

First Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
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MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
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ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
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WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 27, 2012

The House met at 10 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill 16—The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Improved Enforcement and Administration)

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): Good day, Mr. Speaker. I move, by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), that Bill 16, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Improved Enforcement and Administration), now be read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Rondeau: These amendments will strengthen legislation in a number of ways enabling tougher enforcement. The Consumer Protection Office will have greater ability to address businesses that may be taking advantage of consumers. We will also be building on our strong payday lending laws with this legislation. In addition, this bill will allow us to alert consumers to exercise caution when a problem business comes to the attention of the Consumer Protection Office and is in the public interest to inform Manitobans of that.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 212—The Apprenticeship Recognition Act

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): I move, seconded by the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 212, The Apprenticeship Recognition Act; Loi sur la

reconnaissance de l'apprentissage, now be read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gaudreau: Le présent projet de loi proclame la semaine du premier lundi de novembre de chaque année Semaine de la reconnaissance de l'apprentissage.

Translation

This bill recognizes the week of the first Monday in November of each year as Apprenticeship Recognition Week for Manitoba.

This bill recognizes the highly skilled people that are vital to Manitoba's economy.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 205—The Municipal Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act (Defamation Protection)

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I move, seconded by the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), that Bill 205, The Municipal Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act (Defamation Protection), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Briese: This bill is highly supported by the municipalities of this province. It would essentially save municipal officials from frivolous litigation over things said in council and committee meetings, similar to the privilege that MLAs and MPs are already awarded.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Any further bills? Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

PETITIONS

Personal Care Homes and Long-Term Care—Steinbach

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The city of Steinbach is one of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba and one of the largest cities in the province.

This growth has resulted in pressure on a number of important services, including personal care homes and long-term care space in the city.

Many long-time residents of the city of Steinbach have been forced to live out their final years outside of Steinbach because of the shortage of personal care homes and long-term care facilities.

Individuals who have lived in, worked in and contributed in the city of Steinbach their entire lives should not be forced to spend their final years in a place far from friends and family.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health to ensure additional personal care homes and long-term care spaces are made available in the city of Steinbach on a priority basis.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by A. Peters, M. Plett, G. Friesen and thousands of other Manitobans.

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

Newborn Universal Hearing Screening Program

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

And these are the reasons for this petition:

More than three in 1,000 newborns are born with educationally significant hearing loss, but Manitoba's current hearing screening program does not allow for every child to be screened.

Without early detection, children are more likely to develop poor speech and language skills and also encounter social and emotional difficulties, which leads to poor academic performance.

Early diagnosis of hearing loss in newborns can make a considerable difference in a child's development because newborns can be provided with effective programs and support that foster developmental success.

* (10:10)

While most other developed countries and many Canadian provinces have a newborn hearing screening program, Manitoba is lagging behind. There are only a handful of screening programs in the province while all other newborns can only be tested if they have risk factors of hearing loss or if a parent specifically requests a test.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the minister of healthy living, youth and seniors to consider implementing a universal hearing screening program accessible to parents of all newborns in Manitoba.

This petition's is signed by J. Bergen, K. Meikle, G. McLeod and many, many, many other Manitobans.

Cellular Phone Service in Southeastern Manitoba

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

During early October 2011, parts of southeastern Manitoba were hard hit by wildfires. Thanks to the swift action of provincial and municipal 'efficients', including 27 different fire departments and countless volunteers, no lives were lost and property damage was limited.

However, the fight against wildfires reinforced the shortcomings with the communications systems in the region, specifically the gaps in cellular phone service.

These gaps made it difficult to co-ordinate firefighting efforts and to notify people that they had to be evacuated. The situation also would have made it difficult for people to call for immediate medical assistance if it had been required.

Local governments, businesses and industry and area residents have for years sought a solution to this very serious communication challenge.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the appropriate provincial government departments to consider working with all stakeholders to develop a strategy to swiftly address the serious challenges posed by the limited cellular phone service in southeastern Manitoba in order to

ensure that people and property can better be protected in the future.

And this petition is signed by D. Gibson, L. Pastazar and J. Lahare and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Mount Agassiz Ski Area

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

For several decades, the Mount Agassiz ski area, home to the highest vertical between Thunder Bay and the Rocky Mountains, was a popular skiing and snowboarding destination for Manitobans and visitors alike.

The operation of the Mount Agassiz ski area was very important to the local economy, not only creating jobs but also generating sales of goods and services in area businesses.

In addition, a thriving rural economy generates tax revenue that helps pay for core provincial government services and infrastructure which benefits all Manitobans.

Although the ski facility closed in 2000, there remains strong interest in seeing it reopened and Parks Canada is committed to conducting a feasibility study with respect to the Agassiz site and future opportunities in the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the appropriate members of the provincial government to consider outlining to Parks Canada the importance that a viable recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area would play in the local and provincial economies.

And to request the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider working with all stakeholders, including Parks Canada, to help develop a plan for a viable, multiseason, recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area.

This petition is signed by K. Rose, J. Delaurier, J. Delaurier and a host of other fine Manitobans.

PR 227 Bridge

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background for this petition is as follows:

The bridge on Provincial Road 227 was used by both heavy truck traffic and by agriculture producers to travel back and forth to their fields.

During the flood of 2011, the heavy use of the Portage Diversion resulted in damage to this bridge.

Due to irreparable damages to the structure, it was removed in February 2012, leading to detours and associated challenges.

Because there is no natural flow in the Portage Diversion, water is only present when the provincial government opens the Portage Diversion gates.

The provincial government has no set timeline for the bridge's replacement, nor has it indicated plans to establish a temporary bridge.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to recognize the safety concerns and the negative socio-economic impact caused by the loss of the bridge, and to consider establishing a low-level crossing for farm machinery to cross the Portage Diversion a half mile north of Provincial Road 227.

Signed by J. Mynott, M.J. Mynott, J. Sponarski-Mynott and many, many more fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to table the 2010-2011 annual report of the Public Trustee of Manitoba.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I would like to submit the supplementary Estimates 2012-2013 for the Department of Health.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I'm pleased to table the MIT Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for 2012-2013.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

National Day of Mourning

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I have a statement for the House.

April 28th is the Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. As April 28th falls on a Saturday this year, Friday, April 27th, will be observed as the Day of Mourning by workers and governments around the world. On this day we remember the men and women who did not return home safely from work last year.

On April 23rd, Canada witnessed the horrible tragedy at Lakeland sawmill in Prince George, British Columbia. This tragic accident killed two workers and injured dozens more. Just three months earlier, the Babine Forest sawmill experienced an equally devastating explosion. This explosion injured 19 employees and caused the deaths of two people. Those who died will never come home. Their friends and families will never again see their loved ones, and the lives of the workers who worked at these mills will never again be the same. The gravity of these workplace incidents is enormous, and their toll on families and communities is all the more tragic because most are preventable.

