actually built these ferries. Fast ferries I think they called them. Boy, I will tell you, there were fast ferries in this one. They were flying all over the place. Those things never even hit the water. They managed to float, but they really never got across the bay very often and one, I think, just never even got out of the port. This is an example of another NDP bungling of a process, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that actually wasted money in regard to the future of the citizens of that province, and they were turfed.

I believe that this Government, the same outcome will come to them in very short order because Manitobans are waking up to the fact that this Government has spent all of the surpluses that were in government from the best position that any province has ever left a government in in Canadian history, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the NDP came into power in 1999, the best fiscal period that they were in at least.

So a third government in Canada that is having some tough decisions right now is in the province of Newfoundland, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These are not easy times in those provinces, but at least those governments in power today realize that they have had the best of both worlds. They are taking over from governments that mismanaged those provincial affairs and did not leave the citizens of those provinces in good long-term standing because of low interest rates, because of good revenue.

When those times are coming in, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we should be not just paying down debt in the province because the balanced budget legislation, as an example in Manitoba, says you have to reduce it by \$96 million a year. You can be darned sure that if that was not part of the debt reduction legislation in the province of Manitoba, this Government would not have done it this last time.

They would have used that \$96 million to cover up the \$75-million shortfall they had, to say, "Well, we had a \$21-million surplus." That is what they would have done, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They do not like balanced budget legislation. They do not really care whether we reduce the debt of this province.

The deficit was reduced by a government in very hard times in this province, as I have said earlier, from transfer payments that were cut back, from high interest-rate periods. They still eliminated the deficit, had balanced books in this province under the debt legislation for five years.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to just close by saying that I want to urge this Government to use its social conscience to vote for Bill 206 because of the good times that they have had, because they should be able to show some compassion for the citizens of Manitoba by bringing this kind of legislation before this House and before Manitobans and passing it so that it will allow them to pay for shortcomings of disabled persons such as is impacted by this bill brought forward by the member from River East.

I congratulate her for doing that, so thank you.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Obviously, there is a bit of confusion on the opposite side there. They put their papers down for a minute, and I thought just for a brief moment one of them was going to get up and speak on Bill 206.

Obviously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that did not happen. I know the member from Dauphin and the member from Assiniboia had the opportunity, but maybe they just do not feel like getting up today. The member from Inkster talks about sitting for 37 days, I wonder why we do not speak more than 37 days, and I can see why.

The only ones that seem to want to get up and do any work are the members in opposition, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I encourage them to earn their pay. I encourage them to get up and talk about these issues that are so important, especially a bill like 206.

Bill 206 has been brought forward by the honourable member from River East, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a bill that is going to help those that are disabled through no fault of their own. I find it quite ironic that people that have been elected, supposedly New Democratic members, say they stick up for the

little guy. Well, they certainly are not doing a good job of it on Bill 206.

Looking at the legislation on this particular bill would help different people with disabilities through no fault of their own. We had a particular individual in our constituency of Lakeside through no fault of her own had a car accident. She was pregnant with a little girl, and perhaps you saw it on the front page of the paper here about a year and a half ago. Very unfortunate, she was about to be married; now she is a single mother. Fortunately, she did live, but she will be a quadriplegic for the rest of her life.

With only one income, I am sure each and every one of us in this House has to take accountability for making sure, as government, we are responsible for those actions to make sure that we look after them. If we have one role to play in government, it is to make sure we are fair to every Manitoban around the province. It is our responsibility to look after those who are not as fortunate.

I am upset, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have not seen the members opposite get up and speak on this particular bill. I think it is important that the people of Manitoba understand their positions on this bill. It is a bill that has not been taken seriously by the opposite side, and it is time that they did.

\* (10:40)

This individual that I am talking about in Lakeside has found it very difficult. They had to be retrofitted for different pieces of equipment, equipment that helps her day-to-day life go on. We are so fortunate to be able to stand up in this House, talk and be heard. Without exercising that democratic right is something that is very shameful.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

As we try to look after these people, this Bill 206 will certainly not alleviate all hardship, I will make that quite clear. But what it will do is put on the record ways in which we can help those people be somewhat a little more financially independent upon their livelihoods. When you look at the individual that we are using in this particular illustration, from the member of River East, that has \$440 per month as part of her settlement, another \$164 would have brought her up to \$604. Well, I can tell you from sitting as a member in this House, I cannot live on

\$600 a month, and I do know of hardly any others that could live in the times that we are in as well.

It is a small amount of money. Very seldom do you see the facts that members from this opposite side are asking for giveaways. This is not a giveaway. This is a giveaway that may be looked at on the opposite side as being a giveaway, but we certainly do not look at it that way. We look at equity for all people, all Manitobans throughout Manitoba. Fairness is all we ask for.

People are put in situations where they are disadvantaged strictly by a system that is regulated and ruled by legislation in order to satisfy some of the disadvantaged people. Legislation like this from time to time does come forward. The bill would amend the public administration act about allowing a victim who is receiving ability to be brought up to the level of which that would be without having to have the Canada Pension Plan cut off.

