

Second Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	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.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, 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.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 29, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Child-Care Centres

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

These are the reasons for this petition:

There is an ongoing critical shortage of child-care spaces throughout Manitoba, particularly in the fast-growing regions such as south Winnipeg.

The provincial government has not adequately planned for the child-care needs of growing communities like Waverley West where the construction of thousands of homes will place immense pressure on an already overburdened child-care system.

The severe shortage of early childhood educators compounds the difficulty parents have finding licensed child care and has forced numerous centres to operate with licensing exemptions due to a lack of qualified staff.

Child-care centres are finding it increasingly difficult to operate within the funding constraints set by the provincial government to the point that they are unable to provide wages and benefits sufficient to retain child-care workers.

As a result of these deficiencies in Manitoba's child-care system, many families and parents are growing increasingly frustrated and desperate, fearing that they will be unable to find licensed child care and may be forced to stop working as a result. In an economy where labour shortages are common, the provision of sustainable and accessible child care is critical.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) to consider addressing the shortage of early childhood educators by enabling child-care centres to provide competitive wages and benefits.

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider adequately planning for the future child-care needs of growing communities and to consider making the development of a sustainable and accessible child-care system a priority.

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider the development of a governance body that would provide direction and support to the volunteer boards of child-care centres and to consider the development of regionalized central wait lists for child care.

To encourage all members of the Legislative Assembly to consider becoming more closely involved with the operations of the licensed day-care facilities in their constituencies.

This petition is signed by Joyce Contios, Brenda Mazur, Debra Belfast and many, many others.

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

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by Edna Friesen, Katherine Wiebe, Anne G. Wiebe and many, many others.

Provincial Nominee Program—Applications

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Immigration is critically important to the future of our province, and the 1998 federal Provincial Nominee Program is the best immigration program that Manitoba has ever had.

Lengthy processing times for PNP applications causes additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families here in Manitoba.

The government needs to recognize the unfairness in its current policy on who qualifies to be an applicant.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider establishing a 90-day guarantee for processing of an application for a minimum of 80 percent of applicants that have family living in Manitoba.

To urge the provincial government to consider removing the use of the restrictive job list when dealing with the family sponsor stream.

This is signed by R. Franolsco, H. Macdangdang, P. Taah and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Pharmacare Deductibles

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for the petition:

The NDP government has increased Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent each year for the past seven years, with the curious exception of 2007 election year.

As a result of the cumulative 34 percent hike in Pharmacare deductibles by the NDP government, some Manitobans are forced to choose between milk and medicine.

Seniors, fixed and low-income-earners in Manitoba are the most negatively affected by these increases.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba to consider reversing his decision to increase Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent in the budget 2008.

We request the Premier of Manitoba to consider reducing health-care bureaucracy, as previously promised, and to consider directing those savings into sustaining Pharmacare and improving patient care.

This petition is signed by Laurie Schellenberg, Lester Schellenberg, Deb Buhr and many, many more Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I table before the Legislature today the '06-07 Volume 4 of Public Accounts, three copies.

If anybody would like, we could throw in a copy of *War and Peace*, too.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Current Forest Fire Situation

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): I have a statement for the House.

As the Minister responsible for Emergency Measures Organization, on behalf of the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), I'd like to inform the members of the House of the current forest fire situation in northern Manitoba.

The Minister of Conservation and local MLAs are presently in the north meeting with the affected local communities.

There are currently 27 fires burning, Mr. Speaker, in the province, and six fires of concern in northern Manitoba. These are fires impacting the communities of St. Theresa Point, Wasagamack, Sherridon and Norway House, in fact, a number of areas in Norway House. Authorities are monitoring the situation.

Approximately 1,500 people have been evacuated from all affected communities, including in Sherridon, St. Theresa Point and various islands around Norway House, including Mission Island and Fort Island. Evacuations were undertaken for both precautionary health measures and to address a direct fire threat to the communities.

Manitoba departments, including the Emergency Measures Organization, the Manitoba Conservation Fire Program and Office of the Fire Commissioner, are working co-operatively with other organizations including the Manitoba Association of Native Firefighters, the local community leadership and the federal government and its agencies.

Currently, we have deployed over 300 staff, 17 helicopters, eight water bombers and three single-engine aircraft tankers. Through the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre, the Manitoba Fire Program has imported 48 firefighters and two CL-415 skimmers from Ontario to assist our crew. If I could, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we greatly appreciate the assistance being provided by Ontario.

I would like to extend a sincere thanks to all staff and ground workers that are making a tremendous effort to help combat these fires. Our thoughts also go out to the residents of the affected communities. To date, Mr. Speaker, we've had 141 fires burning a total of 8,399 hectares in the province. It is still early in an expected dry year for Manitoba, and we remind people that they must be vigilant in taking precautions when dealing with fire in our forests and communities. We will strive to ensure that the message is communicated to the public. Thank you.

* (13:40)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I thank the minister for his presentation on behalf of the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers). I, too, would like to concur with the minister in regard to the thanks that would go out to the many, many firefighters and all of the equipment that has been displaced to help fight these fires. I think we can see the results of it in southern Manitoba here as well.

The minister's indicated 141 fires burning and it is very early in the season, with some nearly 20,000 acres. I still haven't completely converted to the hectare system, but there's a lot of land that's obviously been burning. It takes a tremendous amount of energy, equipment and expertise to make sure that we can continue to keep it all under control.

Fifteen hundred people being displaced from their homes, Mr. Speaker, is no small issue either, and I hope and trust that the government is helping with those people and that they have been moved very well. We hope that everything is being done to get these fires out and get them back into their homes as quickly as we possibly can.

I also want to thank our neighbours in Ontario, as other provinces have helped from time to time, and we've had the opportunity in Manitoba to help our neighbours as well. I would concur that we'd certainly extend that thank you to the Province of Ontario for the help that they've had in fighting these fires because it is very early in the season. We haven't quite got to June yet, and it's unusual to have this many fires and this kind of a dry condition, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say, as well, that, you know, I know how dry it is in some other areas of the province, Mr. Speaker. I come from an area right now that's faced with a severe drought. Of course, we don't have forest fires. The emergency measures that we dealt with the last time were hurricanes that were going through that area last summer, and I know that there's still debris to be picked up and cleared from that as well. I just want to say thank you again to all of the staff and our neighbours and to the minister for raising this issue.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I want to express, on behalf of the Liberal Party, our concern for people in the communities which are affected, in St. Theresa Point, in Sherridon, in Wasagamack, Norway House and surrounding areas. I've certainly had some communication from individuals in the areas about the dire conditions that are there and the very concerns that people have for themselves and for their communities. Our hearts go out to those who are affected, and we certainly thank the valiant efforts of firefighters and all those who are doing everything that can be done to put out these fires.

Very concerned about the situation and want to emphasize, as the minister has indicated, the caution that people must have in Manitoba with the dry conditions in terms of not starting fires. Dealing with, as we have been very recently, Bill 15, greenhouse gases, it highlights that the government, if they're going to meet their commitments, is going to have to have a much better policy than we've had in the past for preventing forest fires because of the huge amounts of greenhouse gas they produce. So we're looking forward to the government producing that plan as part of their ongoing effort.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my right where we have with us Mr. Binx Remnant who is a former Clerk of this Assembly.

Also in the public gallery we have with us from J.R. Walkof Elementary School 75 grade 4 students under the direction of Ms. Linda Wall. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Bill 37

Public Hearings Extension

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): It's fitting that we would have Mr. Remnant here today given all of the interesting deliberations currently taking place in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 37 alters the very foundation of democracy in Manitoba through a variety of changes to rules that call on taxpayers to contribute to parties they may not support, interferes with Manitobans' right to know, and fundamentally changes the way elected representatives interact with the people who elect them.

Mr. Speaker, public hearings on the bill have now been under way for several nights. The deadline for Manitobans who are interested in making presentations passed yesterday.

We made the request of the government that this bill be removed from committee and taken to a broad process of public consultation so that all Manitobans would have the opportunity for input into this groundbreaking bill which changes the face of democracy in Manitoba. Now, the government has said no to broad public consultations, so we are now in this legislative committee process.

I want to ask the Attorney General, given the importance of the legislation, the very many negative features of it and the limited opportunity to date for Manitobans to have input, will he commit today to extending the deadline to allow more Manitobans to register to present to the committee, so that as many Manitobans as possible can have input into this very important piece of legislation impacting democracy in Manitoba.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the committee's now sat for 12 hours. The first night for two and a half hours, the members of the opposition party spoke for two and a half hours on procedural matters while people waited to speak.

Last night they went on again for half an hour. In fact, I can almost hear the drone of the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) going on and on, and then they had the audacity to apologize to the public for why it was taking so long, Mr. Speaker.

We were following the process of the only jurisdiction in the country that goes to the public and allows the public to speak on every single bill in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker. It's a policy that's been in place for years. We're very proud of it. Speakers in the public were very impressed with the fact that we had a chance to listen.

Mr. McFadyen: Of course, the minister hasn't responded to the question.

They've said no to broad public consultations for Manitobans. He is now saying no to extending the deadline for Manitobans to present. He's taking issue with the right of MLAs to debate during committee proceedings. I would ask perhaps that he only take a look five seats to his right where sits in this Legislature the high priest of procedural shenanigans, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), so—

Mr. Speaker: Order. All members are honourable members in this House. I ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. McFadyen: I'll withdraw the comment, Mr. Speaker. One of the finest procedural authorities in this Legislature who sits five seats to the right of the member.

I want to ask—

An Honourable Member: I think I prefer his first one.

Mr. McFadyen: If the Member for Thompson wants to rise on a point of order, we can address whether or not the first characterization or the second one was more appropriate. I'm happy to debate that point with him.

But, Mr. Speaker, they should adopt a consistent position within their caucus on these issues. Now that they're in government, I know they're in a big

hurry to get this bill through. They're not interested in debate in committees and open public hearings.

So they've said no to broad public consultations. They're now saying no to extending the registration deadline for Manitobans. I want to ask the minister: If he's not prepared to do either of those things, will he at the very least make the commitment to Manitobans that he won't attempt to run a committee 24-7 so that those Manitobans who want to come and listen to the debate that takes place after public presentations can attend, or is he going to attempt to run this committee under the cover of darkness, Mr. Speaker, and prevent Manitobans from participating in and watching the debate on this very important piece of legislation?

