

Fourth Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Private Bills

Chairperson
Mr. Greg Nesbitt
Constituency of Riding Mountain

Vol. LXXII No. 1 - 6 p.m., Wednesday, May 22, 2019

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Man.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	Ind.
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen, Hon.	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE BILLS**

Wednesday, May 22, 2019

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

**CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Greg Nesbitt
(Riding Mountain)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Len Isleifson
(Brandon East)**

ATTENDANCE – 10 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mrs. Cox, Hon. Messrs. Gerrard, Pedersen

*Messrs. Allum, Bindle, Mrs. Guillemard,
Messrs. Isleifson, Kinew, Micklefield, Nesbitt*

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

*Bill 226–The Presumption of Death and
Declaration of Absence Act and Amendments to
The Insurance Act*

Mr. Gord Perrier, Winnipeg Police Service

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

*Bill 207–The Manitoba Conservation Officers
Recognition Day Act*

*Bill 226–The Presumption of Death and
Declaration of Absence Act and Amendments to
The Insurance Act*

Bill 228–The Sikh Heritage Month Act

Bill 240–The Elections Amendment Act

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Mr. Chairperson: Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Private Bills please come to order.

This meeting has been called to consider the following bills: Bill 207, The Manitoba Conservation Officers Recognition Day Act; Bill 226, The Presumption of Death and Declaration of Absence Act and Amendments to The Insurance Act; Bill 228, The Sikh Heritage Month Act; Bill 240, The Elections Amendment Act.

I would like to inform all in attendance of the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment. A standing committee meeting to consider a bill must not sit past midnight to hear

public presentations or to consider clause by clause of a bill, except by unanimous consent of the committee.

We have a presenter registered to speak tonight, as noted on the list before you. Before we proceed with presentations, we do have a number of other items and points of information to consider.

First of all, if there is anyone else in the audience who would like to make a presentation this evening, please register with staff at the entrance to the room.

Also, for the information of all presenters, while written versions of presentations are not required, if you are going to accompany your presentation with written materials, we ask that you provide 20 copies. If you need help with photocopying, please speak with our staff.

As well, in accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members. If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they will be removed from the presenters' list.

Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in committee. The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is a signal for the Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

Thank you for your patience.

We will now proceed with public presentations.

**Bill 226–The Presumption of Death
and Declaration of Absence Act
and Amendments to The Insurance Act**

Mr. Chairperson: I will now call Deputy Chief Gord Perrier, Superintendent, Winnipeg Police Service.

Good evening, Superintendent. Do you have any written materials?

Mr. Gord Perrier (Winnipeg Police Service): I don't have written materials, but I have some verbal comments I'd like to bring to the committee.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you. Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Perrier: First of all, good evening. It's a pleasure to be here and bring a few short remarks to this committee on behalf of the Winnipeg Police Service investigators and families that we interact with.

My name is Gordon Perrier. I'm deputy chief of police for the Winnipeg Police Service, and for a number of years, I had the privilege to lead special—the special investigations bureau of the service, and that included a number of units, among them the Missing Persons Unit.

My comments today are certainly meant to be non-partisan and supportive of a need for reform in terms of presumption of death—for the presumption of death matters. I know a number of years ago the Law Reform Commission made recommendations in this area and stated that there needed to be some improvement and some modernization in terms of a cross-country look.

I share this view, however, what that looks like from specific wording point of view, a point of law—that is the work of this committee. And rather, my comments that I wanted to bring today are from point of view from a police investigator, from the point of view of the family or victim, and what we hear and see during our work.

I can say that detectives in the Missing Persons Units and Vulnerable Persons Unit are some of the most dedicated and caring people that I've ever worked with. Missing person files in particular are an emotional roller coaster, to say the least. Thankfully, most of the time these matters end in unification. Unfortunately, some cases do not.

On these occasions, facts like being lost in the wilderness, suicide or even foul play are difficult conclusions and can be only compounded when remains are not located. These times for family are the worst that can be imagined, incredibly difficult, gut-wrenching and simply hard.

Holding on to hope for a positive outcome is natural, yet there comes a time when information, investigative facts and all the information gathered or

known paints a picture of a likely outcome or a presumption that death has occurred. In some of the hardest cases, human remains are never located, and I believe the emotional toll never relieves a family and remains for generations.

That said, managing the affairs of the missing is left to the family and loved ones, and is not an easy task. Navigating systems like banking, loans, benefits, vehicle matters, real property, insurance and documentary issues are difficult and causes that difficult story to be told over and over, hoping that institutions, businesses, financial institutions and other organizations take the same view of a family manner—matter and help bring a matter to conclusion without an official declaration.