When people are accidentally hurt from one thing to another, Mr. Speaker, it just does not seem right without the people on the opposite side wanting to help look after them. Just in closing, I would like to remind the members opposite to bring their ideas forward and support this bill, and if they are not going to support it, that they would have the courage to try and make sure that they get up and talk about this bill, because if they do not, then they are going to be going down on record, and we will help to encourage them.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) would probably love to get up and talk about this bill, because it is something that should be very dear to his heart. I think that it probably is. He just has not had the opportunity to get up and do that. Also, the member from Dauphin, I know he would like to get up and talk. He has a young child that he was telling me about when I first got elected that he was so proud of his new son or new daughter. With that opportunity, golly, who knows. I would wish this on no one. But sometimes accidents happen, and that is why they are called accidents, where by no fault of our own, they are brought upon us and we are just all of a sudden thrown in that little, dark room and left to fend for ourselves. That is dead wrong, dead wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Minister of Healthy Living, because I am sure he had the

situation the same and he sees it every day, probably far more than I do, because he is in that portfolio. He needs to take it quite seriously because there are 56 others in this room that have an opportunity to stand up and talk on this bill, and I think there are only 8 or 9 who have done that so far.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would just like, in closing, saying if you have not had an opportunity to speak on this bill, I think it is something that you should take quite seriously. If you have not read the bill, which maybe is the case on the other side, maybe they have not read it, we will be happy to give you a copy of the bill so that you can take it home, read it, and then we will be able to go ahead. *[interjection]* It is not that long. It is something that, even if you have trouble reading it, I will sit down and help and read it to you, if that is a problem. If you do not want to do that—

**An Honourable Member:** The Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) has an insurance company.

**Mr. Eichler:** Yes. The member from Elmwood has an insurance company. He makes good money off people who have accidents. That is a great feat and I am sure he knows all the ins and outs of the insurance business. Most people would want to speak to this bill, and I am sure that he will put on the record his comments once he has an opportunity to read the bill, if he has not had a chance to read the bill. As I said, I would encourage all members opposite to do so. I look forward to hearing their comments and I look forward to each of them putting their comments on record. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale):** Oh, I thought maybe someone was getting up over there. Pardon me, Mr. Speaker, I just about sat down again to make way for somebody from the other side.

The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) was just talking about the bill itself. Maybe what I should do is just refresh the House as to why we are in debate on this resolution. Maybe I could just give a bit of an explanation on it. Mr. Speaker, the amendment that has been put forth amends The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act. It allows an accident victim who receives an income-replacement indemnity to keep any part of the disability benefit that is paid to the victim under the Canada Pension Plan as

the result of the division of the pensionable earnings. It sounds very small, very innocuous.

It is quite straightforward. It is a situation that came out of an unfortunate accident with a lady in one of our constituent's ridings and it was brought forth with the intent that the Government would look at it in a very serious manner and, possibly, even have the ability to make the change or amendment to The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act. This is what we are debating today. As mentioned, the amendment in the act itself would be very, very innocuous. It is only a one-paragraph addition to the act and it would eliminate or look into the problem that has been created by the specific incidents under the personal injury act through the Manitoba Public Insurance corporation.

Mr. Speaker, just as a bit of a background, it was a lady who was severely injured in a car accident some years ago. She was dealt with through the personal insurance protection afforded under no-fault insurance. I think it is called PIP, as it was referred to earlier by one of my colleagues. The history of the family is that the lady was married to an individual who was disabled and receiving CPP disability. After the accident, she was compensated through the Manitoba Public Insurance corporation for her disability, but subsequent to the accident, she and the husband split up. As a result of that split, she applied, as was afforded her under the law, the opportunity to apply for income-splitting from her former spouse. She applied. She was granted an amount as a result of that income-splitting, but not realizing the fact that the money that was being taken from her husband and given to her was, indeed, going to be clawed back by the Manitoba Public Insurance corporation.

In essence, what has happened is the disabled husband did not have the opportunity to access the portion of the disability pension, and the disabled ex-spouse who is getting income replacement from the Manitoba Public Insurance corporation was not allowed to keep the additional \$164 a month. Indeed, that was clawed back from the payments made by the Public Insurance corporation.

\* (10:50)

What we are looking for, as mentioned, Mr. Speaker, is the amendment to section 197 of The Manitoba Public Insurance Act. I know that letters have been sent to the minister; there has been

correspondence that the individual has sent to the department and the frustrations that she has encountered along the way. If we look at the history of it, we are going back to 1997; 1997 was the unfortunate accident that this lady had, and she has been in contact and through appeals, from what I understand, and correspondence, not only through the member for the area in River East, but also in her correspondence with the minister. It was pointed out that, even through MPIC, she was the first one to bring this type of situation to the corporation.

So the corporation, in essence, had never been faced with this kind of dilemma, if you want to call it, before. One can say, "Well, you know, if you do pass this amendment, you are setting a precedent in a sense that others will happen and everything else like that," but, as pointed out by MPIC, this was the first time an incident like this ever came to their attention. MPI has been around, if we recall, since, I believe, 1972 when it was first introduced and first brought forth, so that is a long time, and they have dealt with literally hundreds and hundreds of thousands of claims along the way. This is the first instance of this nature that has affected this individual.

We are not looking at setting up a huge precedence of influx of claims against MPIC. We are looking at an individual that has been put in a situation where, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, because we are dealing with two people on disabilities, they are both suffering because of the strict rule of law that MPIC is enforcing.