* (13:50)

Mr. Chomiak: First of all, Mr. Speaker, members opposite had asked for a week off. We changed that. We're sitting all week.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, one of the presenters the other night who was speaking against the bill—and the Tories were all chuckling along—said, you know, why don't you deal with your legislation after midnight and later on and in the Legislature and allow the public hours and allow us to speak instead of your talking back and forth. She said that to the members opposite, that we should use the public time to listen to the public.

We have lots of time in this Legislature to debate. We debate for hours and hours, and we'll be debating for hours and hours, but when the public has time to speak, I wish members opposite wouldn't go on points of order and waste hours and hours and hours.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it surprising that the Attorney General would make reference to that presenter who was also expressing outrage over the fact that retired teachers who are not getting COLA on their pensions are faced with an NDP bill that gives COLA to political parties. She went on to say that it's bullying when a government attempts to ram legislation through the process in such great haste. She used the word "bullying." I know we have a bill against cyber-bullying, but how about a bill against committee bullying on the part of this NDP government.

But, Mr. Speaker, he hasn't responded to the question. So he said no to broad public hearings. He said no to extending the deadline to allow more Manitobans to register. He hasn't foreclosed the

possibility of running committees 24-7 and have debate occur under the cover of darkness, and now we've had one other very disturbing piece of information about the conduct of the Government House Leader come to our attention.

One of the presenters who attended to speak to Bill 37 on Tuesday evening arrived, came up the front steps of this building, the people's building, between 9 and 10 p.m. on Tuesday evening for the purpose of presenting, but when he arrived at the Legislature and walked up the stairs, he saw a closed sign on the front doors of the Manitoba Legislature. Between 9 and 10 p.m., while committees were sitting, a closed sign. So he turned around. He turned around thinking that perhaps something had happened and the committee had been cancelled, thinking perhaps the building was closed. He then saw some activity inside the front doors of the building and decided to come in and find out what had happened. When he came into the building he spoke to the security guard and was told by the security guard that the Attorney General had instructed that security guard to put a closed sign on the front door of the Legislative Building on Tuesday evening.

Mr. Speaker, this is the people's building. This building is meant to be open to all who want to come and speak and present. Then when we have a former member of this Legislature arriving to make a presentation to be confronted with a closed sign, to be told by the security guard that that sign was placed there on the instructions of the Attorney General, what we have is further evidence of a government that is not in the least concerned about openness and democracy but is, instead, bent on the path of closure.

I want to ask the minister if he will apologize for the instructions given to the security guard. Will he take the closed sign off of the people's building and will he ensure that all Manitobans have the opportunity to participate in this very important debate?

Mr. Chomiak: I have no idea what the member is talking about. I have no idea, nor do I have the authority to tell anybody to put a closed sign up.

Mr. Speaker, I love the member—I know he's worried about me bullying him, and the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) worries about bullying.

The Tory party feels like a bunch of victims. They're victims in question period because they're

lousy in question period. They feel victims of the committee because they're lousy at committee. They feel victims of democracy because they've lost three elections in a row. They're victims of everything. They stand up and they're poor victims.

If they weren't victims, Mr. Speaker, they would stand up and fight. But make up stuff. Make up stuff third-hand and bring it to the Legislature. What kind of question period is that?

When I used to ask questions, I always verified it with two people. That was a rule I had before I'd raise it in the Legislature, and I'd ask a minister if it was something like that. That is such—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for River Heights, on a point order.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, there was a major problem. The opposition leader is right. It was a normal practice to put closed on the front door of the Legislature, but it wasn't changed when the committee was hearing. There is a major problem. It needs to be addressed. The minister is wrong to take this in other than a very serious matter.

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

Mr. Chomiak: I'll accept that fact, because I don't know what the sign was. But for the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) to say that I instructed the guards to put a closed sign on is typical of the Tory malarkey that goes on, Mr. Speaker.

They make up stuff. They get way over the top, Mr. Speaker. No wonder no one takes them with credibility. Everything is over the top. They take a silk purse and turn it into a sow's ear. I've never seen such extremism in my life.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order should not be used for debate. On the point of order raised, it is not a point of order, and points of order should point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure from our practice, not a means to debate one another.

The honourable Member for Steinbach, on a point of order?

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I challenge your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in support of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Goertzen: A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

* (14:10)

Order. The question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained.

Division

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

Yeas

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Swan.

Nays

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 29, Nays 20.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

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

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: On a matter of privilege.

The honourable Member for Russell, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Derkach: I rise today on a matter of privilege, Mr. Speaker, as a result of what has just transpired in the House.

I know there are two conditions that have to be met in order to be able to substantiate a matter of privilege. One, that it is raised at the earliest convenience, and, Mr. Speaker, this is the earliest convenience in terms of being able to raise this matter; secondly, that a prima facie case be established to substantiate the matter of privilege. That's what I will do now.

Mr. Speaker, privileges of members here depend on the goodwill and on the rules that are established in this Legislature and, indeed, on the tradition that has been established in this Legislature over many, many decades.

Mr. Speaker, members of the public are given an opportunity to respond to legislation that is presented by the government through a committee structure. Those committees are held in either one or two rooms in this Legislative Building, and usually the committee process takes place in the evening.

Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last number of days, we have had many presenters who have wanted to make presentation on a number of bills. We have seen large registrations of Manitobans on bills, and, indeed, I think their desire was genuine in wanting to make their views known as to the legislation that is being proposed by the government.

But, Mr. Speaker, people have to have access to this building and maybe that is good reason for a building of this nature to be under the purview of the Speaker rather than of the government, because we saw what happened in this instance. An employee of the Legislature here indicated that the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak) had given the instructions that a closed sign be put on the building after 6 o'clock or after 8 o'clock. When that sign went up on the building, it gave the indication to Manitobans that they should not enter this building. The Attorney General can't fly out from under this because if, in fact, as is stated by an employee where we don't have any reason not to believe the employee, that in fact this happened, then the Attorney General has crossed the line in terms of trying to keep people out of the building at a time when it is critical for Manitobans to let their views be known on important legislation that is before us, legislation that is going to impact on the lives of all Manitobans for years to come. So that's why it's important that we welcome people to this Legislature to make presentation on bills.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General, having given the order that the closed sign be posted on the building, simply indicates that the building is no longer functionable for the presence of people. Manitobans came up to the doors, they saw the closed sign and they turned away.

How many did that? We don't know, but, Mr. Speaker, we know of specifically one individual to whom this happened and he is not shy to talk about it. He is a respected Manitoban. He is a respected Manitoban who has sat in this Legislature, who has been a minister of the Crown. He is also a respected attorney in this province—his name is Mr. David Newman—who indicated that he came up to the door and saw the closed sign and thought—and I can quote from a note that he wrote. He said, and I quote: I thought maybe there had been a bomb scare or something and I started to leave.

But, Mr. Speaker, how many other Manitobans came up to that door, in that same way, and saw the closed sign and thought there's something happening in the building? We have seen this building closed at times before when there have been incidents that have to be dealt with, so when the building is not accessible to the public, the public use the sign as direction and perhaps leave.

* (14:20)

Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious matter because last night in committee I sat in one committee all evening and a number of names were called and those presenters weren't there. Now, we didn't know why they were not there, but perhaps one of the reasons they weren't there was because the sign on the door said closed.

Now the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak) thinks this is a little bit humorous. He keeps shaking his head in his place but, Mr. Speaker, I think Manitobans take legislation very seriously. They take the passage of bills very seriously in the province, and they take their responsibility in making presentations to committee very seriously.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General says from his seat that that's all filibustering, but if he thinks that Manitobans making presentations to bills is filibustering then he's living in the wrong country because he has been trying to bully his way—

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the Speaker, I take all matters of privilege and points of order very seriously, and I need to hear every word because at the end I will have to make a ruling here. So, I'm

asking the co-operation of members, please. I need to hear every word that is spoken.

Before recognizing the honourable member, I just want to make a correction in one of the statements he made for clarification of the House. The security guards are not employees of the Legislature. They are employees of Government Services. I don't want that kept on record because they work for Government Services not the Legislature. I just want to clarify that.

Mr. Derkach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and you are very correct in that, and I correct the statement on the record that these are employees of the government not of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know why the Attorney General thinks that this is such a light-hearted matter. I take very seriously Manitobans' ability to enter this building and to be able to make presentation on various pieces of legislation that the government proposes. This is the only opportunity Manitobans truly have in committee stage to make their views known and to try to convince the government as to what changes might be made to better reflect the wishes and the needs of Manitobans.

Last night we saw young people presenting on the environment bill. We saw young university students coming forward and making presentation. What a wonderful display of democracy, Mr. Speaker, when you have both mature and youth coming to the Legislature to make presentations on legislation. That says that Manitobans are indeed interested and engaged in the political process and that is something all of us have been fighting for, was to get a greater amount of engagement of the public into the process of what legislation really means so that indeed better understanding can be held by all of those in our province about how laws are made and indeed what impact laws have when they are passed in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is a breach, a serious breach on the part of government to put a closed sign on this building because this building is not under your purview. This building is not controlled by you, as it should be. This building is controlled by the government and, so, therefore, the government has gone so far as to put a closed sign on the door to give the impression that the building is closed and that there is no access to it for people to come in and present to committees.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I take that very seriously and that has to be corrected. We are in the midst of committee hearings on important bills, probably the most important bills we have heard in this Legislature for a long time in terms of their potential impact on citizens of this province. So that's why it is important to make sure that every step is taken that we can take to allow the public access to this building and access to these committee rooms. How else will any citizen know that, indeed, the committee is going on in Room 254 and 255 when the sign at the front of the building says closed.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very serious matter. I think this is one that you as Mr. Speaker, indeed committee of this Legislature, is going to have to consider very seriously in terms of how we proceed in the future but also in terms of how we make amends to those people who perhaps did not attend committee last evening, because they thought the building was closed.

I think that this has to be given some serious consideration. I think there is something else that needs to happen here. In order to be able to give access to Manitobans properly, there should be an extension on the number of days that Manitobans have to register for committee hearings, because some of those members were dropped from the list last night. Therefore, they will not have another opportunity to register.