This day has special significance for Manitoba. In 1991, Manitoba Member of Parliament Rod Murphy introduced private member's legislation that prompted the Parliament of Canada to officially recognize April 28th as the Day of Mourning. Seven years earlier, Manitoba union leader Dick Martin was instrumental in the Canadian Labour Congress initiative to designate April 28th as the National Day of Mourning.

The Day of Mourning is a reminder to us of the ongoing challenges we face in eliminating death, injury and illness in the workplace. We have reduced the time-loss injury rate by more than 40 per cent since 2000, but we have more work to do. Today, as we remember and honour those workers who were killed or injured on the job, we must accept our responsibility and strengthen our commitment to work together to put an end to these preventable tragedies.

I ask, following the statements of my colleagues, that all members stand for a moment of silence in the Chamber to honour the memory of the men and women of Manitoba who were injured or killed in the workplace this past year. Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): It is an honour to stand in this House today to acknowledge April 28th as the International Day of Mourning for employees injured or killed on the job, including at factories, construction sites, and agriculture, amongst many other places.

The Day of Mourning is also known as the Workers' Memorial Day. In 1991, the Day of Mourning was officially recognized by the Canadian Parliament by the Conservative federal government, and today the Day of Mourning is marked around the world, with 80 countries celebrating April 28th as a day to remember those who have been injured, become ill, or died due to workplace conditions.

Manitoba tragically lost 22 individuals to workplace fatalities in 2011. Each one of these 22 individuals has loved ones, whether they're spouses, children, parents, siblings, loved ones, friends. They would have been volunteers, active in their communities, making Manitoba a better and safer place. We send our condolences to all of these individuals and we share in their loss.

* (10:20)

The unfortunate thing about these fatalities is that most of them could have been prevented by changes to the workplace structure and worker awareness of dangerous conditions. I encourage all Manitobans to take a few moments to remember their injured or fallen colleagues, friends, and relatives and think how to improve their workplace conditions. Let us all work towards making workplaces safer and preventing tragedies from happening in the future.

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

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow the member for River Heights to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: I join my other colleagues here in the Chamber in its acknowledgement of the International Day of Mourning and the recognition of the need to considerably improve workplaces to make them safer and less likely to have people injured or killed. I acknowledge and extend condolences to the family and friends of the 22 workers who were lost this year in Manitoba and, similarly, to those who were lost in the tragedies in British Columbia in recent times.

We acknowledge the decrease in the injury loss-time-loss for injury rate in Manitoba, but recognize

that we still have one of the very highest time-loss injury rates in all of Canada. So we have much more work to do here, collectively, bit by bit, to improve workplace safety and to decrease the loss of life and the injury here in Manitoba. And certainly I, and, I think, my colleagues, dedicate ourselves to that effort as we recognize this International Day of Mourning for those injured or killed on the job.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to rise for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Please rise.

A moment of silence was observed.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I wish to draw the honourable members' attention to the public gallery where we have from Westdale Junior High 74 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Caroline Josephson. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this morning.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Budget

Withdrawal Request

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Today we acknowledge and pay tribute to those families in Manitoba who have suffered or had family members suffer either injury or death in the workplace. It's also a time to give consideration to the impact of government policies on the—on hard-working Manitoba families.

Mr. Speaker, after campaigning on a platform to not raise taxes and to make life better for working families in Manitoba, this government, 10 days ago, brought in a budget that not only has a deficit that is off track, but also makes it more difficult for hard-working families in Manitoba, with nine tax increases and a range of other increases, including hydro rates and a variety of other fees.

With a benefit now of 10 days to reflect on this misguided budget, will the Premier (Mr. Selinger) agree, before it comes to a vote, to withdraw the budget and bring in something closer to what was promised in the election campaign?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, it may also be fitting today then, Mr. Speaker, to

remind the member of what he actually said when we brought forward amendments to the workplace health and safety act. If I remember correctly, he referred to them simply as red tape, regulation and bureaucracy.

You know, this House needs to stand in solidarity with families and friends who've lost loved ones, who have people injured in the workplace. This is not a political issue, Mr. Speaker, it's a kind of thing, I think, that both sides of the House can get together on and work towards, in terms of getting legislation in place that protects families and protects workers.

Mr. Speaker, also, the member mentions deficits. This is the same party, in the election, who promised \$590 million in extra spending after they were in this House talking about deep cuts to health and education and lack of support for infrastructure. So I think the members opposite should at least pick a story and stick to it.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, on a day when Manitobans should be standing together on the issue of workplace health and safety, it's unfortunate that the minister would want to play politics on that issue.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is this: Only nine months ago, they promised Manitoba families, and particularly lower income and working families, that they would keep costs down by not raising any taxes on those families. That was the commitment that was made; nine months later, they have betrayed those very families with a budget that increases taxes nine times. It punishes those at the lower end of the spectrum. It punishes families who need to use their vehicles to get their kids to school and to sports. It punishes rural communities, people who require their vehicles to get from place to place. It punishes northerners who absolutely require their vehicles to get by from day to day.

I want to ask the minister: In light of the fact that he's now had 10 days to reflect on this terrible budget and he's got another three days before it comes to a vote, will he come to his senses and withdraw the budget before it comes to a vote on Monday?

Mr. Struthers: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that just yesterday the—Moody's bond rating agency downgraded the Ontario situation, something that my friends in Ontario, I think, are very concerned with. Some of the reasons that Moody's used were some of the very things that this

group across the room here proposed we should be doing ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, bond rating agencies are impressed when a government can bring forward a budget that reduces by 3.9 per cent the level of expenditure, which is what we're doing. I think that bond rating agencies are impressed that you can do that while protecting health care and education and investing in infrastructure so their economy can move forward.

They're not impressed with the Ontario government's plan to come back into balance in 2018, which, by the way, is the same year that members opposite, in one of their many positions on this, have picked. Mr. Speaker, if we were to take your advice, it would cost Manitobans even more money.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, this is coming from the Finance Minister who, in this year alone, is increasing Manitoba's debt by over \$2 billion in this year's debt. The debt-to-GDP ratio is going up, and Manitoba, if we're not careful, is not far behind Ontario in terms of reviews of Manitoba's credit standing.

At the same time as they are increasing the debt by over \$2 billion, they've revealed the true NDP agenda to raise taxes on Manitoba families, which they've done in this budget. The tax increases impact women. They impact northerners. They impact rural Manitobans. They impact families in the city. They impact all Manitoba families, particularly those who can least afford to pay.

I want to ask the minister again. He's got the benefit of an added three days to consider his position. Will he go back and look at what they promised in the election and reintroduce a budget that at least somewhat resembles the commitment they made only seven months ago?

Mr. Struthers: I would ask that the members opposite at least make a—make an effort to be accurate in the information that they bring to this House.