Many times, investigators become close to a family, and we're asked, what's the next step? How do I manage things like a car loan? Can I sell property? How do I manage affairs of my loved one?

For sure, we're not experts in this area, but we are aware of families who struggle with the gap in legislation and the very extended time periods between presumption and a declaration.

* (18:10)

For instance, I know families who manage loans in the name of the missing who struggle to do so, but they don't want that loan to go into default. You see, the name of their loved one is all they really have left, and they don't want that name sullied. So many times they can't afford to do this. This is a huge burden, but they do it anyway because of that hope they're clinging to.

Managing the best they can, many times they're unable to work—move forward without some sort of legislation to help them. Just last night, I spoke with a mother who has managed affairs on behalf of her son for an extended period of time. And I told her about my appearance today, and she welcomed that government is working together to hopefully bridge the gap that exists today.

I didn't call her because I was coming here today; I called her because there's one missing family today that reached out to the police and said: How do I navigate this? I've come to the realization that my loved one is deceased. And they wanted to connect to somebody with lived experience. And she's paying it forward in her son's name.

That's her community in Manitoba, caring and helpful. So, if you have any questions, I welcome them.

Thank you for listening, and I promise to be short in my comments.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Thank you for your presentation. And I think this is an important piece of legislation.

But the one thing I ask is about protection of the effects of the person who is presumed dead. And the reason I do this is because I had an experience helping an individual who didn't go missing, but he was a victim of a crime, got beat up, was comatose, was written off, was under the Public Trustee. Everything he owned was completely got rid of and—but he recovered. And he's now doing well, but, you know, everything that he had is gone.

Mr. Perrier: So I think this legislation, from my cursory examination, isn't met—meant to address that particular situation. That person would be in a medical state, a medical facility and, I think, rightfully under the management of the Public Trustee.

How the division of assets occurred in those cases, from a police point of view, we get involved in lots of cases like that because sometimes there are people have power of attorney and there's frauds that occur. And those are difficult things to sort out. These cases were where somebody is missing.

I like the example of—and it's not a nice thing to talk about, but suicide's a reality. We have a number of cases where we have notes; we have information. Somebody walks into the woods to commit suicide, maybe even changes her mind, but then gets lost in the course of walking through the woods and is never found at all. It's those cases of waiting years for the medical examiner to make a declaration. How do you manage those effects?

And I think within the legislation, there is always the potential that something like that could happen. Someone could make a return. So I think by having the courts examine those things and make some declarations with the best information at hand that we can make the best informed decision and at least help those people that are servicing debt at times.

I can think of 10 situations where it's really problematic. I'll give you a really quick example. So one family had a car. The car was very important to that family and to that young person. They went missing, suspected suicide.

And after 12 months, they—still making payments on the car—was a huge burden for that family. But they can't sell it because that car's registered in that person's name. They can't get a TOD. And then the insurance expires and they can't insure it because they're not the insuring party.

So there are some provisions under some other insurance avenues on homeowner insurance where they can get coverage for that real property. But they get stuck in that quagmire. And people, when they're victims of that, these—all of these systems become overwhelming. And we've got those calls, say, what do we do. And we know the answer. A lot of times, we'll say, well, call a lawyer.

But, as soon as I say call a lawyer, I actually feel guilty right away because I know some lawyer is going to say, yes, come to me. And there's another charge for a consultation of the very same facts that I've already told them. So we actually have deals with some lawyers that we'll send people to, to get that advice, because sometimes they want to hear that from somebody learned in the law. So those are the types of situations that I think the legislation will address.

It's important; it doesn't affect tons of people a year, but 10 families with all of their loved ones, their extended family and all their friends, the community effect is huge. And, when somebody is gone—a teacher—an entire school was affected on one teacher case a while ago, and those are the types of situations that I'm talking about. And that's what this enable—this legislation enables: is some things to move forward.

No one's going to forget about their loved one but nor should they be put under undue stress and feel re-victimized in telling a story to a collection agency, to an unco-operative organization that really is only thinking about the bottom line and not thinking about community.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Yes, thanks for coming out this evening. I know this is not the first time you and I have been face to face talking about these issues, so thank you for sharing your perspective. Obviously, we're wanting to bring closure to families who feel trapped in a very—what

is already a very difficult situation and we're wanting to bring as much relief, at least on one front, as is possible.

Mr. Chairperson: Excuse me, the five minutes for questioning is up.

Is it the will of the committee to extend the question period? *[Agreed]*

Continue.

Mr. Micklefield: I think you made mention to it, but I was going to just ask you if there's—if you have an approximate number of families this would affect in a year. Do you have a sense on that? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Deputy Chief Perrier.