One of the advantages when you are in government and you are a Cabinet minister is a lot of times you can look at situations. We all, as members in this House, have constituents bring forth problems or situations that they ask us to look into. That is really what the role of an MLA, a Cabinet minister, the Premier and government is all about. People have the right of access to their elected officials to ask for help. I encourage everybody to do that in their constituencies, and I am sure that I am not speaking out of line when I say that not only do we get calls on our side of the House as opposition, but I am sure that members on the other side of the House, from their constituents, will get calls from people that are looking for some sort of guidance or help or problem-solving that they have come across that affects their livelihood or their situation that they have been forced into.

We all try to help these individuals. Mr. Speaker, it is laudable, because we are in a position as the elected officials and, in a lot of cases, direct access to the minister or to some of these places, to try to help these people.

Now, these are some of the incidents, and it is usually the small things; it is the small little incidents usually that you get the greatest satisfaction in trying to help or steer through the maze of red tape or bureaucracy that a lot of individuals in our constituencies are facing. They come back with a sense of gratitude that you were able to help them and you were able to do something.

I think that is a very, very important function of MLAs and for Cabinet to recognize that, as elected officials, there is a responsibility, there is a duty, to try to help as many people and individuals in our constituencies, and for all Manitobans, whether they are in your constituency or not, in trying to get a betterment of their programs or their situations. We are talking here about an individual with a disability, a person that, I think, is trying to cope, is trying to get through the daily routine of existence in the community and is reaching out through her MLA to try to get some sort of resolve on a problem that is affecting her.

We are not talking a large settlement of money. We are not talking about a huge amount of money that this lady is looking at over the years. We are talking about a situation that is affecting approximately \$2,000 a year of income for this individual.

In the overall spectrum people say, "Oh well, it may not appear like a lot of money." But to a lot of people that are on fixed income or on a disability, that means an awful lot. That means a lot of times going without or buying something that they need. It may mean some pleasures in life. It may mean a movie. It may mean a rental of a video or something. These are all small little pleasures that people enjoy, and \$2,000 can go a long way in trying to eliminate some of the frustrations and the problems that this individual has.

When we look at trying to help these people, I think that it is worthy of the minister to reconsider a position that he has taken in regard to not recommending the proposal put forth. I think that the responsibility that government has to listen to the people and I believe that every Cabinet minister and

every person in government and in the back benches and in the Opposition take very, very seriously the concerns that individuals bring forth to them because they, a lot of times, come to their MLA as the last resort and a lot of times they do not realize that the last resort is sometimes where they can get the solution to their problems.

A lot of times people come to their MLA, a lot of times in a very intrepid and a very humbling manner saying that I have tried everything and I cannot get any answers. So they come to their MLA to see whether they can get a response for it, or a direction, or somehow to get a solution to their problem. This is something that I think, as I mentioned, the MLAs, everyone takes very seriously. The opportunity we have right now today in debating this resolution is where we can make a difference.

We can make a difference collectively. We can make a difference as an MLA. Mr. Speaker, we can make a difference as a Cabinet minister and we can make a difference as a government. When I say government, I mean government in all respects, whether it is opposition or the governing party, which is the NDP at this particular time.

So I think there is a lot of compassion that has to be looked at anything that is brought forth by a private member. A private member usually brings forth a bill that has a meaning to it in a sense of wanting to help in a particular way. I think that these are some of the things that have to be brought into consideration when we look at this amendment that was brought forth by the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) in trying to get help, a handout and a hand up, if you want to call it, for this individual that has run into a situation under the compensation and income splitting.

So the resolution, like I mentioned earlier, is a very simple one. The wording of it is very simple. It is just a one-paragraph addition to The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act and I will read it into the record, Mr. Speaker: "If part of a disability benefit referred to in subsection (1) is payable to the victim as the result of a division of pensionable earnings under the Canada Pension Plan, the corporation shall not deduct that amount from the victim's income replacement indemnity."

Very simple, a one line if you want to call it, a one-paragraph addition to the amendment to the act. I

think that this is something that should be very, very seriously considered, Mr. Speaker, not only because it is brought forth by the Member for River East but because it is something that I think that the Government, the minister should look at very seriously because it is the small things that a government is measured at.

The Government can go down the road of the grandiose, grand projects like dams and the floodway and the great expansion, which is good, and I do not criticize. Those are things that are very, very laudable for a government to go down the road with, but a lot of times it is the small things that the government is going to be measured against.

It is the reaching out to the people on disability. It is reaching out to the seniors. It is reaching out to people that cannot help themselves. Mr. Speaker, those are the things that the Government will be measured on first and primarily when people consider what this Government has done for them.

This is one of the things that they can help with. This is a situation where they can help an individual, Mr. Speaker. I think these are the types of things that Government should take very, very seriously when they look at how they can be better government. If the Government goes down this road, we will applaud them for this because this is something that we believe in. I would think that the majority of the backbenchers and Cabinet, the individuals involved, they look at this as a very serious situation and the fact that they had the opportunity to help.