Contrary to what you just heard from the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, are—whether it's our deficit-to-GDP ratio, whether it's our net debt-to-GDP ratio, whether it be the cost of—that we pay towards financing debt, they are all down since 1999. And this budget, Budget 2012, continues that very responsible approach to making sure that our net debt to GDP remains low.

* (10:30)

We are lower than the Canadian average, for instance. We are lower than most provinces. We understand that if we don't make good, steady, stable decisions, unlike the advice we get opposite, if we don't do that, we would worsen the situation, Mr. Speaker, and we don't intend—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Budget

Tax and Fee Backgrounder Availability

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I introduced number—Bill 211, The Increased Transparency and Accountability Act. This bill calls on the government to include in the budget books a schedule that breaks out all user fee increases and tax base expansions.

When I asked the Minister of Finance if he would support the bill, he said, and I quote: We handed to people in the lock-up a list of the fees in a number of different departments, he said.

Mr. Speaker, what I found out was that the listing of new fee increases was provided as a backgrounder only—only to the media in lock-up and not to people in the third-party lock-up.

Why was this information provided to the media and not to those people in the third-party lock-up?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, we presented a budget in this House with detailed information covering the broad range of the initiatives that we're undertaking, and we have provided that more detailed information in the lock-up, to those in the lock-up who were participating.

I made myself available in the lock-up for questions from any and all who were there. I stand every day in the House and ask questions from members here.

So I don't think that the member across the way has a case to be made in terms of us being secretive or not being transparent, Mr. Speaker. We make as much information available to the people of Manitoba as we can.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance deliberately refused to provide a backgrounder to third-party—to the third parties who were in lock-up, including our staff.

This is exactly why we have said that a schedule should be included in the budget books themselves,

so the information circular could be sent to everyone, so the information is there for everybody, not just those of the minister's choosing.

Why did he only give the backgrounder to the media and not the rest of the people in the third-party lock-up?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, not only did we make the budget available, we've made more information available. We have papers attached to the budget on issues that are important to Manitobans. That's not being untransparent; that's being transparent with people.

And I must say, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't sound to me like making information available to the media to publish to—the to Manitobans is being secretive.

We're going to look at ways in which we can be transparent. We're going to look at ways in which we can get as much information to Manitobans as we can, because you know what, Mr. Speaker? This is a good budget for the economic times we're in, and I want more people to see it.

Bill 211 Government Support

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, this could almost be matter of privilege in this House. The government deliberately withheld information from certain members in lock-up. This information should be included in the budget. That's what Bill 211 is all about. Yet members opposite are refusing to support that bill.

Why is it that they're refusing to support the bill, Mr. Speaker? What are they trying to keep from the rest of Manitoba?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Making all the information available that we can is not trying to be secretive, Mr. Speaker. We have a budget—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing the answer to the question posed by the honourable member for Tuxedo. Please allow the Minister of Finance to respond.

Mr. Struthers: We have a budget, Mr. Speaker, that we openly presented to members opposite and to the media and to people in the lock-up. We have a budget that we presented to 1.2 million Manitobans, and you know what? It's a far cry from the old days when members opposite were on this side of the

House and you had to look underneath the table to find the real budget that they put forward.

We will take no lectures from members opposite when it comes to intransparency. We'll take no lectures and certainly learn no lessons from members opposite about being secretive and having two different sets of books.

We'll defend this budget in every community, in every city, in every town hall in this province, Mr. Speaker, openly and transparently.

Rescued Bear Cub Government Plan for Wildlife Release

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): A few weeks ago, Rene Dubois found a young bear cub near St. Malo, which has now become quite famous. The bear is called Makoon and has received attention worldwide.

As the world watches Makoon, they are concerned what this government intends to do with it. More than 5,000 men, women, children and grandchildren have a petition going to ensure the protection of Makoon, and the numbers grow by the minute. However, there are mixed reports about how the provincial government intends to handle Makoon's future and his journey back into the wild.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Conservation: Can he update the House on his department's plans for Makoon?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I think, first of all, it's important to recognize that, you know, Manitobans have had particularly big hearts around this whole story and around the bear, and I think that that speaks highly of the concerns of Manitobans.

I think, on coming into the portfolio, Mr. Speaker, I can say that I'm quite heartened by how strongly Manitobans feel about a—quite a variety of environmental issues, whether it's fishing stocks or bear or moose or whether it's climate change. And I think that's the Manitoba spirit when it comes to Mother Earth.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I also believe it's very important that, in this portfolio, we apply not only our hearts but also the science. And so the wildlife experts in the department have been very, very diligent, ensuring that they know the best science that should be applied, and that's what is working in the best interests of this bear.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, it's been reported that Manitoba Conservation intends to release Makoon back into the wild in June. Mike McIntosh of Bear With Us sanctuary in Ontario has publicly raised concerns about releasing Makoon at such a young age could put a death sentence, as a cub will not have learned the skills it needs to fend for itself.

Citizens are very concerned about Makoon. They believe this bear belongs to the people. They are fearful for Makoon's future.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Conservation explain the precautions his department has taken to protect Makoon and to ensure the greatest chance of survival?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I understand from our wildlife officials and the science that they have explored and—including with Mr. McIntosh from Ontario and, indeed, other authors—that unlike, I understand, in some provinces—I think I was told that Québec, they would release a bear at 10 months—or 10 pounds, I'm sorry.

In Manitoba, the plan here is, with this bear, to release it when it is ready, in other words, when they consider, from looking at both the weight of the bear and its development, that that is when the bear should be released. And so that's the science that's being applied to that.

And I think that when you consider all of the sources that they have rallied to make some determination, that seems to be a well-informed approach for the wildlife biologists in the department and at the Manitoba—at the Assiniboine zoo.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, Mike McIntosh of Bear With Us sanctuary offered to take Makoon to his rehabilitation centre to help prepare him for release into the wild. However, this offer has been rejected by this provincial government.

People are understandably concerned for Makoon's welfare and want to ensure his greatest chance of survival.

I ask the minister again: What is this government's final strategy for Makoon? Take the offer from Bear With Us, or release him back into the wild in June, or let him fend for himself? Is he confident this government's strategy is the right one, Mr. Speaker?

*(10:40)

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, the wildlife scientists and officials in the department that have looked at this have concluded that the Assiniboine Park Zoo has—is providing the necessary services and oversight to ensure that the bear develops appropriately. And what they are very concerned about, of course, is that we guard against a human imprint of the bear and, as well, contact with any diseases.

And so it is their view that the appropriate way to deal with this, in light of all of the research and the discussions, I understand, with as many as 30 individuals, including the official in Ontario, is the path that they have proceeded with.

So the release will be done when it is their view that the bear is ready to go back to bear country. Thank you.

Provincial Park Entry Vehicle Permits Government Use of 2009 Permits

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, in 2009, the NDP government announced that it was waiving the provincial park entry fees. However, before they made the announcement in—the 2009 provincial park vehicle permits had already been designed and printed.