Mr. Perrier: My apologies.

We're all fairly aware what grabs the news in terms of foul play, but those are—that's a very rare incident. What's far more prevalent is issues of suicide in our community—is we're all plugged into that and knowing that it's—it happens far more frequently than it should.

And, thankfully, there's lots going on, but it's not a stretch for just the Winnipeg police to say that there's 10 incidences like that a year or more, at the very least. The RCMP could say that, as well, 10 instances. And, if we do a cross-country look, now we're talking about hundreds and hundreds of families.

And legislation similar to this exists in all provinces except Manitoba.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Deputy Chief, thanks so much for coming down today.

I want to thank our friend from Rossmere for introducing this bill into the House. It's clearly something whose time has come, and I think you've done a great job of outlining some of the financial and emotional and legal issues surrounding these really difficult situations. And I think you know, in our caucus, issues related to MMIWG are very close to us and very sensitive. And so, while it can't provide closure, this bill may help those families as well.

Would it, though, change or reclassify police investigations into a missing person in any way?

Mr. Perrier: We've come to a conclusion relative to those cases independently of this. Of course, in looking at the legislation—proposed legislation, I did have a worry of sort of investigational protection

regarding incidents of foul play, but I do know that there's rules within the Court of Queen's Bench Act to address that for in 'cramera' hearings or in camera information to be shared with the judge only, to assist a judge in making a declaration or presumption of death before a medical examiner would. So, with that built in, some of that has been allayed.

It's not going to change our conclusions relative to is a case open, closed, pending new information or whether we believe death has occurred by foul play or death has occurred by misfortune or other means.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Deputy Chief Perrier.

Floor Comment: Thank you for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: That concludes the list of presenters I have before me.

Are there any other persons in attendance who wish to make a presentation?

Seeing none, that concludes public presentations.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: In what order does the committee wish to proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of these bills?

* (18:20)

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): We would like to proceed with 207, 226, 240 and 228. It is our intention to get through all the bills tonight, to see—as we're done with presentations, and have them reported in the House tomorrow.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee that we proceed with—in the following order, Bill 207, Bill 226, Bill 240 and Bill 228? *[Agreed]*

During the consideration of a bill, the preamble, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order. Also, if there is agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Bill 207—The Manitoba Conservation Officers Recognition Day Act

Mr. Chairperson: We will now proceed with Bill 207.

Does the spokesperson for Bill 207 have an opening statement?

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): I'm optimistic this bill recognizing Manitoba conservation officers for their selfless work will get passed because conservation officers deserve support and recognition for carrying out their important enforcement duties. Recognizing October 1st each year throughout the province as Manitoba Conservation Officers Recognition Day will help Manitobans show their appreciation to these officers.

And, because this is a completely non-partisan issue, as I believe every member here is thankful to the men and women who work in this field protecting our province's resources, wildlife, ecosystems and the public.

Why October 1st? Because it was on October 1st, 2015, The Conservation Officers Act was originally passed, which expanded the legal enforcement duties of natural resource officers, and gave natural resource officers peace officer powers, and renamed them as conservation officers. That bill was passed with all-party support.

Law enforcement, resource management and disaster management has evolved considerably since the early days in Manitoba. In response to these changes, Manitoba, in 1998, consolidated game guardians, forest guardians, fish inspectors and natural resource officers into one entity called natural resource officers.

It was around this time in the late 1990s natural resource officers first started carrying sidearms for protection. It made perfect sense because they were dealing with armed hunters in remote backcountry and there was a high degree of risk. A risk the officers had undertaken many times prior, without having sidearms, simply because it was their duty.

Today's conservation officers have many duties, and I think they're best described by this letter I received from André Desrosiers, who's a retired conservation officer.

Conservation officers are the front-line protectors of Manitoba's wildlife, fisheries and forests. They are highly educated and trained in constitutional law, conservation enforcement, problem wildlife management and human interaction. Our conservation officers have extensive peace officer authorities and responsibilities. They're Manitoba's third largest law enforcement agency to carry

firearms on their person and in patrol vehicles. They are trained to Canadian law enforcement firearms standards for their personal protection and the protection of the Manitoba public.

The nature of the profession requires conservation officers to rely on themselves with respect to completing the objectives and demands deemed appropriate by Manitobans. These readily identifiable, uniformed officers patrol every corner of Manitoba, whether densely populated like our cities or sparsely populated like our great North. The conservation officers' service enforces the conservation laws of our province.

Their job involves ensuring that hunting, trapping and fishing are carried out safely and legally. Enforcement of applicable laws requires a collection of evidence; charging and prosecution of poachers day or night; apprehending poachers is dangerous work.