If we could extend the date, the time, for which these people can register for committee, whether it's Friday, Monday and Tuesday, then I think we will have attempted to make an amend for something that was done to perhaps shut out Manitobans' ability to be able to access the building.

According to the note that was sent to us by Mr. Newman, the sign was up on Tuesday evening. It doesn't mean that this just happened once; it happened on a number of days. Indeed, Manitobans could have been shut out not just one day but at least two days from coming to committee.

Therefore, I think it's important for us to send a signal to Manitobans to allow them to come back, if indeed, they were turned away, if they felt they were turned away, so that they could present it in committee on these pieces of legislation. We need to extend the time for which Manitobans can register to make their positions known on the legislation that is before us.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that this serious matter be referred to the Committee on Legislative Affairs, that it be reported back to the House and that, indeed, an extension be given to Manitobans registering for committee.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing any other members to speak, I remind the House that contributions at this time by honourable members are to be limited to strictly relevant comments as to whether alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): The member, I suppose, raised it at the earliest possible moment.

I thought the Leader of the Opposition's question was that I had ordered, on Monday night, the guards to block the doors. That was his question. Now he's saying Tuesday; so it was last night when I was in committee until about 11; I left at 11:15. Mr. Speaker, I must have run out, I guess, at some point and ordered the guards—that is uncatagorically incorrect and inaccurate.

The frustration, Mr. Speaker, with that kind of politics that members are playing, they don't have substantive issues, so they make up stuff.

Having said that, the fact that I've been advised that the staff, as is normal, follow a normal pattern—I don't know what time it is—8 or 9 o'clock, to put a closed door sign across the Legislature may have happened.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the government minister responsible for government services will look into that. It's always been a long-standing practice in this Legislature for the sign to go up. I have been in this building at committee hearings 24 hours.

I remember when the government opposite rammed through the privatization of MTS, promising not to do it in the campaign and then privatized MTS, took the proceeds and used it to balance the books for a couple of years. The hearings went on for 24 hours a day.

If there was an administrative difficulty caused by someone—I don't want to blame anyone, if a staff member went out.

Now, I do take exception with the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), who is a solicitor, and

the Member for Russell (Derkach) accusing me of ordering them to close the doors—if I get it right—so that people wouldn't come here to the committee hearings.

* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker, I left my father in the hospital to come to these committee meetings. I left my son alone at home to come to these meetings. The Leader of the Opposition is advertising on radio to come to these meetings. Our members have sat there for 12 hours to listen to presenters who come to these meetings, and we've consented to orders, and we've not spoken at length because we want the public to speak and they have spoken.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Tories have no issues; they're all—they're all hat and no substance. It's unbelievable. It's no wonder the opposition has shrunk in this province. No wonder they feel like victims. Certainly there's a problem if the staff put across a sign that said closed and some people didn't come. I think that's a problem, and I think that has to be looked into and dealt with. We even instructed the clerks to allow the 24-hour line for people to phone in to get on committee, and they double—they advised the committee they were doing a back-up system to make sure everyone got on the list. That's how seriously we took the process.

Now, you know, to then stand up and say somewhat—okay, it's one thing if it was inadvertently put on. I mean that's a valid point, let's discuss it. But to say that the Attorney General ordered them to close it to keep people out of committee is absurd, Mr. Speaker, absurd. Not only is there no evidence, it would be bizarre. It would be like me accusing Gary Filmon of locking the building when there were students protesting down here. The building was locked but I didn't say to Gary Filmon, lock the building, for heaven's sake. They have to have some sense of proportion and some sense of decency, and they don't.

If they want to raise a valid issue about the sign being put up accidentally, that's a valid issue, but to go—you know, the kind of accusations, and the kind of humbug characterization that's coming from the opposition is one of the reasons why the opposition feels like they're being victims. They are being victims. They're victims of themselves. They're victims of overblown rhetoric. They're victims of hanging on and clinging to a past that doesn't exist. They're victims of making up stuff. It's unbelievable, Mr. Speaker.

They've taken the bill—they characterized the bill that we're proposing—yesterday the Leader of the Opposition asked one of the presenters at the committee about the bill. He said, did you think the MLA wanted this to be your first course of action to introduce a bill and amending The Elections Act as the first thing they did? Now, I was thinking, wait a second; we've been in session for over a year. We've been close to 100 bills and the Leader of the Opposition is asking the person that the first thing we did was change The Elections Act. Where has he been for a year? There are 28 bills yet to go through.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the hours, the hours were agreed upon by agreement between us and the opposition parties. We agreed committees would sit from 6 till 12 or from 4 till 10. The 4 till 10 innovation was put in by us because we thought it might be more advantageous to the public, so we've tried both systems. It was an agreed-upon agreement. We wanted to go Thursday and Friday; the opposition didn't want to go Thursday and Friday—I mean we wanted to go Friday and Saturday, the opposition didn't want to go. They didn't want to work Friday. They didn't want to work Friday so we agreed to those hours. Now to say we would deliberately put a sign up to close the building to keep people out of committee, even though that—if that occurred it would've been an administrative issue and should be dealt with. But to make it into an issue of the emancipation is as typical for the opposition, totally overblown, out of proportion and inappropriate in a Chamber of this kind.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, a few brief comments on this situation. It's fairly often that I'm at the Convention Centre of the Delta Hotel and I walk back in an evening, so when I first came back and noticed the closed sign on the front of the Legislature, which was actually quite some time ago now, but it's been a regular occurrence since then, and, you know, I was actually rather struck. I thought, what is going on here? I've never seen a closed sign here before, you know; can't I get in? I walked up and the door was open, or I could push it open, and I went inside and it turned out that the practice had changed, that there was now a closed sign up at a certain time in the evening, and from what I've seen, it's been a regular occurrence every evening for some time now.

The problem here is that when there's a committee meeting that closed sign needs to be taken down, all right? It needs to be taken down whenever there's a committee meeting and for at least a half an

hour or an hour after the committee meeting is over. That should have been done. It wasn't attended to, but that's what needs to be done.

In my view, quite frankly, the government should acknowledge that there was a mistake made inadvertently, offer an apology to those who had trouble getting in or who saw this, and then offer a 48-hour extension in case there's somebody who wants to register who couldn't. Thank you.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak) giving advice on keeping things in proportion is a bit rich, Mr. Speaker, given his complete lack of proportion with some of his over-the-top comments.

Somewhere in all of that froth that came out of the Attorney General was an admission that the closed sign was left up. He made reference to the fact that he's aware that there was an administrative decision to keep the closed sign up, and if he's concerned about the point about the security guard advising Mr. Newman that he had been instructed to leave the sign up by the Attorney General, I didn't go on to say, by the Attorney General to keep people out of the committee. That part was added on by the Attorney General.

What I said was that the security guard advised that he was told by the Attorney General to put the sign up. If he's got a concern about that, my recommendation would be that he take it up with Mr. Newman and not go around casting aspersions about those who come to the House bringing forward information. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: A matter of privilege is a serious concern. I'm going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities, and I will return to the House with a ruling.

Mr. Speaker: Let's continue on with question period, and the honourable Attorney General had the floor.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, and thanks. There are many substantive issues that affect Manitobans: First Nations issues, Mr. Speaker, health issues, education, poverty, the rebuilding of our infrastructure, and I find it very passing strange that the opposition is only focussed on process issues because they can't find any substantive issues. I think we should get on with hearing the public in committees, as we have.

Bill 38
Government Intent

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): It's not the opposition that are victims. It's the Manitobans that are victims. Manitobans are the victims of high taxes. Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are the victims of high debt and Manitobans are the victims of an equalization welfare state. That's what they're victims of.

Mr. Speaker, the unbalanced budget legislation is the perfect tool for this government to revert back to massive deficits. The Finance Minister's key political adviser, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, is absolutely ecstatic. In an article published today, they state, and I quote: It is particularly worrisome that the existing legislation prohibits deficit spending and that Bill 38 begins to reverse the negative effects of that original act.

Negative effects, Mr. Speaker. Living within your means is considered a negative effect. Spending only as much as you earn is a negative effect.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister embrace the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): The legislation before this House right now, the balanced budget legislation reforms, is the result of criticism that came from the Auditor General's office since 1998 that there shouldn't be two sets of books. It also is a result of criticism from the Auditor General that money shouldn't be counted twice, once going into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and, secondly, when it comes out and is used again to balance the budget.

Those flaws in the existing legislation have been corrected. There are many other things that the existing legislation did not conform with with respect to the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles that this legislation corrects.

Most importantly, it includes, for once, the whole story. All the Crown corporations are included on the bottom line. The pension liability is included on the bottom line, and, Mr. Speaker, after nine years of balancing the budget, we have a plan in this legislation—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, that is nothing more than smoke and mirrors. It'll certainly come out in a deficit budget, I'm sure.

The minister has already assured us that he is going into deficit. This \$2-million surplus is going to be eaten up in a flash with the forest fires that we're now experiencing in northern Manitoba. Even with record revenues and a budget of almost \$10 billion, the minister still has no contingency built into the budget for unforeseen circumstances. What he needs is Bill 38 to give him access to more cash, this on a balance sheet from Manitoba Hydro and Autopac ratepayers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister admit that his poor judgment and lack of planning has jeopardized the fiscal stability of the province of Manitoba?

* (14:40)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I guess the member missed it when the credit-rating agencies gave us an upgrade this fall and said that Manitoba's fiscal situation was very well managed.

The member opposite seems to forget one vital piece of information in the budget. Although the Fiscal Stabilization Fund can no longer be used to balance the budget under our full summary treatment, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is at a very healthy level, over \$650 million, Mr. Speaker, and that is a contingency fund. That is a contingency fund for difficult circumstances.

If the member would just pay a little bit of attention and actually read the budget, he would recognize there is over \$600 million available for unforeseen circumstances, such as forest fires.

Assiniboine Regional Health Authority
Lack of Nurse Practitioners

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Can the Minister of Health explain why she ignored the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority yesterday when she announced more nurse practitioners for practically every other health region in the province?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question. I can certainly inform the member that we were very delighted to be making an investment yesterday of \$1.8 million to be providing—thank you very much—to be providing 18 more nurse practitioners across the province of Manitoba. These nurse practitioners, of course, we know provide excellent primary care. They have an

extended scope of practice. Manitoba was a leader, of course, in extending that scope of practice to be one of the most extensive across Canada.