We questioned the Conservation minister, now the Finance Minister, about this during Conservation Department Estimates. The minister assured his critic, and I quote: "We have them. If we need to use them in the future, they're there to be used." End quote. And I'd like to table that.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister explain what happened to the 2009 provincial park vehicle permits?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): And we can certainly explore the park entry fee issues and the other fees around parks when it comes to Estimates, of course, but I just want to announce to the House that Manitobans are certainly very—are very keen to get into the parks, and we did, after recognizing for a few years and the economic circumstances in play, that we should waive the park entry fees.

But, as my colleague announced earlier—I think it was in December—there will be fees once again this year, recognizing that in Manitoba, unlike, for example, in some jurisdictions—I understand California, they've closed about 70 parks; in Manitoba, that is not the plan. We've been able to

maintain that important resource and getaway for Manitobans.

But they have this year indicated that 2,274 Manitobans want to enjoy our parks by way of the reservation service. That's up 16 per cent over last year. That's a great vote of confidence for Manitobans in—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Mr. Maguire: Well, obviously, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are worried about the accountability of Manitoba parks; they're not worried about the ones that are in California that the minister may be referring to. But this year the cash-strapped NDP government reinstated the provincial park entry fees.

I'd like to table a copy of the 2009 provincial park vehicle permit. I'd also like to table a copy of the new 2012 provincial park vehicle permit.

What these two documents reveal is that, despite the minister's assurances that the 2009 vehicle permits were ready to be used in the future, they are, in fact, missing in action, Mr. Speaker. Rather than simply using the 2009 permits, the new vehicle permits have been printed at taxpayers' expense.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why hard-working Manitobans' money has been wasted printing new park permits when they simply could have recycled the old ones? What kind of mismanagement is this?

Mr. Mackintosh: We'll certainly look into concerns by the honourable member.

But I know when it comes to trying to save money, the former government certainly did that on the backs of parks. We recognized that the investment that was needed in provincial parks was due to a terrible deficit in attending to the infrastructure and the lack of many welcoming amenities in our provincial parks. So we've made historic investments and many of those are rolling out now, and many in constituencies of the members opposite. But, Mr. Speaker, since 2006, we've invested about \$40 million in infrastructure compared to what—about \$7 million when they were—in the latter part of the '90s.

So when it comes to saving money, Mr. Speaker, we're going to make sure that we attend to the interests of the taxpayer. At the same time, we're going to attend to the interests of those that deserve some relaxation and Mother Nature.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, that answer accounts for probably why they made the mistake in the first place that the minister's referring to as far as accountability goes. More averaging on yearly basis might have been better than what he's done.

According to figures received through a freedom of information request, which I will table, Mr. Speaker, as well, it cost taxpayers a whopping \$53,125.38 to design and print those vehicle permits in 2009. It likely cost at least that much, if not more, to print new ones this year again.

In the *Brandon Sun* yesterday, the Finance Minister was bragging about how Budget 2012 finds responsible ways to spend less money and spend it smarter. However, Manitobans would agree that printing park passes and then failing to reuse them as promised, Mr. Speaker, is neither smart nor responsible spending.

Mr. Speaker, why must Manitoba taxpayers continue to pay for this government's ongoing fiscal mismanagement?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, the investment in parks is unprecedented in Manitoba. The interest of Manitobans in getting online and reserving parks is at an all-time high—in getting a space in a campsite is at an all-time high, 16 per cent over last year.

When it comes to some of these parks that have been, in some cases, devastated as a result of flooding, Mr. Speaker, the department has been very diligent to make sure that there is a very solid analysis of the shortcomings and how the parks can proceed into the future with new investments, and that's what we're going to do. We're embarking on a very aggressive rejuvenation of our provincial parks, and Manitobans deserve no less.

Municipal Police Services Mandatory Police Boards

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): The Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) said he would reduce the number of government appointed boards by 20 per cent, yet this government is moving ahead with plans to create mandatory police boards for all municipal police services in Manitoba. Most of the dozen or so municipalities that are affected by the change have questioned the cost and the effectiveness of these measures, and they say that the changes could create more problems than they actually solve.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance says he's committed to reducing the number of government appointed boards. Will he agree that this is the right time to eliminate the mandatory provision for police boards?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm very proud that our government has embarked on a review and a substantial overhaul of the 80-year-old police act in this province.

And, you know, following a tragedy and following the—what's known as the Taman Inquiry, the word from that judicial inquiry was very, very clear: The confidence that Manitobans have in their police would be enhanced by having independent police boards for each municipality operating its own police force.

On this side of the House, obviously, we take the results of judicial inquiries very, very seriously. That's why some tough decisions were made, and in this case we made it very clear to municipalities that have their own police force that they will have to be setting up a police board. We've also committed that the members of those police boards will be well trained, they'll be set to take on their role, and we will make sure that they are ready to go.

So we think, actually, that it's a very, very good step to give Manitobans the utmost confidence in our excellent police services, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Friesen: This government is taking a one-size-fits-all approach where none is warranted.

The Minister of Finance has said that his search for savings remains a priority. Mr. Speaker, allow me to assist the Finance Minister on his quest.

Why not listen to those municipal governments who have grave concerns about this plan? They've cited concerns about costs, accountability, effectiveness and efficiencies.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the Finance Minister direct his search for savings right here by adding police boards to the list of the boards that he will reduce by 20 per cent?

Mr. Swan: Well, the answer is simple, Mr. Speaker: because public safety has a cost and it's a cost that we're prepared to bear and the municipalities would bear as well.

I know that the members opposite moved an amendment—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Morden-Winkler has asked a question and I think he has the right to hear an answer from the government, and I'd like to have—give the Minister of Justice the opportunity to respond to the question posed by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler. I ask for the co-operation of all honourable members.

* (10:50)

Mr. Swan: Of course, it was the members opposite that moved an amendment to make these police boards voluntary. And you know what? [*interjection*] And they cheer from their seats.

I think it's very telling, Mr. Speaker, that when there's a judicial inquiry, New Democrats take it very seriously. And you don't have to look very far back in this province's history to see what these opposites—these Conservatives actually think of judicial inquiries.

There was a very serious inquiry that was done in the early '90s, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, and Conservatives let that report sit on the shelf—didn't even take the plastic off the cover—and did nothing to improve justice for Aboriginal people in this province.

It is absolutely necessary that when we're given direction by a judicial inquiry—there is a cost to run those inquiries, there's a great deal of energy that goes in from many people—we take those things very seriously.

And I know we've had a number of discussions with various municipalities. We've been very clear. We will give them well-trained—we'll give them the tools they need to succeed, but this is necessary for governance of police—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, this same minister has already demonstrated that he will borrow heavily when he sees a good idea from our benches. So why not borrow heavily now? We made the suggestion already that whether or not our region needs a police board should be decided by the proposed new provincial police board itself.