I would recommend that the Government look very, very seriously at this amendment. Mr. Speaker, it is something that we will support entirely. We welcome their input into the debate, but at the same time we welcome their support for this amendment. I think that these are the types of things like I mentioned before, that government will be measured at. The election may not be down the road for a few years, but it is the small things that build up, and they come to a head when people look at their ballots.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The hour being 11 a.m., when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have one minute remaining, and also it will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick).

\* (11:00)

## PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 1—Agriculture Awareness Day

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour being 11 a.m., we will now move to Resolutions, and we will call forward the resolution moved by the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), Agriculture Awareness Day. The honourable Member for Lakeside has seven minutes remaining.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** The Agriculture Awareness Day is a bill that the honourable member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) has brought forward and a bill, Mr. Speaker, that is definitely going to be a bill that all members are going to support and I, certainly, encourage all members to support. It is definitely a bill that is good to see the other side of the House get up and talk about it. It is obviously a bill that is something they are trying to get educated on and bring themselves up to date on. I know agriculture is not one of their strong faiths, but they are definitely getting better at it. There are one or two members over there who are trying a little harder than others, who definitely are trying to drive the force.

The experiences that come with the Agriculture Awareness Day regarding the BSE crisis is one. We certainly need no more history in that particular field; however, the R-CALF announcement last week and the follow-up to it yesterday in Montana is definitely a situation that we are quite concerned about, and I am sure members opposite are as well. We certainly hope that members opposite have Plan B in place. I know on the educational side they are up to Plan H already, so when we get to Plan B in agriculture we are definitely hoping that they have their ducks all lined up and their plan ready to go. We are excited to hear what they have to offer on Plan B, Mr. Speaker.

The potato producers, we have not heard any more as far as the potato producers are concerned with their cut of six producers, is another industry that is being hard hit by the diets and other things that have come into place. Now we are talking about water preservation, and again that is an issue that is again quite important to both sides of the House, but we have to have water in order to irrigate those potatoes to keep the quality up, that we do not lose more contracts in that particular area.

The PMU industry, Mr. Speaker, is another industry that has been hit hard in the last seven

months. That industry is going to be probably making more cuts by fall. That money will be going out of the economy forever, and I remind all honourable members that that money, once it has gone out of the cycle system, will be gone and has to be replaced with something else.

Mr. Speaker, I notice the REDI program was cut back. A number of dollars that usually goes into rural development is down some \$100 million, and they blame it on the VLTs, not helping them out there. The VLT money is one part, but we drive the province of Manitoba through new growth, through new business ventures. That is where we get our true growth.

Mr. Speaker, we do not need VLTs for our windfalls in Manitoba, especially in rural Manitoba. Most of that money has been brought in by the City of Winnipeg and their casinos. Granted there are people in rural Manitoba, a few of them, who like to go to the hotels and play. If that is their way of life, they decide as they see fit, so well then, so be it, but definitely we need to sustain that rural development and make sure that we have plans available to move them forward.

The elk and bison industry is another industry that has been hit very hard, Mr. Speaker. The market in the bison industry with the plant being closed in Grand Forks has just put a strong, strong strain on that industry. They have been forced to ship their animals to Alberta, where they have to pay the freight, under the last program that the government opposite proposed with the slaughter program. They had to lose money, not only just the loss in the values, but they had to pay the freight to get them there.

The only money they got out of that particular bison was meat value, and that was after they got the subsidy from the provincial government. If they would have put it on the cash advance program, as we had suggested, they would not have been forced to sell those cattle. It put a glut on the market. We as an industry are going to suffer for it for a long time to come.

When the border does open, hopefully the bison industry, if there are a few players left in that industry, hopefully they will be able to sustain it and get their marketplace back. It is definitely an industry that we are going to have to try and work with and try and save, Mr. Speaker.

In regard to the TB wildlife herds in the Riding Mountain Park, we had another situation just south of Winnipeg in a dairy herd. It is an issue that we are going to have to make sure we stay on top of as we want to make sure that that is under control, because with the BSE and TB following we are going to have to make very sure that we do not let it get contaminated in the rest of our herds.

I notice my time is about up. I said I would just be a few minutes, but time goes fast when you are having fun. I am looking forward to hearing the rest of the debate on this. I know KAP is looking to try and work with Government to get into the tax situation. It is another area I never got to talk about, but a scenario I will definitely be bringing up in the future. I am looking forward to what the rest of the members have to say about this Agriculture Awareness Day that has been brought forward and encourage all members to get up and support it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation):** I am very pleased to rise today and give credit where credit is due. To the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), that is where credit is due on this one, along with the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), who have put forward this resolution, which I think is very important, moved by the Member for Carman, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture, supported I hope by every, single member in this Legislature to move forward on an Agriculture Awareness Day.

I have to say, though, off the hop, that I am pretty disappointed at the way this debate has gone. I just have to express my feeling that I think we are setting the wrong parameters, the wrong attitude about Manitoba farming by debating in here in such a negative way and bickering back and forth about this program, that program. I think we are missing the point. It is an excellent resolution. It is an excellent idea. I think we need to talk about what a great lifestyle farming is, what a great place to live in rural Manitoba is. I think we have to start talking about some of the positive things that happen in rural Manitoba. I think we have to give people who do not live on farms or do not live in small rural communities a much better sense of what life is like in these little places.