This announcement builds on an announcement we made in February of 12 additional. I can let the member know that we filled all of the applications from RHAs that we received.

Nursing Shortage

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I've got a stat for her, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the answer is cold comfort to the educators at the Brandon University who are frustrated that they have to turn away nursing students year after year when there are 107 vacant nursing positions in Brandon and Assiniboine Regional Health Authority.

Since the minister isn't giving the ARHA another nurse practitioner, what is she doing to address the nursing shortage in Brandon and the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I really thank the member for the question. I want to remind the member opposite that it was just about a year ago now that we went to Manitobans with our commitment on health care, our commitment, incidentally, that made health care our No. 1 priority. We know, of course, members opposite went to the people by saying that health care would not be their priority.

We made a commitment, Mr. Speaker, to add 700 nurses to the complement of nurses working in Manitoba. We also know that according to the colleges and the listing of registered nurses that we've seen an increase in the last year of over 200 nurses, bringing that total to 1,800 since 1999.

Mrs. Rowat: During the last election, yes, the Premier (Mr. Doer) was in Brandon. He went to the university. He promised more nurses and more training positions, and then they ignored them when they made this very important announcement yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, why, then, has this government not taken the steps to ensure that Brandon University can meet the demands for students in Westman who want to become nurses to help fill the 107 vacant nursing positions in Brandon and Assiniboine Regional Health Authority?

Why is Brandon University turning nursing students away when there is a nursing shortage in the region, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Oswald: Perhaps the member opposite wasn't aware that just about a month ago the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) and I came together to announce a \$3-million investment to add 40 more seats for students to be educated in the province of Manitoba.

We've made investments across Manitoba not only in health infrastructure but in diagnostics, making all places in Manitoba an attractive place to work. We want to educate people in all places of Manitoba. That's why we're going to work together in Advanced Education and Health to make that happen.

These are curious questions coming from the folks that fired a thousand of them when they had the chance.

Dauphin Regional Health Centre Intensive Care Unit Closure

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, lots of announcements, no action, no results.

The intensive care unit at Dauphin Regional Health Centre was closed from Friday, May 23, until Tuesday, May 27, at 8 a.m., and it is closed again from today until 8 a.m. on Monday. Can the Minister of Health explain why?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I can tell the member opposite that when it comes to ensuring that patients get the best possible care in any facility in Manitoba, that the absolute No. 1 consideration, Mr. Speaker, has to be patient safety. So when doctors and nurses work together with a regional health authority, wherever in Manitoba, and it is a situation concerning health human resources or any other situation that would in any way compromise a patient's safety, steps are taken to ensure that that doesn't happen.

I can let the member opposite know that we're working very diligently to build our complement of ICU nurses and doctors for rural Manitoba. We're committed to do that.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, I think patient safety is compromised. What will happen if a patient comes to Dauphin ER and requires transfer to an ICU? Where will he be transferred?

Ms. Oswald: Of course, any sort of suspension of services for the reasons of patient safety would have contingency plans, Mr. Speaker, and those plans, of course, would be in place for any sorts of emergencies. That would include involving EMS. It would include involving doctors and nurses to ensure that those emergencies would be taken care of.

I can say to the members opposite once more that our commitment to bringing health human resources to rural Manitoba is real. We know that we committed to bring 700 more nurses, a hundred more doctors to rural Manitoba.

I ask the members opposite how many doctors did they promise, and in case they've forgotten, it's zero, because health care was not their priority. It continues not to be, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, we hear over and over and over again this minister telling us about all the extra nurses she's hiring.

Can the minister confirm that these closures in Dauphin hospital are due to a shortage of nearly 50 nurses in the Dauphin Regional Health Centre?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can confirm for the member that competition for health human resources across Canada and, indeed, internationally is very, very intense. Despite that fact, we know that the college and nurses combined posted their numbers for last year and that we've seen it—these aren't my numbers. They belong to the college. We've seen an increase of 200 nurses. In fact, every year since 1999 we've seen an increase in the number of nurses in the province.

I can also tell the member that virtually every year in the '90s, we saw a decrease of nurses. They seem to think that their record in the '90s on health care isn't relevant. I respectfully disagree.

Bill 40 Security Risks

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, we support the idea of enhanced driver's licences, but with Bill 40 the NDP is rushing the process with little regard for the privacy risks involved. The privacy commissioners in other provinces have raised serious concerns about the security of personal information used on the cards. We all know that Manitoba doesn't have a privacy commissioner and probably won't be getting one anytime soon.

Is the Justice Minister aware of the concerns raised in other provinces, and is he totally satisfied that Bill 40 presents no privacy risks?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for that question. Indeed, that comprises a very significant part of the act that we have before committee that I hope we can get to clause-by-clause to deal with soon. We want to have as many people as possible to present, Mr. Speaker.

There are built-in concerns, and we raised that very specifically when we were reviewing the act. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there's significant provision for layered information. I do share, we all do share the concerns of the member, and there are factors built into the entire process, as it works its way back, that are similar to security systems for passports, et cetera, and that actually has been looked at.

I look forward to an opportunity of explaining it in fuller detail to the member during committee.

* (14:50)

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, Ontario is not moving ahead with the enhanced driver's licences. The Privacy Commissioner is concerned because the provinces do not have access to the federal government's citizenship data base.

Ontario's Privacy Commissioner argues that it's a very serious security risk for the province to duplicate sensitive citizenship and is also a massive costly project. Manitoba doesn't have a privacy commissioner to raise these issues.

Mr. Speaker, has the Minister of Justice given any consideration to this serious security risk?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I think that we'd rather be in a position where we had a cheap national identity card alternative so that all individuals who needed photo ID could have access to it. We're working on this with MPI and with the Province of Ontario to deal with several different types of cards.

The security issue has been very closely looked at and is of major concern. In fact, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons for the identity cards in the first place is to provide a sense of security and to provide some individuals who normally wouldn't have access to any form of picture ID, to allow them to have a chance to have a cheap affordable picture ID that will allow them to travel and to carry out other activities.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, privacy commissioners from across the country have raised many serious concerns about enhanced driver's licences. For example, there's a potential for third parties to track people's movements because the cards contain radiofrequency identification chips.

The privacy commissioners say government should conduct full-risk assessments of the possible security breaches, and they said provinces must consult with privacy commissioners and other parties prior to issuing enhanced driver's licences.

Mr. Speaker, will we set this bill aside until we have consulted with the federal government?

Mr. Chomiak: There are several issues. First, we have already consulted with the federal government, Mr. Speaker, in partnering with them. Secondly, the radio chip frequency will only be limited to specific information that is voluntarily provided, just basic data information that is voluntarily provided and allowed for by the individual. Our adjudicator will have the powers to make any orders with respect to this as they like.

What we're trying to do is to help Manitobans and to allow them a voluntary—they will voluntarily provide this information. They don't have to, Mr. Speaker. It's actually to provide an asset, to keep Manitobans with the ability to travel and to keep the economy between Canada and the United States and other provinces as booming.

After all, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba together with Saskatchewan has got the fastest growth in the country according to the latest economic forecast.

Dry Soil Conditions Effect on Cattle Producers

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, as I raised in the House earlier this week, there is an extreme drought or dry area going on in southwestern Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the articles from the *Boishevain Recorder* in the House. Scott Day of Manitoba Agriculture told the *Boishevain Recorder* this week the situation is very difficult for cattle producers. He said, and I quote: "They are having to haul water and buy feed. They have high feed prices and low commodity prices. ... Livestock guys need a lot of rain."

The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) on Monday didn't know there was a drought going on

anywhere in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. So today, can the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) tell affected producers if she recognizes the serious situation unfolding in southwestern Manitoba, and, if so, what is she going to do about it?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Acting Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question and, indeed, we know it's still early in the growing season. We're still in spring. I think the first official day of summer is the 21st of June. There's still a possibility for moisture. We know this. It's a history that we've had in this province, and we're certainly anticipating some moisture levels to increase in the province.

We understand it's dry and we do have MAFRI people who have been monitoring the situation that continue to do so. We have people on the ground, Mr. Speaker, all throughout the province with regard to the monitoring that they're doing.

A couple of other issues the member raised, Mr. Speaker, was with regard to hay listing and the hay-listing services that may be needed, but, as I mentioned previously, it's certainly too early in the growing season right now and rain can have a positive effect.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, it's easy to see this minister never farmed before. Without rain, producers will be forced to feed their cattle for the foreseeable future. Grain and hay stocks continue to dwindle and input costs will jump further. Dugouts are running dry. Some of them have been dry all spring. Producers will have to haul water and look for alternatives. For some, this could mean selling their cattle herds. For an industry that has taken a beating from BSE and low commodity prices, a drought could be the final straw.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) tell this House what immediate steps she is taking to help cattle producers weather this drought?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't want the MLA for Arthur-Virden, you know, frightening or scaring our agricultural producers in any way.

The Minister of Agriculture is very much aware and has staff on the ground monitoring *[inaudible]* continually and also monitoring the situation. I just mentioned that MAFRI provides a hay-listing service to facilitate hay purchases. I want to, at this time, mention the listing can be found on the Web

site which is: web2.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/haysearch. When I say slash, there's a proper word for it in technical terms, but the only slashing that went on in their term is when they slashed the crisis line in the 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, this government and this Minister of Agriculture is doing everything—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, he should maybe replace his Lexus with a tractor, I don't know.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to table this document, as well. Maybe the minister could tell Pierson area cattle producer, Todd Daniels, who recently told the *Brandon Sun*, and I quote: "It's critical out here. We need a lot of rain now for the hay to make something because we have no subsoil moisture here at all. There's nothing here."

Strategies are needed. Here's some ideas for the minister. These could involve programs to, one, move feed; two, address water needs; and three, possibly relocate cattle to areas where there is better pasture, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister again: Is she considering these types of programs or is she content to see cattle producers have to sell off their herds?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, the negative nabob. Thank goodness, the agricultural producers in this province are very, very positive in outlook with regard to the growing season.