But if it ain't broke, don't fix it. And the government's taking a one-size-fits-all approach and imposing a solution where no widespread problem has been proven.

At a time when the government is saying that it's doing its part to reduce spending, why are they creating more costly government boards?

Will the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) admit the glaring inconsistency of his plan and hit the delete key on mandatory police boards?

Mr. Swan: I won't be taking the member's advice, because it's a terrible idea.

Mr. Speaker, right now—the way the police act is written right now, there is nothing stopping any municipality, large or small, in Manitoba from having its own police board. There's not a single municipality that has its own police board and that demonstrates the challenge.

Again, the Taman Inquiry came out of a terrible, terrible tragedy. The message in that inquiry was very, very clear, that Manitobans are entitled to good governance of police forces across the province of Manitoba. That can best be done by having police boards that are well trained, that are well prepared, that are able to provide the kind of governance that all of us want, to make sure that we have the utmost confidence in our police forces that do a great job across this province keeping us safe.

So, indeed, I will admit, Mr. Speaker, there is going to be a cost to police boards. As I've said, public safety has a cost. We're always prepared to bear that. It's—Budget 2012 will be bearing the cost of our police officers. I know the opposite—opposition members will be voting—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Community Works Loan Program Cancellation

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): On March 8th, 2012, the NDP informed community economic development groups and municipalities across Manitoba that they were cancelling the Community Works Loan Program. The Community Works Loan Program was used widely across the province as a tool to aid small business development.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): Why is he arbitrarily removing a program that was very successful in promoting small business development across Manitoba?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, what we've said all along is that this Budget 2012 gets us in the direction of coming back into balance in 2014 and that we're going to do it by

protecting services, services that Manitobans believe are important.

One of the things that we've been very diligent on working with communities on is economic development, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that one of the ways we come back into balance is by encouraging growth, which naturally means that we have increases in revenues through those sources, and a good way to do that is by working co-operatively with communities in terms of economic development.

That remains our goal, Mr. Speaker. We're open to ideas from communities, as we have been in the 12 years that we've inhabited this side of the House, and we'll continue to be open to ideas coming from communities, especially communities who have seen some good success in their program.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, on December 21st, 2011, the Premier commented on federal health transfers, stating, well, I think there is a big concern, just about the way it's being done, just dropped on people without consultation or discussion.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Why did he cancel the Community Works Loan Program without any consultation or discussion? Why isn't rural development a priority of this government?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, rural development is a big priority of this government. The member for Agassiz should not make that mistake; he should not underestimate our commitment to people who live in rural parts of our province.

To compare this and the consultations that have happened with the Premier and with a number of ministers on this side of the House with rural communities in terms of economic development, to compare that to what happened with the federal government is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker.

The federal government did not consult one iota before they dropped on this province, and every other province of this country, the bad news that they had. They invited us to a meeting to talk about something and then dropped it on the table with no discussion at all.

Don't confuse that process with the consultations that we do on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, the minister says he's looking for good ideas from municipalities on community economic development. Let me tell you what they said.

Mr. Speaker, on March 29th, a letter from the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the AMM, urges this NDP government to continue the Community Works Loan Program, because it is necessary to help small business across the province. In a March 23rd letter from the Town of Gladstone, the town expresses extreme disappointment and states that the Community Works Loan Program is an important component of their current economic plans.

The Community Works Loan Program has been and still is a very valuable, cost-effective tool for small business development across Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Will he take a second look at the Community Works Loan Program, consider reversing this arbitrary decision that's been made by his government?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, our Premier and one minister after the next on this side of the House has met with the representatives of AMM. We've talked about such things as support for infrastructure.

Now, I know the AMM has come forward and said, let's raise the provincial sales tax rate by a point and dedicate that to infrastructure. Our Premier, to his credit, was very clear in saying that we would not be raising that tax, and he was very clear in saying that we would continue to work with the AMM on something very important to them, which is infrastructure: roads and bridges and those kinds of priorities.

We did that in Budget 2012. We have an equivalent of 1 per cent that we've dedicated. We've increased that commitment to the tune of \$31 million, Mr. Speaker. We have a \$589-million announcement the other day that my colleague the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton)—[inaudible]

So, I think the member from Agassiz is way off base when he makes the kind of ridiculous statements that he just made in this House, Mr. Speaker.

Flooding (Lake Manitoba) Compensation for Loss of Property Values

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, last May the 30th, the minister of Agriculture at the time, now the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), said that the government was not concerned about the loss of property values after the Lake Manitoba flood. He said, with respect to the flood, and I quote: The lessons that we've learned in the past is that

property values don't depreciate. The minister could not have been more wrong.

I ask the Minister of Finance to admit that he was wrong last May to those around Lake Manitoba, who have been so terribly hurt financially and emotionally because of this incredible loss of property values to their properties around Lake Manitoba.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not that long ago in 1997 that the Red River Valley was devastated. Manitobans came together, fought that historic flood. They also started planning, not just the recovery of the area but significant improvements in terms of flood mitigation.

We had a flood in 2009 that was greater than the 1950 flood, and there was one home that was impacted by water seepage, Mr. Speaker.

What we have said with Lake Manitoba is that we were there to fight the flood with the municipalities and the residents in that area. They said, don't forget us, and we brought in the historic outlet that was open November 1st from Lake St. Martin, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say to the member opposite and say to residents in and around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin that our commitment is do—to do exactly what we did in the Red River Valley: to rebuild and to restore confidence. And, indeed, that will impact not only on property values but on what people want, which is hope for the future, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:00)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, we have people, as an example, like Darrel and Dee Dee Armstrong, who have worked hard their whole lives farming and in developing an incredible community at Big Point. They have seen tremendous loss in the value of their properties. But they've been told, with respect to this loss in property values, that it is not a component of the Lake Manitoba financial assistance plan program, and thus we cannot estimate nor pay any loss of property value. Instead of trying to help, this government is saying there is nothing we can do about this terrible situation.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Why has the government not got any plan to deal with those who've had such a devastating loss in their property values around Lake Manitoba?

Mr. Ashton: Well, perhaps the biggest difference between the approach of that member and this government and of many people around the lake is that our goal is to rebuild Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin, to get people back to the use of that lake the way they had it for many years.

We're not throwing in the towel when it comes to Lake Manitoba. We didn't forget last year when it came to the outlet. We put in place the Lake Manitoba regulatory review. We put in place the review in terms of flood mitigation for the area. Our goal is to rebuild and re-establish confidence for Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, if there was a reasonable support, the people like Darrel and Dee Dee Armstrong, they would be out there rebuilding. They would be rebuilding the roads and helping people to rebuild the homes in the community and so on.