I want to remind all members in this Legislature, every single one of us should understand that only 3 percent—and the former Member for Lakeside used to

point this out time and time again. It was Harry Enns over and over who used to say that less than 3 percent of our country's population, less than 3 percent are involved in farming, less than 3 percent live in small rural areas, on small farms. He is exactly correct.

We have to understand that our country has been urbanizing for a long time. Over 80 percent of our country lives in 10 of the largest urban centres. Over 80 percent live in the 10 largest urban centres in Canada. We have to understand what those two facts mean. We have to make decisions in our legislatures right across Canada and in our House of Commons that reflect that reality.

Mr. Speaker, we also have to remind people over and over and over again how important agriculture and the products that we produce, the goods that farmers produce, how absolutely essential that is to our Canadian lifestyle and to our quality of life.

\* (11:10)

Mr. Speaker, I am afraid we are not doing that in this debate here in the Legislature on this very important resolution. I am very disappointed that we are missing the boat in that. We have got to convey, I think, the real reason for moving forward with this very positive resolution. It is not to squabble over the things that are going wrong in farming. I do not want to leave the impression that is all a bed of roses in the farm world and that every rural community is thriving. I do not want to leave that impression. I do not want to leave the impression rural Manitoba is not a good place to live either; which is what I am afraid we are going down the path of doing.

I want to talk a little bit about the real reason that we should be pushing for an agriculture awareness day, and that is to give Manitobans, give Canadians a positive, Mr. Speaker, a very positive, very good understanding about what life is like in small communities and on farms in our province. I do not think you do it, although I enjoyed listening to the current Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) and I was very encouraged when he said that time flies when you are having fun, because I think this should be a discussion that elicits happy attitudes towards farming.

It is something we can have some fun with, but at the same time I do not pretend that the border never closed. I do not ignore the impact that has been

had by the PMU industry. I do not underestimate the impact that the drought has had on farming and on rural communities. I do not underestimate the impact that bovine tuberculosis has had on many of the constituents of mine in the Dauphin-Roblin constituency. I do not underestimate that.

At the same time we must do a better job as farm people, as rural Manitobans, to convey what a great part of the province we live in and to convey the absolute dignity of earning your living by growing things from the earth, from raising livestock. Mr. Speaker, we have to get across to people that that is a very much acceptable way to live and that we do make a huge contribution to Canada, to our gross domestic product, to our standard of living and that the farm community makes that huge contribution largely unknown to many Canadians.

I do not think we get that by implying that our urban brothers and sisters, our urban cousins, our urban friends do not understand farming or they need an education from rural Manitobans. My experience tells me that many of the people who live in the cities of our country may have a connection back to the farms, or for the vast majority are willing to investigate, to research, to talk to people who live in small communities, to talk to farmers.

I do not believe that the people of Winnipeg have built a big wall around the city. I have never believed that. Mr. Speaker, I think all of us as Manitobans, whether we live on a farm or in a small rural community, whether we live in our largest urban centre, I think we have to understand how important farming is, and that is why I support this resolution.

We all as Manitobans, we all as Canadians, have to do a much better job of understanding what it is like to live on a farm, what it is like to live in small communities and how important that is for our overall nation. I think what we should talk about is the rural way of life, the farm way of life.

I think we should talk a little bit about the get-togethers through history and through until today, the storytelling, the sharing of experiences. As a rural Manitoban some of my fondest memories have to do with our little half-section of land in the Swan Valley. Some of them I like to tell, some of them I get a little embarrassed telling about. You know, about the time I was out on the quarter-section and I

hooked my harrows onto my neighbour's fence and dragged it halfway across the field before I realized that I had been popping out all of his fence posts. He was not very pleased when he found out that I had done that. But those are the kind of things you do when you are 16 years old and you are learning about farming. You are on top of a John Deere 4020 and no cab, and you have got this big implement behind you. Those are the kind of stories that we tell from one generation to the next in farm communities. My son will get a laugh out of that when I tell him someday.

That is the kind of thing we need to be talking about. We need to talk about all the celebrations that occur on a farm. Mr. Speaker, we need to talk about the celebrations that occur in little communities. These celebrations that I know so many of us in this room here today have taken part in, have helped organize, have volunteered, have done the baking for, have gone to the hall to attend. All these things are important and we have to convey that as a very positive approach to what I think is a very important industry and a very important way of life in Canada.

I think we also need to talk about the tough times. Goodness knows, in the past few years we are going to have lots of tough times to talk about to the next generation, or to talk about with our neighbours, or to share with our friends and neighbours who live in the cities of this country. We will have those tough times to talk about. But we have been through tough times before in agriculture. We have been through droughts, we have been through floods, we have been through low commodity prices. We have to learn from those times that we have been through because our grandparents and our parents developed some very skilful techniques in dealing with tough times in agriculture.

My grandfather, when he was alive, used to talk about how tough it was to load up a wagon of wheat, attach it to the horses and pull it into the elevator in Swan River, Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, he said the toughest part about it all was that before the Wheat Board was there, he did not know from one hour to the next what price he was going to get for that commodity he was pulling in. His advice to me was that people who have never hauled wheat to the elevator, without the benefit of the Wheat Board, will not understand how important that single-desk selling advantage is. His point to me, and his point to all of us that we need to consider, his absolute sound



advice on this, was that we need to learn from the experiences of those who have gone before us. That is good advice whether you are talking about farming, or teaching, or politics or anything. Those stories are out there and we need to talk about those stories.