You know, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to be able to hear the questions and the response, please. The honourable minister has the floor.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Aside from the weather forecasts, they are forecasting rain for today and tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. It's very early in the growing season with regard to creating panic with regard to members opposite.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable minister.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, they make light of this issue, and it's a very serious issue. Our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has good staff on the ground monitoring the system. There is a suite of

federal-provincial programs that are available to address this evolving situation, Mr. Speaker, including production insurance for crop producers, AgriStability to offset declines in producers' production margin, AgriInvest, AgriRecovery and the federal-provincial governments to determine this to be an emergency situation.

Sam McGillivray Case Public Inquiry

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, Sam McGillivray, who's with us this afternoon in the public gallery, has a story that needs to be heard.

Mr. Speaker, could you imagine being a child, where government or child services takes you into custody and then puts you into a foster care home situation, where you are woken up early in the morning, 4:30, 5 o'clock in the morning and then you are asked to go and clear a field of rocks. Not only are you the only youth, there's a multitude of other young people, young children, that are being asked to do this type of work by a government who is supposed to be protecting the interests of children.

This has happened and it happened in the '60s and '70s, and these individuals and Manitobans as a whole need to know what happened. Will the Minister responsible for Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) request an inquiry be held on this matter?

* (15:00)

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport): Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to respond to the question by the Member for Inkster, although, because of the matter being in the courts, I am unable to get into some elements of it.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the Member for Inkster because he raises this issue on a day that is the National Day of Action for Aboriginal people across this country to bring to the attention of the world atrocities that have occurred to Aboriginal people, among them residential schools and what the member describes so eloquently and that is that children that were adopted out into foreign environments away from their homes and the work that had to be done in bringing them home, also the housing situation of Aboriginal people nationwide, the health issues that Aboriginal people are faced with.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, before you cut me off, that what happened to Mr. McGillivray—

Mr. Speaker: Sorry.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what happened to Mr. McGillivray should never have happened. It shouldn't have happened, not only to him but the dozens of other children.

I'm looking to the Minister of Family Services, and I would suggest to the Minister of Family Services that he listen to what it is that his colleague just said, a national day of action.

Will the Minister responsible for Family Services take action today and acknowledge—because it was the Aboriginal children primarily that this affected, will he take the action today and agree to have an inquiry on this very serious, sensitive issue?

Mr. Robinson: What happened to Mr. McGillivray, Mr. Speaker, is really something that more members in this House ought to hear because what he experienced is nothing less than—I can't imagine us and our children going through those circumstances.

In some ways, I can relate, being a residential school survivor, to some of the devastating effects that this has had on his life. I've met with the lost boys on several occasions now. I've had the opportunity of sitting down with them, and together with the minister responsible we've been able to recommend some counselling services for them. I have strong faith that they're on their road to recovery, although maybe when these things happen to you as a child, you never totally recover.

But, certainly, I want to say to the House that I believe that Mr. McGillivray and the other brave boys that we know as the lost boys have made tremendous strides in their own recovery in trying to overcome this very, very sad part of their history.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, earlier today, I looked into Sam McGillivray's eyes, and what I saw was an individual pleading for help, an individual Manitoban that deserves justice. The only way in which the provincial government is going to be able to deliver justice to individuals like Mr. McGillivray is by having a public inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm asking for the Minister of Family Services to do today, a national day of action, as the minister has said, I'm asking for the minister responsible to take the action that the victims need

and ask for an inquiry into this matter, so not only will members of this Chamber be made aware of it but all members of the public, in particular the victims of this injustice. Thank you.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Well, Mr. Speaker, of course we owe a lot to inquiries that have been held into these matters and most particularly, of course, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Kimmelman inquiry. There are inquests that are held from time to time that inform us in very loud terms of the work that we have to do to achieve healing and closure with those who have survived wrongdoing in the past because the past is still here today.

I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to meeting further with Mr. McGillivray, indeed today, and we will do what we can as a government on a continuing basis to work towards that healing and closure that all Manitobans deserve and are entitled to. Such wrongdoing cannot be tolerated in the past, and it must be dealt with in the future by way of healing.

Economy Growth

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Earlier this year, the Conference Board of Canada predicted Manitoba's economy would lead the way in Canada with an economic growth of 3.7 percent.

Can the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade provide an update on this forecast?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Indeed, I was pleased several weeks ago to tell this House the Conference Board of Canada had predicted that Manitoba would lead the nation with a 3.7 percent increase in GDP in 2008, but I must acknowledge to this House that they have revised their forecast. In fact, their prediction is that Manitoba's GDP will grow by 3.9 percent in 2008.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, that has been noticed by papers across the country. *The Globe and Mail* just this morning tells us economic growth in Manitoba and Saskatchewan is predicted to surpass Alberta's this year. Indeed, those two paragons of socialism, the *Calgary Herald* and the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* told us two days ago that, quote, Manitoba also is experiencing its own boom, end of quote.

Manitoba's economy right now is providing more jobs, more investments, more capital, more opportunities.

Letellier Bridge Closure

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I have risen many times in this House to express my concerns about the state of the Letellier Bridge.

There's been a new development. Signs have gone up saying the bridge is closed for a few days while more work is being done. So many repairs have been done to this bridge that it appears to look like a patchwork quilt.

Will the Minister of Infrastructure concede that repeated repairs are only a stopgap solution? When will he replace this decrepit bridge?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): There is a long-term plan in our unprecedented \$4-billion, 10-year plan for fixing our infrastructure in the province.

Indeed, there is a temporary bridge closure for a few days. Just the other day, he said—asking the minister about the problem with the bridge—then do something about it.

When our engineers spotted that it needed some work, they indeed informed the communities around this particular region that it would be closed for a couple of days, a few days, would be repaired and then would be opened once again.

Indeed, we want to make sure that the bridge is safe for traffic. We are going to ensure that that happens. A long-term plan, of course, a long-term solution is by replacing this existing bridge.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

Prior to Routine Proceedings on May 13, 2008, the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) raised a matter of privilege concerning the impacts of Bill 37 and potential impacts on MLAs. At the conclusion of his remarks, the honourable member moved that this matter be referred to committee of the Legislature. The honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and the honourable Deputy Government House Leader (Mr. Ashton) also offered advice to the Chair. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity? Second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House have been breached in order to warrant putting the matter to the House?

* (15:10)

Regarding the issue of whether the matter was raised at the earliest opportunity, the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) did not address this aspect in his submission to the Chair.

Regarding the second issue of whether a prima facie case of privilege has been established, the ability of members to do their jobs is an important issue. There are various protections provided by parliamentary privilege which are in place in order to ensure that members are able to perform their parliamentary duties in the House.

I should note, however, that there are distinctions in the protection provided by privilege and that not all duties and functions performed by members are protected by privilege. For example, privilege provides the protection of freedom of speech, but only in the context of comments made in the House during a parliamentary proceeding. As the House well knows, comments made outside of the House are not protected by privilege.

Privilege also provides the protections of freedom from arrest in civil actions, exemptions from jury duty, exemptions from appearing as a witness and freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation and molestation.

Privilege, however, as noted by Joseph Maingot, concerns a member in the capacity as a member and not as a minister, party leader, a whip, parliamentary secretary or a critic. Therefore, when looking at allegations or breaches of privilege, it is important to assess in what context the action complained of has taken place and whether it involves a proceeding of the Legislature and whether it involves the duties of an MLA performing as an MLA in the Legislature and not as performed the duties of a minister, a leader, a whip or a critic.

The honourable Member for Inkster asserted that the bill would have an impact on his ability to communicate with Manitobans as well as affecting his freedom of speech. There are several points to be mindful of. First, it is not up to the Speaker to decide interpretations or questions of law. Second, freedom

of speech refers to comments made by members in the House in connection with parliamentary proceeding and, as members know, comments made outside of the House are not protected by privilege.

Citation 76(2) of the sixth edition of *Beauchesne* states in part, "the court made it clear that freedom of speech was limited to the floor of the House." Therefore, the honourable member cannot claim his privilege of freedom. His privilege of freedom of speech is violated due to comments or communications outside of the Chamber.

Regarding the issue of the impact on communications with constituents, this aspect of the duties of an elected member is not covered by the protections of parliamentary privilege, because there is a difference between parliamentary work and constituency work.

On March 18, 1987, House of Commons Speaker John Fraser ruled that breaches of mailing and householder guideline do not obstruct in any way a member from carrying out the activities for which he or she was elected.

Also, as noted on page 90 of Marleau and Montpetit, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, House of Commons Speaker Sauvé stated on July 15, 1980, in finding that there was no prima facie case of privilege in relation to member's constituency work: "While I am only too aware of the multiple responsibilities, duties, and also the work the member has to do relating to his constituency, as Speaker, I am required to consider only those matters which affect the member's parliamentary work. That is to say, whatever duty a member has to his constituents, before a valid question of privilege arises in respect of any alleged interference, such interference must relate to the member's parliamentary duties. In other words, just as a member is protected from anything he or she does while taking part in a proceeding in Parliament, so too must an interference relate to the member's role in the context of parliamentary work."

Similarly, in 1985, in response to a matter of privilege raised by a member of Parliament claiming that his ability to service constituents was being infringed or impeded by departmental directive restricting the release of information about a government program, Speaker Bosley ruled that, although the member may have a complaint, it was not a prima facie case of privilege.

Therefore, with the greatest of respect for the reasons cited, I must rule there is no prima facie case of a breach of a privilege.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, with no disrespect to you, I would challenge the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have support? The honourable member does have support.

The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in support of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Order. The question before the House is, shall the ruling of the House be sustained?

Division

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

Yeas

Allan, Altemeyer, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Swan.

Nays

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 28, Nays 20.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

* (16:10)

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet, if necessary, on Monday, June 2, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., and again at 6 p.m. on June 2, to continue considering the following bills: Bill 6, The Securities Amendment Act; Bill 25, The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Amendment Act; Bill 29, The Business Practices Amendment Act (Disclosing Motor Vehicle Information); Bill 38, The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act.

I would like to ask, Mr. Speaker, if you want to canvass the House to see if there's leave for the committee to meet concurrently with the House, if necessary, on Tuesday, June 3, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., to consider the same bills.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chomiak: I'd like to ask the House, and to announce that the standing committee will meet, if necessary, on June 3, at 6 p.m., to consider those bills.