But, Mr. Speaker, instead of this government coming out and helping find a way to rebuild, this government's programs were specifically designed not to help people, but to say no. We can't do anything about your property value. We can't do anything about compensating you for the loss. This is because from—right from the start, the government was making wrong assumptions about what would happen with property values.

I ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) to start trying to find a way, help people like Darrel and Dee Dee Armstrong who have been 'devastated' by the flood, instead of putting up every conceivable barrier, every conceivable delay and every—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, in the historic flood of 1997, we had somewhere around 10,000 claims. We've had 30,000 claims for the flood of 2011, now 2012.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should recognize that we have already paid out \$600 million.

And I want to put on the record, by the way, because there's been various comments made about our staff, I had an opportunity to visit with many of them in Portage just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker. I am the—very concerned that what—when members opposite, this member included, start talking about staff intimidating flood victims. Our staff, the municipal staff, the people from the various agencies have been working around the clock since last year

for the flood recovery. And we won't stop until we rebuild Lake Manitoba. We won't stop until we rebuild Lake St. Martin and every other affected area of this province.

And I hope the member will be part of the solution in rebuilding this province.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Daffodil Month

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I rise today to celebrate Daffodil Month. Every April Canadians across the country come together to raise crucial funds for the fight against cancer. Some sell or purchase fresh daffodils, some wear a daffodil pin throughout the month to show their support for those living with cancer and some canvass neighbourhoods for donations door to door. These activities all constitute an important part of our pursuit to rid Canada of cancer.

As part of its annual Daffodil Month activities, the Canadian Cancer Society has designated April 27th Daffodil Day. On this day the Canadian Cancer Society asks Canadians to honour the memory of those loved ones, friends and fellow citizens who have died from cancer, by contributing in some way to fight against the disease.

This can take the simple form of telling someone with cancer that you are thinking about them or doing something special for them to make their day a little bit easier. Since research is the most potent weapon in this fight, donations to the Canadian Cancer Society are of paramount importance. The Canadian society uses their funds to build on existing research strengths, develop innovative treatments and better understand the disease throughout its entire life cycle. The world-class cancer research undertaken in Canada ensures that fewer Canadians and their families will have to face the terrible reality that is cancer, while improving the quality of life for those who are living with the disease.

Today is thus not only a day to commemorate and honour those who have been taken from us by cancer, but to remind all Canadians that we are committed to winning this fight. So I ask the members of this House, Mr. Speaker, who are you wearing your daffodil for? Thank you.

Westlands Seniors Housing Co-operative

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Mr. Speaker, the Westlands seniors housing co-op is currently under construction in the Brooklands neighbourhood. It will serve the historic Brooklands and Weston neighbourhoods with their rich culture and strong sense of community.

This co-operative housing facility will be a great addition to the neighbourhood and help ensure that those older residents with long connections to their community do not have to leave behind a sense of belonging in search of appropriate housing.

There is an increasing need for accessible, affordable housing in our province, to ensure that seniors are able to continue living independently and in their communities longer. Recognizing this need, the Westlands seniors housing co-op plans to provide over 35 suites for lower income, independently living seniors. These units will be large and offer enhanced accessibility for residents with mobility and other health issues.

The project was initially conceived and brought forward by representatives from the Weston seniors club, Weston Residents Housing Co-op, Sparling United Church, Nor'West Co-op Community Health Centre, Keewatin-Inkster Neighbourhood Resource Council, Brooklands Pioneer Senior Citizens Club and neighbouring community members. Their goal has been to provide much-needed housing opportunities for seniors in the neighbourhood, and this project is a definite welcome step in that direction.

I would like to congratulate them on their successes so far and state that in this International Year of the Co-operative, housing co-operative projects such as this should be recognized and commended. I wish them luck with their ongoing and future construction and the completion of the project.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Shirley Kalyniuk

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize Shirley Kalyniuk.

Shirley has dedicated her life to her community and is a prominent figure in rural politics. As the first female to sit on Rosburn town council in 1983 and then the first female elected as mayor of Rosburn in 1993, Shirley has used her position to get involved in many different aspects of her community, going

above and beyond the necessary tasks of an elected official.

Shirley has contributed to her community as a role model in more ways than one and also as a role model for women across Manitoba. Through her various roles with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, Shirley has been a leading force to increase involvement by women in municipal politics.

It was at the 2009 AMM conference—or convention, that membership passed a resolution calling AMM to strike a steering committee to identify barriers to women's participation in municipal government, and make recommendations at the next AMM convention on how more women could be engaged in decision making.

This was a great challenge, and Shirley led the task force on Ballot Box Barriers: An action plan for engaging more women in the municipal democratic process. As co-chair of Ballot Box Barriers, Shirley used it as an opportunity to put her best leadership and political skills to the test. By June 2010, the report was complete and welcomed rave reviews and results. Shirley's work on the task force lays out an action plan to try to increase 'romens'—women's involvement in the 2014 municipal election.

* (11:10)

The impact Shirley and her task force left behind from the Ballot Box Barriers is everlasting. The information and research found will act as an excellent resource for women looking to enter municipal politics for years to come.

Shirley's work through AMM and on various community groups and committees in Rosburn are a perfect example of the person that Shirley is. Dedicated, ambitious, inspiring, perseverance, passionate, and leadership—leader are all words that can be used to describe Shirley Kalyniuk.

Mr. Speaker, once again, and it is honour to stand in the House to recognize my friend, Shirley Kalyniuk, who is an inspiration to me as a politician, a woman politician, and she is a shining example of many community leaders in rural Manitoba who devote their life to their family and their community and make it work. Shirley has been a role model for many women over the years and will be for many women to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Broadway Neighbourhood Centre

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I'm very pleased to rise today in this Chamber and sing the many praises of the Broadway Neighbourhood Centre located in my home community of West Broadway. I'm also very pleased to call my colleagues' attention to the public gallery, where we are joined today by the director of the centre, Mr. Spatch Mulhall, and Linda Williams as well. Thank you both so much or coming down.

And Mr. Speaker and honoured dignitaries, the Broadway Neighbourhood Centre is no stranger to being recognized, and deservedly so. They've already won an Accessibility Award from the City of Winnipeg and a Spirit of the Earth Award from Manitoba Hydro. But today, I'm very pleased to announce that, on April the 17th, the Broadway Neighbourhood Centre received the Premier's volunteer award from our very own Premier (Mr. Selinger).

To try to understand just how crucially important this centre is, and the remarkable work that it is doing on poverty reduction and crime prevention right in the heart of our capital city, one need only go to their website and click on the programs. You will find no less than 17 different items pop up on your screen. Just some of these are: the *Just TV* programs, the Lighthouses, a partnership with the YM/YWCA, the homework club, the running club, the powwow club, the girls club. They also have a learn-to-fish program. Programs that bring Camp Manitou experiences for their—for youth in the neighbourhood. A community computer access lab, medicinal picking expertise, as well, with traditional knowledge, free public skating during the winter, and a nutrition program. The list goes on and on. All of this in one very busy centre.