This is a positive resolution that does not need the bickering of politicians back and forth. This is an opportunity for us to talk about all the good things that happen out there on a farm, all the good things that happen in our small communities, and that is what I think we need to talk about in this resolution because there are a lot of good things happening. I think it is incumbent upon us who have lived on farms, who have lived in small communities, to talk to others who have not had that experience. To talk to others who have not had the advantage of living in these smaller settings. To talk to people who have not had a chance to live with neighbours right next to them. Talk about how important it is to communicate with neighbours who are down the road. Talk about how important it is to communicate with your little rural center that you cannot just walk across the street to.

I think we need to talk about those kinds of things when we talk about an Agriculture Awareness Day. I want to talk about a couple of outcomes that I am concerned about that have developed over a course of a period of years and, I think, could have been addressed through a positive approach like we are taking here with this resolution.

The first one I want to talk about is this misconception out there that farmers are bad for the environment. Some of the most environmentally aware people that I know live on farms. Mr. Speaker, some of the best environmental practices that I know are employed by farmers who are out on the fields working and earning a living and enjoying this way of life.

\* (11:20)

We need to be able to talk about those things. The other practical benefit I see to this is that we need to talk about the number of farmers and family members who get hurt or killed every year on the farm. That is a huge issue that we need to be addressing. You see in the papers. You have got the big headlines. Anytime there is a disaster with a mine or a disaster out on the ocean or a train wreck,

we hear those things in the headlines. But every day somebody in farm country gets hurt, and we should know about that. We should talk to people about that.

Just in conclusion, I want to say that this is a very positive step forward. Do not forget the two facts that I have pointed out earlier. Only 3 percent of people in Canada live on farms. That does not give us a lot of leverage. More importantly, I want to remind everybody that more than 80 percent of Canadians live in large centres, the 10 largest centres of this country, so it is incumbent on us to get the positive message of farming out to everybody that we possibly can. I want to thank the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) for bringing this resolution forward and allowing us to put some positive comments on the record in terms of agriculture. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** I also would like to express my appreciation and congratulations to the member from Carman, Mr. Speaker, and the Minister of Agriculture for bringing forward the Agriculture Awareness Day.

I think it is very important for all of us to recognize agriculture as one of the biggest economic engines in our province. That would not be just farmers, but all of the spin-off industry that comes from that, whether it be agricultural machinery, farm equipment dealerships, even the marketing boards that are set up to market the farm products and all of the rural towns that support and have actually grown up around the agricultural industry.

It has been recognized that last year there were over 31 000 people employed in the agricultural sector. As I said, that would be in many of the areas, not just in farming. We all know that the number of farmers has decreased over the years as the large tracts of lands have amalgamated for economies of scale to allow the larger pieces of equipment to be actually more useful because they are costly and they need to farm more land to make the investment worthwhile.

When we think about farming, we think about the production of food. Food production, I think, is one, well, it is the most important thing. If you think about it, if we did not have food, if we had no production of food and we were unable to eat, Mr. Speaker, everything else would suddenly become

very unimportant. So agriculture, even though we may forget where the food is coming from, is our source of food, and it must always be remembered that food does not come from the supermarket. There are many places in many big urban centres where there are probably children that have not been outside of the city and really do not recognize that food does not come from the supermarket, that it comes from those fields outside the city where those big pieces of equipment farm on the land.

We farm our grain crops, and from our grain crops come our cereals, come our bread. There are vegetables and all those market gardeners outside the city and along the riverbanks where the soil is very fertile and conducive to growing the food that we need. That is where the production takes place, so all those vegetables that appear in the supermarket, they come from somewhere, not just a warehouse. And, of course, let us not forget the animals on the farm that produce our meat and dairy products. Again, we are very dependent on farming communities and it is important to recognize food as being the main important thing in our lives.

Agriculture is a very important part of rural Manitoba and, as I said earlier, there are much less numbers of farmers today and larger tracts of farmland. We have seen the agricultural towns in rural Manitoba diminish, the depopulation, I suppose, of rural Manitoba when people have to move away because their livelihoods are no longer there. It is unfortunate to see some of our smaller communities in decline because of that.

You know agriculture is faced with a lot of hardships. Recently, of course, we have had the BSE crisis and that has impacted significantly on producers of cattle. We have had drought in some areas of the province. There are many things that farmers face. It is a very risky business and they face a lot of hardships that people in urban centres may not appreciate or may never have to face. As I said, it is a very risky business and farmers are so reliant on the weather.

As I speak in the House today, my own family is out on the land trying to put their crops in. It is cold and it is not the weather they would want to have. But the growing season is short. What they say in Manitoba: "One hundred days from bin to bin." One hundred days when you take the seed out of the bin until you put it back in the bin. One hundred days is a

very short growing season. Farmers have to get out there and get that seed in the ground and then hope for the best; hope for good weather; hope that there are no droughts; hope that there is no hail when the crops are high; hope that there are no grasshoppers; hope that there is no fusarium and any other disease that will infect the crops.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, they are hoping for a high yield, but, inevitably, if you are a farmer, you know what high yields mean. They mean low prices. So, as I say, farming is a risky business. There are so many inputs, so many factors, so many environmental concerns, and farmers are environmentally friendly people. They recognize that they must be a steward to the land. The inputs that they put in, when fertilizer is put on the land, fertilizer is meant to stay in the soil and not run off on the water. What good would that be? Fertilizer is good for the ground, it is good for the crops.