I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet, if necessary, on Monday, June 2, at 6 p.m., to continue to consider the following bills: The Criminal Property Forfeiture Amendment Act; Bill 26, The Legal Profession Amendment Act; Bill 35, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act; Bill 37, The Lobbyists Registration Act and Amendments to The Elections Act, The Elections Finances Act, The Legislative Assembly Act and The Legislative Assembly Management Commission Act; The Court of Appeal Amendment Act; Bill 40, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the House if there is leave to see if there is concurrence for the committee to meet concurrently with the House, if necessary, on June 3, to deal with the same bills that are being dealt with between 6 and 12 p.m.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, in summation, leave's been denied to meet during the day on Monday and Tuesday, but we will certainly meet in the evenings on Monday and Tuesday, as I understand. *[interjection]*

I was just clarifying that leave was denied to deal with the House sitting concurrently on Tuesday, but the House will sit on Monday, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. to consider those same bills.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There are certain parts of this that need leave. We'll have to listen very carefully, please.

It's been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet, if necessary, on Monday, June 2, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., and again at 6 p.m., on June 2, to continue to consider the following bills: Bill 6, Bill 25, Bill 29 and Bill 38.

Now, is there leave for the committee to meet concurrently with the House, if necessary, on Tuesday, June 3, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., to consider those same bills? In addition to that, the committee will also meet, if necessary, on June 3 at—

Is there leave for the committee to meet concurrently with the House, if necessary, on Tuesday, June 3, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., to consider those same bills? Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Okay, then the committee will meet, if necessary, on June 3, at 6 p.m., to consider the same bills for that.

It's also announced that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet, if necessary, on Monday, June 2, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., and again at 6 p.m. on June 2, to continue to consider the following bills: Bill 14, Bill 26, Bill 35, Bill 37, Bill 39 and Bill 40.

Is there leave for the committee to meet concurrently with the House, if necessary, on Tuesday, June 3, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., to consider those same bills? Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. It's been denied. Order, please.

The committee will meet on June 3, at 6 p.m., to consider the same bills.

Okay, that's House business.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Deputy Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): Actually, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) has announced that there'll be committees on Monday night. Members of this House will know, because they've received a personal invitation from the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province—I have my copy of the invitation, I understand that all members of this House—*[interjection]* I would hope for some decorum from members opposite. I know they don't take most matters seriously.

I have my copy of the invitation, Mr. Speaker, that I received from the Premier, and I'll read it for you. I'm sure it's similar to the copy of the invitation that all members will have received, and it reads: In the presence of his Royal Highness, the Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, the honourable Premier of Manitoba and Mrs. Ginny Devine request the pleasure of the company of the honourable Member for Steinbach to a reception in the Crystal Ballroom at the Fort Garry Hotel, 7th floor, 222 Broadway, Monday, June 2, 2008, at 6 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, now the Government House Leader has announced that we, as opposition members, and certainly some members of the government will have difficulty and impossibility to attend that particular function representing the government, because we're all going to be representing members of the Legislature at that particular event. We'll be prevented now from going to the very same event that the Premier has invited us to attend.

My matter of privilege, I believe, is raised at the earliest opportunity. I believe it meets with the prima facie case of a matter of privilege. In fact, in a Speaker's ruling of May 29, Mr. Speaker, just prior to this issue arising, you laid out the groundwork for the necessity to prove a prima facie case of a matter of privilege. In fact, Mr. Speaker, our protections and our freedoms and our ability to do our job as parliamentarians, to prove that they've been breached, you set out a number of different criteria

* (16:20)

In fact, Mr. Speaker, you referenced earlier today page 90 of Marleau and Montpetit, where, in the House of Commons Procedure, the Speaker Sauvé stated on July 15, 1980, that when finding a prima facie case of privilege in relation to a member's constituency work there would not be to a member's constituency work, but there would be, in fact, if there was interference as it related to a member's parliamentary duties. This is certainly more than constituency work. This invitation came on with a government logo, a logo of the Province of Manitoba, it's specifically to a parliamentary responsibility.

We've been asked as parliamentarians, each one of us as members of this Legislature have been asked by the Premier representing the government of Manitoba to come to this reception to welcome the prince to Manitoba. We all know that in our constitutional monarchy we have, we have symbols here in the Legislature. Mr. Speaker, we have symbols right here in the Legislature as represented by the mace, which represents the Queen and the authority that our monarchy has, at least in constitutional terms, over our country and over our province. That symbolism is recognized in various ways throughout this building and throughout this very Chamber which we are in.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) clearly recognized that himself through the invitation of each one of us members. I know that this will be a specific and a limited number of Manitobans who will have been invited, though we are probably the only class of individuals where all of us were invited, and that's specifically because we have a certain role to represent the Legislature as parliamentarians. I would say, Mr. Speaker, if I would've asked the Premier at a certain time why we would be invited, why we specifically would have special invitations to attend, all of us as elected members, I'm sure he would've said because you're parliamentarians, and so you have a special invitation.

In your ruling today, Mr. Speaker, in citing Marleau and Montpetit on page 90, it specifically says that if you're interfered with in the role of your parliamentary work, that would be an infringement of your duties. I say, more than just being a matter of privilege and falling in line with the authorities that we have set out for us here in the Legislature, this is an insult. It's an insult not only to us as individuals, not only to us representing our constituents, but I

would say it's also an insult to His Royal Highness, who would expect, I'm sure, that all of us who were invited, all of us who are invited would have the opportunity to come to this particular issue.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that there are a variety of different ways that we are recognized in our special way in the fact that we're part of a Commonwealth group of nations. In fact I know members of this Legislature and the speakers often, I believe, invite you to Commonwealth parliamentary conferences. We sometimes have the opportunities to put our names in to attend Commonwealth parliamentary conferences by the very nature that we have a special role as dignitaries, but a special role as elected officials within the Commonwealth group of nations. So, when the Premier himself identifies that it's important that we be there as part of our parliamentary duties, our parliamentary duties as recognized through this specific invitation, and to have the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), and I don't know if the Minister of Justice conferred with his Premier on this particular issue—[interjection] Well, he nods that he did, so perhaps his Premier was agreeable to this and I think that that would even add to the disgust that I have by the announcement from the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, I'm asking you on behalf of all parliamentarians, this is a special event, it's a unique event, it's a unique opportunity, it's specific to our role as parliamentarians. The invitation came from the Premier because we are parliamentarians. Holding the committee on that night will prevent us from performing our parliamentary duties which is specifically in violation to the rule and the ruling that you brought forward not two hours ago. So I know that to be consistent with the ruling that you brought forward not two hours ago you will ensure that this affront to our parliamentary duties is corrected here on the floor of the Legislature now, because we don't have time to wait for a particular ruling because after that comes down, we may have already missed the event.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, I know you've reviewed the parliamentary authorities recently because of your ruling. Please enforce the rules so that we have our parliamentary rights defended; we can attend this special event and bring dignity to all Manitobans and not stand for the indignity that this Minister of Justice is trying to foist on this House.

Mr. Speaker, I move—

Mr. Speaker: It has to be followed by a motion.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs for consideration and report back to the House.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader on the same matter of privilege.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, this is extraordinary, an extraordinary example of members saying one thing and doing another. You know, they filibustered at committee for several hours and now we're asking them to go to committee, not the whole Legislature, but a committee of the Legislature to hear from Manitobans, but instead, they don't want us to do the Queen's work which is working for the people of Manitoba in committee.

You know, any one of them, they were invited by the Premier (Mr. Doer), they can platoon, they can go and have—they can see the prince 10 o'clock behind the Legislature during the day. They denied leave to have the committee meet on Monday. Pardon me, they denied leave to have the committee meet on Tuesday during the day for the public. Now they want to not have committee hearings so they can go meet with the prince. I would love to meet with the prince, but first we've got the work of the people of Manitoba to do.

Mr. Speaker, I am appalled. There is no duty on the part of members opposite to go meet the prince. There is a duty on the members opposite to pass the laws of this Chamber and to listen to what Manitobans have to say.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: I'll correct myself. There's a duty on members to debate and not filibuster. Their duty is to debate and not filibuster. They can craft it up any way they want. They can argue at committee for two and a half hours on points of order as they did while the public waits 12 hours to speak. We invite the public and they have to sit and listen to the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) weave their literary—leave their words, and we're supposed to be meeting in committee.

In fact, we're supposed to be meeting in committee right now and members, on a point of privilege, because he wants to go to dinner with the

prince or have a reception with the prince. He can go. There are, what? Twenty some-odd members of the opposition, less than last election. They can platoon. They can change. That's what we're going to do on our side of the House. We will change members if some people want to go. We want to respect His Excellency, Mr. Speaker, but we have a job to do. You know, if we were in any other line of work, if you were in any other line of work and you got an invitation, you might have to go to your boss and say, you know, could someone else replace me? You might have to find some other—but there's no duty for members opposite to meet the prince. I think they're—

An Honourable Member: We're invited.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, they're invited. It's a privilege that they're invited by the Premier (Mr. Doer). When the President of Ukraine was here, I marched back from that Taras Shevchenko statue to be here for 1:30 for the opening of the House. I would have loved to have stayed there. I would have loved to have gone to the 2 o'clock reception, but my duty was my elected constituents. Their duty is by their elected constituents and the duty isn't to have tea with the prince. They might want to. Their duty is to work in this—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must be able to hear when there are matters of privilege or points of order are raised. It's a very serious matter and I need to be able to hear because I have to make a ruling after the matter of privilege or point of order is raised. The honourable member has the floor.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. If this was an event where—there's public events. If this was an event perhaps if your Speaker yourself had invited, it might be an act of the Legislature. The Premier invited—I don't know, all or some of the members to a—

* (16:30)

Some Honourable Members: All.

Mr. Chomiak: All? All to a reception. All of them aren't in committee. They can platoon. I guess the reception's a couple of hours, but I think it's better that we do the work of the committee, Mr. Speaker.

Members opposite have complained about not letting the public speak and then, every time the public wants to speak, they filibuster. I find that extraordinary. In fact, Mr. Speaker, first off, they use

procedural orders in committee. Next, they don't want to give leave to sit during the day. Now they don't want to sit because they want to go to an invitation with the prince.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go, too. Maybe we'll platoon and maybe I'll get a chance to go, but our duty is to work for our constituents, to hear the public presenters. We have Monday night. We have Monday night—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: I know that if you went to the average Manitoban and said, should we do our duty or should we go to the do? I think they'd say we do our duty.