The Broadway Neighbourhood Centre's probably best known, thanks to national media coverage that it received, for its award-winning *Just TV* program. It's part of the national crime prevention initiative, and it engages at-risk local youth, many of them gang involved, to conceive, produce, and edit, and program their own videos with positive messages for youth. The youth involved participate in all aspects of the video creation, including the editing, and the skills training helps them to develop a social enterprise of youth, and their self-esteem and sense of belong—sense of belonging—simply goes through the roof. Over 30 videos, Mr. Speaker, have already been uploaded to YouTube. And twice a

year, they hold a remarkable film festival to showcase their work.

One of the other remarkable things about this organization is the partnerships they've brought together. All three levels of government, The Winnipeg Foundation, and local business leaders, such as Edward Carriere, see the value in the work that is happening at this centre.

And I am very, very pleased to thank all the board, staff, volunteers, and most of all, the youth—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I'm standing on a matter of privilege, please.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Tuxedo, on a matter of privilege.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I know there's two issues that need to be brought forward with respect to a matter of privilege. One is that it's done at the first opportunity, which I believe it is, because this issue was brought up just in question period today. And the minister didn't answer the questions, and this is a very serious matter. And secondly, that there's a prima facie case that a member's privilege has been breached, Mr. Speaker.

And so, I think the first issue is that it was brought forward the first opportunity. This is an issue that to me is very serious. When this budget was introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) on April 17th, what happened was that there was an information circular. It was actually a background piece that was provided to—it was called a backgrounder that on the new fee increases, and this—the problem with this is that this information was only provided in the media lock-up, Mr. Speaker, but not in the third-party lock-up, which is where our staff are able to go in and comb through the budget and see what some of the main points are.

There's a reason for that, and this is why in our Bill 211 we—I've brought forward the fact that I want this information—this is part of it, but more of it—is to put the schedule of those fees into the budget books, because that way we all, all Manitobans, have the same opportunity to see what's in the budget books. But, when the Minister of Finance provided only that backgrounder to the media and not to the third parties, it leaves us at a disadvantage when we come out to comment to the media after because they've

had more information and they've been given more information than we have been given.

And so I believe that this was a breach of, you know, of parliamentary procedure here, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that it inhibits me from being able to do my job as the critic for Finance because information was deliberately withheld. And so I—so this is a—this, to me, is a very serious matter, which is why I'm bringing it forward as a matter of privilege today. It's—it really affects my ability to be able to do my job in this House when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) chooses deliberately to withhold information from third parties in the third-party lock-up, which is where members of our staff attend while the budget is being read in the House. And so it's very difficult when leaving this sort of thing up to the Minister of Finance to decide who gets that information and that backgrounder prior to coming into the budget, and that's exactly why, in Bill 211, I have said that we need to ensure that this kind of information is actually included in the budget.

So that's why, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, I—I'm very upset, quite frankly, that this—that the Minister of Finance has chosen to go about this. I don't believe this is the way things have been done in the past, but, you know, I'm not in the media lock-up. I'm not in the, sorry, the third-party lock-up, so I don't know if this has been precedent in the past where the Minister of Finance has chosen only to give it to the media and not to the—in the third-party lock-up.

Perhaps this is the way this NDP government has been doing it for many years, but certainly it's wrong. I found out about it this time around because the Minister of Finance asked—in asking a question about my Bill 211, he went on to say that, oh, the member should do her homework; the member should know that we provided this backgrounder on the fee increases in Manitoba to the media—or to the third—to the lock-up, in lock-up. And, in fact, Mr. Speaker, when I went back and did some research on this, I found out that the third-party lock-up was left out of receiving this information.

And so I am very upset about this. I think this is a breach of—this is a matter of privilege—a breach of my, you know, rights in this Chamber.

And so I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs for consideration and then be reported back to this House.

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

* (11:20)

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): You know, there is a saying—I think I heard it once on *The West Wing* TV program, which I dearly miss, that, you know, when you have nothing more to say about the content, you go on the process, and I think that's kind of where we're at here now in the budget debate.

So, I take the member's comments seriously. I listened to what she had to say. Clearly, she has a copy of the document in question because she referred to it. Clearly, she's had a copy for several days because she's been asking questions about the things that are listed on there. They were—they've been asking questions about these issues for several days, frankly, so clearly they have it. My understanding is this piece of information was provided to the media, so clearly it has not been kept secret. Clearly, those—that information has been available to the members opposite.

You know, I woke up this morning looking forward to hearing the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) complete his speech on the budget. I thought it was going to be a great day because I'd get to hear him speak. Clearly, that sentiment is not shared by his colleagues. So I look forward to hearing his complete his—hearing him complete his comments on the budget. I look forward to hearing more people get to engage in the budget debate, and I'm sure we'll be able to do that. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): On the same matter of privilege, I want to provide some new information, and it's why I seconded the motion that the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) put forward on this very important matter of privilege. And I was disappointed, as somewhat of an aside, Mr. Speaker, to hear the Government House Leader not take this matter of privilege seriously, to try to cast us in a disparaging way, because I think that all matters of privileges that come forward to the House, in fact, should be taken seriously. And I know you, Mr. Speaker, do take them seriously, because they do reflect how we are able or not able to do our jobs.

Certainly, the member for Tuxedo, raising the question earlier today, and I think she had the opportunity to hear the different comments by the minister in response, and to reflect on those and to try to ensure that they corresponded to what she understood to be true, and so she raised this matter of privilege at the earliest opportunity. And I hope, Mr. Speaker, in your own deliberations, that you'll reflect on that and take her at her at word, that in fact she raised it at the earliest opportunity, which is one of the two requirements for a prima facie case of a matter of privilege.

The second, of course, is that in some way it impugned upon our rights. And I wanted to speak to that most specifically, Mr. Speaker, about how it did impugn on our rights as individual members, and I would say all of us, and it's important to remember—and I've reflected on past rulers speaking—past speakers' rulings about how sometime that can be the collective rights or the individual rights—the collective rights of this body as a whole and how we are given rights, and that's part of our democratic system, that each of us have to rely upon those rights so we can exercise the duties that we are sent here by our constituents to do without any sort of sense of intimidation, without any concern that we can speak freely, and to exercise the rights that we've been given. That's the collective rights that we as all members are given, and I think all of us have to defend those rights, and that goes back again to the Government House Leader's comments. I think she should reflect—I know she's relatively new on her job, but I think that she would look at this and go—that all of us need to ensure—*[interjection]* I, of course, didn't—I didn't reflect on the quality of the job she was doing, just the newness of her being in that job. But the point was that all of us have to ensure that we are defending the rights of this institution collectively.