I do not think that farmers get enough credit for the stewardship they do provide over the farmland, and I think that with Agriculture Awareness Day we need to congratulate them as well on being good stewards to the land. Farmers love their job. It is not a job to be a farmer, it is a way of life. It is a way of rural life. The farmers I know would trade it for nothing.

Having grown up in a small farming community, I find it very sad to see the demise of the edifice of the Prairies, that being the grain elevator. There was a time when there was an elevator in every small town across Manitoba, tied, of course, to the railway lines. As a child I remember going and playing in the grain as it was coming out of the auger in the elevator which was at the end of my street.

Of course, also, when we drove away and visited the big city of Winnipeg and we came back to the town that we lived in, the first thing that we saw across that Prairie sky was our elevator, and then we knew that we were home.

Now, I live in Headingley and we, just in the last few years, have seen the tearing-down of our grain elevator and another elevator at Mile Ten Six on Wilkes Avenue has also been torn down, and of course, these big grain elevators have been replaced by the magnificent concrete structures that there are much less of.

\* (11:30)

Of course, we know why there are less of them. The Crow rate subsidies, Mr. Speaker, that were available to farmers have been removed, and farmers now must haul their grain a lot longer distances and this has resulted in economies of scale and much larger grain-handling facilities, but the unfortunate part is that our road system in rural Manitoba has not kept pace with the advances in the grain-handling industry.

Farmers have a lot longer to go to haul their grain. Mr. Speaker, they have to haul larger, heavier loads to make it economically worthwhile, and the road restrictions on many of the grain roads are simply not adequate to allow those heavy farm equipment pieces and those dual tandem trucks to haul their grain the distance that they need to go.

As I mentioned, I think I did say that I grew up in a small town in rural Manitoba, that being Austin, Manitoba, and I think Austin, people will recognize here as the home of the Threshermen's Reunion. That was and is a huge farming festival that started 50 years ago. In fact, this July-August long weekend, the Austin Threshermen's Reunion and rodeo will be celebrating its 50th anniversary. That is an amazing place to visit.

When I lived in that town, it was just starting and there were just a few pieces of old equipment and a few of the farming people in the region had a vision to create a museum for farming to keep and preserve the heritage of the farm and the history of the farm. If you were to visit and go to this festival, you would see the old steam engines of the past being brought back to life, and there are very few people left that have the skill to do that. I wonder how far into the future it will go before there are no farmers that have passed on their knowledge of how to run these steam engines and how to stook those sheaves so that these types of heritage museums and festivals will be preserved.

The member from Dauphin also talked about the number of crafts and bake sales and whatnot that people in rural communities contribute to for the number of farm festivals. Every year, there is a farm festival in every rural town in the province and they celebrate the agricultural spirit of the community. They are celebrating the growth of their crops because that is their livelihood. They celebrate a

good season and they do that with their festivals and we all, from wherever we come, from have certainly been to those and participated in those.

So, I think that, as I said earlier, the farmers are, right now, as I am speaking here today, out putting their crops in. I like to talk about my own family who are putting their crops in today, planting wheat and Canola along the Trans-Canada Highway where our farm is located.

Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that the season will be a good one and that we will not see the things that we have seen in the past with some of the problems I have mentioned. I urge all the urban MLAs and all the people from urban centres to think about farming as a way of life, as a big contributor to the economy in the province, as the major food contributor to the province, and recognize the importance of farming.

We need to preserve our rural towns because that is the support network for the farmers and their families. I would discourage the industrialization of farming and the huge farm trucks run by large corporations. I would discourage that. Mr. Speaker, I think that would impede our farm life, our farmers, our small communities and I would not want to see that happen. I think that with Agriculture Awareness Day, we can promote the significance of agriculture, the importance of agriculture and the need to preserve agriculture for our food and for our way of life.

Having said all that, I would like to congratulate the House again in setting aside a day to celebrate and recognize agriculture in Manitoba as Agriculture Awareness Day. I support and applaud the member from Carman and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), especially the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), for bringing forward this private members' bill. I again, encourage everyone in the House to be aware of the significance and importance of farming in our province. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert):** Mr. Speaker, I stand to speak in favour of this private member's bill. I want to congratulate the member from Carman for putting this forward. I think it is actually an excellent idea to have an Agriculture Awareness Day. I commend him. I like to think of myself as a city girl married to a country boy. I come from the city, but I actually married a fellow who comes from Fort Whyte. His family all resides on La Salle Road, and I

have some idea about agriculture, although probably not as strong as the member from Morris.

I would like to say that on April 3, Mr. Speaker, I attended the 4-H Western Canada Conference on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) that happened at the Holiday Inn Airport West. It is amazing, the strength of the farm community and the 4H movement. How very important a role it plays in the farming life. Their ceremony of swearing an oath and talking about how very important farming is, is great. Having an Agriculture Awareness Day can only help us understand, those of us who reside in the city, the importance of agriculture.