A member wants to show his respect to the monarch; we show our respect to the monarch by doing our work in this Legislature and doing it as proper parliamentarians, Mr. Speaker, not by a bunch of whining—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Not only do they not have a matter of privilege, they have the right to go to committee; they have a right to go to meet the prince. They'll have to make the decision as to what's more important in their lives, whether they go to committee, Mr. Speaker—they're not compelled to go to committee and they're not compelled to go meet the prince.

They have to make a choice; not all of them have to go to committee. It's not like the whole House is sitting; it's a committee of this House to listen to Manitobans. We want to get down to work and listen to Manitobans; I hope members opposite want to do the same.

They could platoon during those couple hours. There is no right or duty affecting their rights as legislators in going to a reception with the prince, but I suspect there is a duty on their part to send some of their members to committee in order to deal with the business of the Province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. I urge members opposite to make their plans accordingly.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing any of the members to speak, I remind the House that contributions of time by honourable members are to be limited strictly to relevant comments as to whether alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether prima facie case has been established.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's clear that the matter was raised at the first opportunity on the merit or on the substance of the issue where there's a prima facie.

The Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has absolutely established a prima facie case of privilege. We are members of the Commonwealth; we are parliamentarians within the Commonwealth system. As such, within the traditions and the structures of our system of government, there is a special relationship between parliamentarians and members of the monarchy.

That is why, we presume, that the Premier took the time to issue a personal invitation to each and every member of this Chamber to be part of this historic and important event, for parliamentarians and members of the Royal Family to converse and to get to know one another just a little bit better and to strengthen the ties of the Commonwealth that we all belong to.

The Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak) has put a factual error on the record. He made reference to the visit of President Yushchenko earlier in the week this week. It was a very good series of events. Many members of this House had the opportunity to participate to a great extent in those activities.

I know the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was part of several activities, the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), of course, the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and others, all had the opportunity to participate, as did I and others participate in both the MOU signing, which took place in Room 200, as well as the event, the very moving event in front of the statue of Taras Shevchenko on the grounds of this Legislature.

It's worth noting that the House was adjourned to allow members to participate in meetings and events involving the President of Ukraine. Similarly, this House and its committees should be adjourned to participate, to allow members of the Commonwealth, parliamentarians, to participate in an event with the prince.

So, Mr. Speaker, the protestations of the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) would be taken more seriously, if there was any genuine urgency to the matters that he is so desperately trying to push through the legislative process.

Let's take a look at what it is that we're dealing with in the committees that he's called on Monday night, Mr. Speaker. He wants us to deal primarily with Bills 37 and 38. The question we ask is, what is the urgency on Bills 37 and 38? Is it that they're desperate to get their hands on the \$250,000 that they're going to get under Bill 37 for their political party? Is that a good enough reason to create the sort of urgency, the false urgency that they're trying to create in connection with dealing with Bill 37?

Is their financial situation so desperate that they need to ram Bill 38 through the House to ensure that they won't be penalized if they run a deficit in this year? Is that the urgency that's creating a need to sit on Monday night?

We note the irony, Mr. Speaker. They have presented Bill 17 in this House, and we respectfully disagree with what the purpose of Bill 17 is and what its effect will be. Their position on Bill 17 is that this bill is to save Lake Winnipeg. We note the irony of the fact that they haven't even called Bill 17 to committee.

Mr. Speaker, let's examine the urgency of the bills before the House: get our party's hands on \$250,000 of taxpayers' money—urgent; ram through the balanced budget—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When members rise on matters of privilege, it should be prima facie. We're getting into debates that shouldn't be occurring right now. It should be dealing with the prima facie case.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, just on a prima facie case, I just note that I think there's relevance; the subject matter of the bills is obviously relevant to the issue of urgency, which is relevant to the issue of whether or not it's appropriate to call committee the night of this event.

The government's position is that it's urgent for them to get their hands on the \$250,000. It's urgent for them to gut the balanced-budget law and, yet, the bill that they purport to introduce to save Lake Winnipeg, they haven't even bothered to get around to calling it to committee.

Urgent to get their hands on the \$250,000, urgent to gut the balanced-budget law, optional to deal with Lake Winnipeg—that seems to be what the government is saying in the way that they're calling these bills to committee, Mr. Speaker. So we reject the minister's phony argument about the urgency, the need to get down to work, so they can get their hands on the \$250,000 as quickly as possible.

We reject his argument about the urgency to get down to the so-called work of allowing them to gut the balanced-budget law when they're talking out of both sides of their mouths. They don't think it's urgent to deal with Lake Winnipeg, so they're delaying their own bill, Bill 17, which they claim is required to save our waterways. The arguments are phony; they're disingenuous. They're not persuasive, Mr. Speaker, and it's clear that there's no urgency to call these committees to deal with them on Monday night.

Therefore, we should honour the invitation issued by the Premier of Manitoba. We should honour the Royal Family. We should honour the Commonwealth that we're all proudly part of. There's a prima facie case of privilege, our privilege as parliamentarians.

Mr. Speaker, members of this Chamber have been abused by this decision to call committee to deal with non-urgent bills, urgent only from the political perspective of the government, not urgent from the perspective of the people of Manitoba. I support the motion of the honourable Member for Steinbach.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I suspect what we've witnessed is the Government House Leader has made a mistake. I believe that, ultimately, if he just were to reflect on it, much like what we had earlier today during question period, because I had noticed the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) did nod his head in affirmation when it was brought to his attention.

Whether or not he instructed the closure sign to be put on the door is irrelevant, Mr. Speaker, but when it was brought—*[interjection]* No, I don't want to take a side on it, right? I'm not wanting to take a side on it. The point is that the Government House Leader recognized it wouldn't be appropriate to have a closed sign on the building when the committees are going on. He acknowledged that.

That's when it was pointed out, Mr. Speaker. I think that what we've seen here is the Government House Leader maybe wasn't aware of what was happening on Monday night. Now that the Government House Leader is aware, I think that he needs to recognize that as being a mistake, like he did earlier today and to make the changes that are necessary.

* (16:40)

The reception that everyone has been invited to starts at 6 o'clock, Mr. Speaker. Even if the Government House Leader was to acknowledge, by allowing for the committee to start at 8 o'clock, would accommodate the issue that is before you right now. The Legislature has clearly demonstrated in the past how it has been able to accommodate important issues such as this.

Both the Government House Leader and the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) make reference to the visit of the Ukrainian president, Mr. Speaker. I, too, participated where I could. What we saw was the Legislature demonstrate its flexibility. We were able to pass a bill in which you yourself and the Clerk's office were able to even accommodate through allowing that bill to pass even prior to the president attending the Manitoba Legislature.

The Premier did invite members of the Legislature to be engaged in that process, and I think it's a good example to bring up because what it does is it shows the discretionary, accommodating way in which this Legislature can work if the political will is there, Mr. Speaker. We saw that for the Ukrainian president, and we all applauded and encouraged that to take place.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that if members would have been fully aware, if it would have been on top of their minds that this dinner was taking place on Monday, I suspect that the Government House Leader would have taken that into consideration and not moved the motion.

It is a very busy time for the Legislature in the eagerness, in terms of trying to get bills into committee and trying to accommodate as many committee hours as possible, I suspect that the Government House Leader might have overlooked the invitation that was sent to the Government House Leader, but now, Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader is aware of the invitation so what the privilege is really doing is we're asking the Government House Leader to do what the Premier of the province has done and recognize the importance of His Royal Highness's visit and the importance of the invitation that has been extended.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the Leader of the Liberal Party, as an example, has an obligation to be there. He also feels that there's an obligation for him to be inside the Legislature for the committee meetings. Even with this week, we tried to do what

we can in order to make sure that that presentation is there.

I believe, given the fact that we are a part of the Commonwealth, as opposed to spending a great deal of time on that, just to emphasize that we are a part of the Commonwealth, it's an issue of respect. We respect the system that we are a part of and we would ask for the Government House Leader to even prevent you from having to take this issue as notice, Mr. Speaker. I think the most appropriate action, and, if I could, I would even suggest it through leave, that what should happen is we should allow for, let's say two hours, allow for the committee to start at 8 o'clock as opposed to 6 o'clock, and it would allow us to get over this hurdle.

I don't know if it's an appropriate thing to do, but I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that you might even want to canvass to see if, in fact, there would be leave to allow us to start at 8 o'clock as opposed to 6 o'clock. This way, the matter would be positively resolved. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I probably have heard sufficient information—order. Last time I looked, we had one Speaker in the House.

I have probably heard sufficient information, but if the honourable Member for River East has some new information, I will hear her briefly.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for that consideration. I'll be very short and very much to the point. It was the Premier (Mr. Doer) that sent this invitation out to all of us. When asked last week, the Premier indicated that, normally speaking, it would have been the First Minister's responsibility to introduce Bill 37 with the legislative change, but the reason he didn't do it was because he was going to be away for committee meetings at the Western Premiers' Conference. He wouldn't be able to be here at committee for a couple of days, so that he foisted that responsibility onto the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak). There might be ulterior motives for that happening. Maybe he didn't want to be the fall guy when the public came out and had an opportunity to make representation to talk about how undemocratic the legislation was. But, nonetheless, it is the Premier's responsibility to be at committee on Bill 37 when he arrives back in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that the Premier, then, will ensure that he doesn't attend the reception with the prince, but he does what he should be doing, and

that is sitting at committee and listening to presentations from Manitobans who want to tell him their feelings on Bill 37.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity, and second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House have been breached, in order to warrant putting the matter to the House.

Regarding the first condition of whether the matter was raised at the earliest opportunity, I accept the word of the honourable member.

Regarding the second condition, whether there is sufficient evidence that the privilege of the House had been breached, it is important to determine whether parliamentary privilege has been breached in the incident complained of.

Joseph Maingot advises on page 224, *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, that parliamentary privilege is concerned with the special rights of members not in their capacity as ministers or as party leaders, whips or parliamentary secretaries, but strictly in their capacity as members in their parliamentary work. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, claims that privilege has been violated due to activities performed as a leader of a party are not the basis for a prima facie case of privilege.