Remember that virtually every person encountered by conservation officers likely possesses some sort of weapon. Every wildlife poacher has at least one firearm, knife and/or axe. Every fish poacher has at least one knife.

For the record, poachers typically possess multiple firearms and multiple-edge weapons. Every hunter inspected for compliance has a firearm, archery bow or crossbow. Every hunter has a knife or hatchet. Anglers typically possess a knife and needle-nose pliers. Every campsite has an axe, hatchet or knives.

How many hikers can carry tools? Let's not forget that bear spray is another commonly carried personal defence tool by Manitobans, not always legal either. Every day, conservation officers prepare themselves mentally in the event they may encounter one or more of these potential weapons under illegal circumstances.

Today, Manitoba conservation officers serve as members of the Western Conservation Law Enforcement Academy cadre of instructors. Recruitments from all four western Canadian provinces and Yukon attend the academy prior to beginning their careers with the respective jurisdiction.

Conservation officers' service has paid a hefty price, with the loss of six members while on duty. These officers lost their life while serving the people of Manitoba. They left behind grieving families and friends. How can anyone deny these families the honour of recognizing their loved ones?

And, like I said, that was presented by André Desrosiers, retired conservation officer.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 207?

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Chair, I just want to take a brief moment to acknowledge the good work of conservation officers in Manitoba.

Certainly, I think we all have a tie to, you know, the great outdoors whether we were raised in the bush, raised on the land, or maybe it's just somewhere we go for cottaging and, you know, some family time. Certainly, conservation officers play an important role there.

And I'd be remiss if I didn't also acknowledge those who have lost their lives in the line of duty, either some sort of confrontation or by accident. We certainly do appreciate their sacrifice and acknowledge that. So, you know, I want to support that with this bill.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 207?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I would just like to acknowledge the importance of conservation officers, and I look forward to having this day annually in recognition of their work.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 207?

So we'll now proceed with clause by clause.

Clauses 1 through 3—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

**Bill 226—The Presumption of Death
and Declaration of Absence Act
and Amendments to The Insurance Act**

(Continued)

Mr. Chairperson: We will now proceed with Bill 226.

Does the bill's sponsor, the honourable member for Rossmere, have an opening statement?

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Yes.

Bill 226, The Presumption of Death and Declaration of Absence Act and Amendments to The Insurance Act stems from conversations which I had with families, one in particular, who found themselves in these awful situations of having a loved one disappear and having to draw the conclusion that that individual would probably never be coming home.

They subsequently had to go through the turmoil of—the frustration of trying to sort out financial affairs, and it's almost unimaginable to think about what they have to do as they attempt to navigate and negotiate with banks and insurance companies and MPI and other organizations who mean well but their rules are not set up to contemplate these kinds of situations often.

Manitoba's Presumption of Death Act was based on research done in the 1960s, became law in Manitoba in 1968, and hasn't been looked at since then.

In 2015 the Manitoba Law Reform Commission highlighted this aging and somewhat archaic legislation and in a report issued a number of recommendations which I've attempted to follow quite closely in what is now before us this evening.

The Presumption of Death and Declaration of Absence Act allows a judge not only to declare an individual to be presumed dead when the situation meets criteria spelled out in the legislation, but it also gives the court the option of declaring somebody to be considered missing for any purpose which the judge may choose. So—missing so that a house could be sold or missing so that a car could perhaps be taken off the road and possibly sold as well.

* (18:30)

That's a new development in this legislation for Manitoba, though other provinces have been doing this for quite some time.

A question that has come up is, you know, what if the missing person turns out not to be missing? Well, there is provision in the bill for those unusual situations, and I'll allow—I'm sure people here who are interested can take the time to read the details of that.

But I certainly hope, and I think all of us here do, that this bill can bring closure, that this bill can bring clarity, and that this bill can help smooth out a path which nobody wants to walk, nobody expects to

walk, but sadly, some people do find themselves being forced to walk.

And I appreciate the co-operation of the committee tonight, and hope this can pass into law in short order.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 226?

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I believe our colleague from Rossmere has explained, I guess, the rationale and the function of the bill quite well.

I would just add, as a personal observation, that it's important that we undertake this legislative change to support families in their time of loss and great need. On a personal level, you know, I have in-helped-of-execute my late father's estate. Not the most pleasant experience, and that was for somebody's passing who we expected.