I would also like to say that in St. Norbert we are blessed with a very important institution, the University of Manitoba. The University of Manitoba, in the Faculty of Agriculture, is undertaking a new initiative with the Richardson Food Centre. I am not sure how many members are aware of the importance of nutraceuticals and what an important role they play in our lives. That is what the Richardson Centre will be all about. It is a \$7-million project and it will be unfolding as we move ahead. I attended on behalf of the minister for secondary education. I wanted to just say how important agriculture is, particularly the agriculture diploma course that the graduates were coming from. There are many jobs available for people in this field, and I would like to encourage young people to get involved in agriculture because there are jobs out there waiting for them.

Mr. Speaker, our Government fully supports increasing agriculture awareness. We think this is a fabulous idea to have this bill come forward and for people to be aware of the importance of food, the importance that it plays in our lives. When we talk about things like soybeans, potatoes, new seeds that Syngenta is putting forward, all of this is making our whole industry in terms of agriculture change. I do not think that a lot of people are aware that one in ten jobs can be directly attributed to agriculture. It is important that we make agriculture known to people who live in the cities as well as it is known to people who live in rural Manitoba.

I also attended the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair March 31 and April 1 in Brandon. It was an excellent show. It highlighted the importance of agriculture in our whole community here in Manitoba in terms of rural as well as in terms of urban. We need to be aware that there are a lot of new changes that are

going. If you look at the new Syngenta competition that was there at the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, it was an excellent competition to talk about new seeds and the opportunities for seeds that are happening.

\* (11:40)

So, on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we do support the introduction of Agriculture Awareness Day. I just wanted to stand and say congratulations to the Member for Carman for putting this forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I too rise in support of this resolution. It is a positive resolution recognizing Manitoba Agriculture Awareness Day. I think it is something that is very positive. We are quite pleased to see that it is in fact introduced and just to add a few words on the record in regard to it.

Mr. Speaker, I have had opportunity from my childhood to become more and more acquainted with the agricultural community. I can recall as a child actually going out to a farm and being hoisted on to a tractor, which was quite an exciting time at that time, and enjoyed it tremendously. It left an impact, especially the one day we were cultivating the field, I guess, and he said, "You know, you cover the gopher holes, so if you want you can go and run and chase some gophers." It was quite the experience.

I say that because agriculture is something in which, I believe, the more you get into, the more you want to get a better understanding of. So even from that early time to this day, I can recall having drive-throughs with our former critic back in '88-89, Lawrie Evans, who was pointing out the difference between flax and other types of crops.

I remember hearing the Leader of the Liberal Party talk about the diversification, ethanol and the potential of ethanol. There is so much diversity within our farms. The crop that everyone is familiar with is of course wheat, but Canola, ethanol, there are all sorts of vegetable farms. The farming industry as a whole has contributed from the origins of our province to this day and will continue to do so.

Driving one day out in rural Manitoba, I had seen all of these floodlights in a field. As I came closer, I saw it was a—*[interjection]* No, it was not a UFO. What it was was a line of tractors harvesting

the bounty from the fields, and it was very impressive. We feed people throughout the world.

There is a great feeling, as a Manitoban, seeing our farmers hard at work, feeling so good knowing that this produce that is coming from the land is actually feeding the world. Even though it is a small percentage that actually have the privilege, and when I say privilege, you know, it is hard work, I know it is hard work, many of the farmers that I have talked to, that we are contributing to the world through the production that we do here in Manitoba.

So even though a vast majority of Manitobans do not really have the opportunity to work the fields like our farmers, I think that we all take a great sense of pride of the hard work that is done in our rural communities because we see the net benefit for the province, not only economically, but also socially. It has been such a wonderful thing for our province, that is one of the reasons we exist the way in which we do today.

Mr. Speaker, there are industries that, obviously, have changed. I remember debate in this Chamber about the sugar beet industry. There are other industries that have actually grown, the Canola industry, and it is important that government do what it can to assist our farmers. The BSE is another good example, weather conditions, there are things that occur at no fault to our farmers in which, at times, there is a need for government to be proactive and be there for our agricultural community.

So, having said that, I do believe that it is important that we support this resolution. I would have liked to see the Pool of the Black Star, and I use that as an example, we get thousands of people, children that come to our Legislature, I would love to see some sort of a mural that would reflect the history of our province from an agricultural point of view, from a multicultural point of view, just to give

some heritage and use that Pool of the Black Star, get some sort of a mural. We see beautiful murals throughout the city of Winnipeg if you drive through, and, I suspect, there are even some on some of the rural buildings.

I think that there is some merit for doing something of that nature, that not only should we recognize a day but have the Pool of the Black Star or some other space within the Legislature, so as get tourists coming through, Mr. Speaker, that we are reminded. We get so many people young people that have tours. We should remind them of the benefits of our province and all the different dynamics at work, and agriculture is second to no other.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, we are quite prepared to see this resolution, in fact, voted upon, and we suspect it will be supported by all MLAs inside this Chamber. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any other speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question before the House is the resolution moved by the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk).

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

Is there a will to show unanimous support? *[Agreed]*

Is there a will of the House to call it twelve o'clock? *[Agreed]* The hour being twelve noon, we will now recess and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, May 6, 2004**

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