Maingot also advises on page 99 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* that in order for the privilege of the House to have been breached, the activity must involve a proceeding of Parliament. This concept is supported from two rulings from Speaker Rocan in 1988 and one ruling from Speaker Rocan in 1991. Although debate which occurs in the Legislative Chamber does constitute a proceeding of Parliament, outside events such as a ceremony do not fall within the purview of a proceeding of Parliament.

I believe it is important to quote for the House comments that Speaker Parent made in 1997 in ruling on a case of privilege that came up in the Canadian House of Commons. He stated: "the Chair is mindful of the multiple responsibilities, duties and constituency related activities of all Members and of the importance they play in the work of every Member of Parliament. However, my role as your Speaker is to consider only those matters that affect the parliamentary work of Members."

Mr. Goertzen: I respectfully challenge your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: There is an agreement. I wasn't quite finished. Because I was going to put—you're too eager; you're too eager.

So I would therefore rule there is no prima facie case of privilege.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I guess I'll stay up to challenge your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged, but we do have an agreement that we would have no votes, so this would have to be deferred until Monday. Okay? I think it is Monday. If you want, we can have a voice vote, but not a recorded vote. So we'll do a voice vote. Okay?

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to sustaining the ruling of the Chair, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Mr. Goertzen: I request a voice vote on Monday—a recorded vote.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, then because of the agreement, the recorded vote will be deferred till Monday.

* (16:50)

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask if you would solicit leave of the Chamber to see if, in fact, there would be leave to allow for the committee to start at 8 o'clock on Monday as opposed to 6 o'clock in order to accommodate His Royal Highness's visit.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is there leave for the House to sit at 8 p.m., instead of 6 p.m., on Monday evening? Is there agreement? No, there is no—the committee, not the House, I'm sorry. It's the committee, not the House.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Okay, that's been denied.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Katimavik Program 30th Anniversary

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, it's my sincere pleasure to have a chance to share a very happy story from my constituency. All of us, I'm sure, are familiar with the Katimavik program which operates across Canada and, across Canada this past weekend, Katimavik celebrated its 30th anniversary here in Winnipeg.

Six different groups of young people from across Canada gathered in the Spence neighbourhood and spent the entire day working on some very exciting green projects, everything ranging from community clean-ups to building new composting bins, to helping local residents and volunteers weed their community gardens.

I'm very pleased to also report to the House that the abandoned lots which once plagued all of the inner city, including the Spence neighbourhood, are now becoming a thing of the past. In the Spence Neighbourhood Association—very, very difficult to find any space which isn't either a garden or a new home which has been constructed, often in conjunction with support from our government—the Katimavik volunteers in their bright wonderful T-shirts and fantastic energy were a wonderful sight to see.

These young people, of course, come from across Canada and they live in groups of 11 people. They're sponsored in three different communities across Canada, two of them English and one of them francophone. They learn both official languages, if they don't know them already, and they work full-time as volunteers involved in many different community projects, such as what we saw in the Spence neighbourhood.

In 2006 and 2007 alone, there were over 1,000 participants in Katimavik, and they contributed over 744,000 hours to 100 different communities across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, one of the wonderful things about the neighbourhood gathering this past weekend in Spence was that many of the alumni from Katimavik, over the past 30 years, were also present to share their stories from those days.

On a personal note, I would add that, at one point in time in my life, I had hoped very much to be a Katimavik participant, but there was a gap of several years in this fine program's history, because

the former Conservative government cancelled it, presumably with the belief that young Canadians should not have an opportunity to rediscover their country and to learn different languages.

So, congratulations to Katimavik and all who are involved.

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Today, I rise in support of all the men and women who are serving and have served in Canada's Forces and peacekeeping missions. Today is the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, and June 1 will be Canada Forces Day.

In Canada, there are approximately 62,000 regular Forces members and 25,000 reserve Force members currently serving in the Army, Navy and Air Force. These courageous and dedicated men and women participate in operations both at home and abroad, while upholding the ideals of peace, security and freedom. Often they carry out these duties in the face of great adversity, and their unwavering commitment certainly deserves the recognition and respect of all Canadians.

More than 2,900 Canadian Forces personnel are deployed overseas on operational missions, while approximately 8,000 members are participating in activities related to these overseas missions on any given day. Canadian contributions are present in areas such as Cyprus, the Balkans, Haiti, the Persian Gulf and Asian Sea, Sudan, Sierra Leone and, most notably, Afghanistan.

For Manitoba and for myself, as the member representing Canadian Forces Base Shilo, the efforts of Canada in Afghanistan are very personal as we witness soldiers from Shilo deployed to the area on a regular occurrence. Sadly, Shilo-based personnel have been amongst those lost in this war.

On this day, the International Day of the United Nations Peacekeepers, and with Canadian Forces Day this weekend, we honour our brave servicemen and women, while also commemorating those individuals who have died or been injured.

Canadian peacekeepers have and continue to protect civilians, oversee elections and disarm ex-combatants in order to bring security, stability and support in dangerous and political volatile regions.

These days highlight to us all of the achievements made by our military forces throughout the world and we recognize the courage, dedication and commitment of these men and women who often face many dangers in their work for our country. I would like to express our enduring gratitude and support to all members of the Canadian Forces for their invaluable service. Thank you.

Jump Rope for Heart School Fundraisers

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the students at École Van Belleghem, École Guyot and Frontenac School for the fundraisers they held for the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Jump Rope for Heart Program. Through the hard work of the students and teachers at these three schools, they've raised approximately \$42,000 for Jump Rope for Heart over the last three years.

Jump Rope for Heart, which started as a pilot project 27 years ago, not only raises the funds for the Heart and Stroke Foundation, but also teaches children about the importance of heart health, and encourages them to make heart-healthy choices in the food they eat and the activities they participate in.

Mr. Speaker, the students in my constituency have participated in this campaign with impressive enthusiasm. The students give up recess and lunch breaks to choreograph and practice their own jump rope routines, with older students mentoring the younger ones.

In 2008, over one-third of École Van Belleghem participated in the campaign and raised \$8,583, approximately 250 students at École Guyot participated and raised \$4,585, and the students at Frontenac School raised \$5,000.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the teachers at École Van Belleghem, École Guyot and Frontenac School for encouraging our young people to live a healthy lifestyle and instilling in them a desire to engage in the world around them.

I would also ask all honourable members to join me in congratulating the students at these schools for doing their part in enabling the vital medical research that happens at the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Their fundraising and support for such a worthy cause is truly outstanding and is making a real difference in Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill Flaws

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I would like to rise today to honour Bill Flaws, a Charleswood constituent. Bill spent his childhood near Gladstone, Manitoba, before moving with his family to Winnipeg as a teenager.

He passed away on Wednesday, April 30 at the Grace Hospital after a brief, courageous battle with colorectal cancer.

After his retirement, Bill and his wife, Pat, found the home of their dreams in Charleswood where he could watch the deer and other wildlife frolic at the side of their home. He enjoyed home renovations and fixed up their home so that their children and grandchildren had a place to spend time together.

He was an avid Bomber and Jets fan and loved doing VIP driving for various special events in Winnipeg, including the Grey Cup, Pan Am Games, skating, World Hockey, curling events, Aboriginal Games and other volunteer work at the Bomber games.

Bill and Pat were also interested in politics and believed in giving their time to encourage the democratic process. I was very fortunate to have both of them volunteer in past election campaigns, as well as for other events during the years. I will miss Bill's quiet advice and company as he joined me many times to door-knock.

Wherever there was a need, Bill offered assistance. He has been described as a quiet leader who was slow to anger and quick to offer assistance. Bill was a consummate volunteer, and our city has lost one of its biggest fans.

Following is a poem written by one of his granddaughters, Jillian Khou: Winnipeg "It is where his life is, / Where his family is, / And where the love of his life is. / It is where he cheers on our home teams, / And where he once cheered on the Winnipeg Jets. / It is where he is loved and cared for by friends and family. / And where friends and family love and care for him. / It is his home, / And he loves it."

Mr. Speaker, we will all miss Bill's gentle presence and his passion for all things Winnipeg. On behalf of many people in Charleswood, Winnipeg and Manitoba, we offer our deepest condolences to

his wife, Pat, and to their family. Rest well, good friend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Buhler Recreation Centre

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): As I said in this House on October 9, 2007, Transcona's field of dreams is becoming a reality because of the tireless efforts of volunteers within the community. I would like to announce that the field of dreams in my riding of Transcona is now fully open.

Mr. Speaker, Transcona's Buhler Recreation Park is the largest, multi-seasonal, multi-use park in Canada. The park covers 150 acres and includes nine baseball diamonds, many kilometres of nature hiking trails, six full-size soccer pitches, a children's playground, an exhibition area and a canteen.

* (17:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. It's 5 o'clock. Does the honourable member have leave to continue? Is there leave for the Speaker not to see the clock? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Reid: I thank honourable members for granting leave, Mr. Speaker.

Transcona Buhler Recreation Park will be open all year with skating ponds and a toboggan hill and cross-country ski trails for the winter, and it will provide excellent recreational activities for families from across the province during our hot summer months right through our beautiful winters.

Mr. Speaker, we are not done yet with this park and I am pleased to inform the House that a BMX track will also be constructed. Beach volleyball courts, basketball facilities are some of the future plans in store for this park. Our government knows how important it is to invest in recreation services. Having a safe place for Manitobans of all ages to play and take part in community activities helps to build community, keeps our young people engaged and helps individuals of all ages with exercising. This now \$7-million park will serve as a beacon to sports and outdoor enthusiasts not only from Manitoba, but also from Ontario, Saskatchewan, United States and, perhaps, beyond.

This year, the Canadian women's softball championships will be held at Buhler Park during September of this year. The park is expected to attract some 400,000 visitors and bring between \$10 and \$15 million annually to our local economy.

On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to congratulate all members of the East Winnipeg Sports Association board and in particular, Mr. Steve Mymko, for focussing on a goal and never looking back and making it a reality.

Also, our exceptional human being and visionary and valued member of our provincial Community Places program, Mr. Pat Done, has guided the EWSA toward this impressive goal, and perhaps one

day we can add the name of Mr. Done to those recognized as major contributors to our park. This park will be a centrepiece in the region for decades to come. Transcona Buhler Recreation Park: one dream, a community of partners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 29, 2008

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