And then, individually, of course, we all have our own rights, and the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) raised the issue about this fact sheet on fees not being made available to the third-party individuals, in what we refer to in the Legislature as lock-up. And why that's important to me as an individual MLA, Mr. Speaker, and how it affected my ability to do my job, was after the budget. And we often say that we are in somewhat of a disadvantage on budget day, for example, because we get the information—while the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) will have been going through the documents, presumably for months before, and

looking at different things, and has—I'm taking that as not a fact but a presumption, that he's been looking at the documents for months before.

We get them virtually at the time that they're tabled, Mr. Speaker, and have to quickly sort of go through things and distill them, and then we are expected to comment on it. And we do, obviously, the best that we can, and we do, I think, a very good job. This may have been a bit of an easier budget because it was such a poor budget to, sort of, reflect on more quickly, but there was a lot of questions about the fees and tax increases within the media.

And I, in fact, I went home to my own constituency that evening and I had a discussion with a number of people about the budget. And I said, you know, looking at the budget, it looked like there was about \$180 million in fees and tax increases overall. And they said to me, well, you know, what kind of fees and tax increases are you talking about? And so I went through the ones that were mentioned in the budget speech because some of them were specifically outlined. But there was many, many others that I simply couldn't have spoken to because I wasn't privy; I didn't have that fact sheet that those who were third-party individuals weren't given either. Only the media were given that information.

It seems to me that it's strange, Mr. Speaker, that I, as a member, wasn't given information that a—that other party like the media were given and that I am the elected voice of my constituents. I'm expected, and my constituents expect me to go and have the information. They come to me and they say, well, what is happening in terms of the budget today? And I had to tell them, well, I know of some of the things that were contained in the budget, but I certainly didn't have a detailed breakdown of it, and maybe I'll have to go through the budget. And now I find out, in fact, that that detailed breakdown did exist.

So it reflects poorly on me, but part—but quite apart from that—because it's not about how I'm—how it reflects on me. It certainly does impugn my ability to do my job because I wasn't able to go to those constituents and say, well, this fee increase, that fee increase. I understood there was hundreds of fees that were increased on that form and I could have gone through and done the job that they expect me to do and provide that information, but I couldn't because the Minister of Finance only provided that information to certain parties.

And that is, in fact, why it's difficult for me to respect what the minister did, but more importantly,

whether I respect him or not for what he did in the general sense. It certainly does impugn my ability to do the job. And that's clearly within the—within—in my estimation, Mr. Speaker, and I'll leave it to your good offices to rule upon this, but it's my estimation that it prevented me from doing my job, which is the second point of a prima facie matter of privilege.

Now perhaps, Mr. Speaker, perhaps you'll look at this and go through past rulings and say, well, you know, it doesn't fit into every one of the individual categories. But I would ask that you and those who assist you in your deliberations when you bring back a ruling, be very carefully, think about and reflect about what the role of a member of the Legislature or a Member of Parliament is within our democratic system. And certainly a big part of it, a significant part of it is to go to our constituents and tell them, in an accurate way, what is happening here. And it's very difficult for us to do that if we don't have the information.

It's one thing if we just don't have the information because we're not a member of government. It's entirely a different matter if we can't do it because the information was provided to some parties but not to others. That's a much more egregious case I would argue to you, Mr. Speaker, because it wasn't as though the information wasn't there, or the government just simply decided not to share with anybody. They decided to share it with a select group of people. So how is it can I then go back to my own area, those—my own individuals—and tell them what it is that they want to know. How can I do my job?

If you accept, Mr. Speaker, and you'll make that determination, but if you accept that a principal part of the role of a legislature—of a legislator—whether it's in Ottawa or in Manitoba, that a critical role is, in fact, to go and disseminate information that is available to one's constituents. And you would know this from your own work as an MLA—and a good MLA you are—you would know that one of the critical things that you have to do is to go back to your constituents and reflect to them what's happening in the Legislature. That's what I try to do as a role—in my role on budget day, but I was impeded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) because he did not provide to me the information that he was providing to certain other individuals.

* (11:30)

So I hope, as I conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, that you'll look at the two different

requirements, that you'll look at the fact that the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) brought this forward at the earliest opportunity once she was able to distill the answers from the government in question period, that it was, in fact, the earliest opportunity for her to bring forward the matter of privilege, and that you'll take my comments about how it impeded my ability on budget day to do my job that I'm elected to do by the constituents, and that you'll, in fact, see that this is a matter of privilege, and that you'll look at the motion and have it brought to the proper bodies so that we can have further discussions to ensure that this doesn't happen again. Perhaps it was an error, but has—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I think I've sufficient advice on this matter. As members will know, and I've indicated in previous matters of privilege, I take these matters very, very seriously, and I'm going to take this matter under advisement and come back to the House with a ruling.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, it's generally been past practice in this House that we have some notification when ministers are going to be in attendance. And I'm not specifically referring to any particular minister today or any other day. I'm simply referring to past practices of the House when we have been able to know which ministers will be available for comment and questions in that particular day.

This is something that has been afforded to us as members and—but, simply, Mr. Speaker, this hasn't been happening. And I—yes, it hasn't been happening, and it certainly is a point, then, because we prepare questions, we take a lot of time to prepare our questions to bring to question period, and we expect that we have the ministers there to answer those questions. So, well—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: —it is a particular point here, Mr. Speaker, and I don't know why the members on the opposite side think it's so funny, because question period is serious. We take it seriously; I know they don't, but, and as I said, it has been past practice that

we have some prior knowledge as to who will be in attendance, and that hasn't been happening. And I think that that is something that impedes us in our abilities here in the House as well.

And I'm simply asking to have a ruling on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Howard: Certainly, you know, I'm very available to the Opposition House Leader to hear her concerns and talk to her. We've had a good relationship. We comment—we talk to each other frequently during the day on things that are going to happen, and I've been very available to her if she wanted to talk about this issue. Never raised it in the time that either of us have been House leader, but if she wants to talk about it later, I'm happy to do that.

Mr. Speaker: I think from my experience in this House there has been a co-operation between Opposition House Leader and government House leaders, at least in past, and these matters would best be resolved between the two House leaders to determine which ministers would be available to allow the opposition to ask their questions.

So I must respectfully state, on this point of order, that there is no point of order, and I will encourage the two House leaders to get together and to make arrangements to have ministers made available for questioning from members of the opposition.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm challenging your ruling.

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

The question before the House is: Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

All those in favour—shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Some Honourable Members: Aye

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the Ayes have it.

Shall the—the question before the House, then, is: Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the Ayes have it.

Formal Vote

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, a recorded vote, please, Mr. Speaker.

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

Order, please.

The hour allowed for the ringing of the division bells has expired. I'm instructing that they be turned off and we'll now proceed with the vote.

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, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Pettersen, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe, Wight.

Nays

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Taillieu, Wishart.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 35, Nays 20.

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

Mr. Speaker: The hour being past 12:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 27, 2012

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<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>