Certainly couldn't imagine the additional grief that would have been caused if it was an unexpected or even unexplained death, so anything we can do to help a family in that situation, to ease their suffering, is something that we're prepared to support. And so with those few words on the record, I think I'll just leave it at that for now.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 226?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I thank the MLA for Rossmere for bringing this forward, and in comparison with other provinces, it looks like we will now be coming basically into line with what's happening in other provinces, and it will hopefully help people who are in the circumstance where they have a relative who is missing or presumed dead.

And I'm glad that there's provisions there if the individual is later found not to be dead, that there can be circumstances where the effects of that person could be returned to the person or could be there could be compensations.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 226?

We'll now proceed with clause-by-clause.

Clauses 1 through 3-pass; clause 4-pass; clause 5-pass; clauses 6 and 7-pass; clauses 8 and 9-pass; clauses 10 and 11-pass; clauses 12 and 13-pass; clauses 14 and 15-pass; clauses 16 through 18-pass; preamble-pass; enacting clause-pass; title-pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 240—The Elections Amendment Act

Mr. Chairperson: We'll now proceed with Bill 240.

Does the bill sponsor, the honourable member for Fort Richmond, have an opening statement?

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): I do. Yes. I'll keep this very brief. I think that the bill is self-explanatory.

It amends The Elections Act to require candidates to disclose offences that they have pleaded guilty to or have been found guilty of. Offences for which a person received a record suspension under the Criminal Records Act Canada must be disclosed. Youth offences and those offences for which a pardon was granted under the Criminal Code are excluded.

And this is really a bill that will highlight the importance of transparency and honesty with candidates and, hopefully, will lead to a more informed decision at the polls for voters. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 240?

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'm very proud of the changes that I've made in my life over the past two decades and, you know, it's been no small endeavour to engage in personal reflection, self-improvement and a continual process of advancement in my personal life.

And, you know, I've recorded some of these reflections in a book which was very well received and widely published—widely sold, I should say.

And, in the years since, which was prior to my entering politics, you know, I've been very fortunate to have the opportunity to speak to many young people—young men in particular, many young indigenous men, also, to encourage them that if they want to live a good, clean life of respect, then, of course, being straight-up about where you've come from is an important step in that.

So some people have talked to me about, you know, some concerns with the bill. And, you know, media were asking questions, like, if this is going to scare people away from entering politics—people who may be very good public servants. However, it's been my experience that I've been honest and forthright throughout my political career. The first person to say anything bad about, you know, the member from Fort Rouge is typically the member from Fort Rouge.

And, while people may want to, you know, distort or misrepresent the way things have been shared in public, you know, I'm very happy if—a close read of the timeline will in fact show that I've always been forthright and disclosive on my own personal shortcomings, the lengthy transformation that I went through and the role that I play in the community today as a devoted father, husband and possibly the next Premier of Manitoba.

So I'd close with an anecdote—from yesterday evening, actually. I was in a church in River Heights. And we were there for an event that had a certain political dimension to it—more policy oriented rather than anything partisan.

And there was a young man who spoke after I was there. And he was a guy who said, you know, I just got out of prison two years ago, and I've been incarcerated for 20 years of what I assume is a 30-year period of time on Earth. And he spoke very passionately, explained, like, why he wanted our province to improve for the better. And I was very moved.

And, you know, I'd already had my chance to speak, this and that, so I didn't really want to steal the show, but I was so, like, moved by what this guy was putting out there that I just, you know, asked the pastor if I could get on the mic one more time. And so he indulged me, and I just told this young man, I said, you know, it's going to be very difficult for you. It was very difficult for me.

But I want you to be good, I want you to treat people with respect and I want you to live a life that you can be proud of, because the next young person that you're going to inspire is watching you right now and the conduct that you display in public will be what they use to guide their decision making on.

And I said, you know, they can take your title, they can take your money, perhaps even they'll take your freedom, but you have a gift to communicate the emotions that you feel with the audience that's

listening to you. And they will never be able to take that away because that was a gift from the creator.

So I wish the young man well and hope to be able to offer him any sort of assistance in the future.

And so bills like this one, perhaps, require a higher standard from some of us than others are willing to live up to, but I fully welcome that. And I know that at the end of the day, not only will I be judged by the creator, I will also be judged by the people of Manitoba. And I'm perfectly at peace with that.

So, with those few words on the record, I'd just like to thank everybody for coming out.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 240?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I would like to just comment briefly to say that I think it is important that we recognize that there have been many people who have had problems when they were young or at some point in their lives and have gone on to perhaps we could say learn from that and contribute.

* (18:40)

There was a Conservative Member of Parliament, I believe from Saskatchewan, who I listened to at one point. And he talked about the time that he had been in a gang and had been very violent at one point and had learned from that and go on to become a Member of Parliament who was able to contribute in understanding and empathizing with individuals who had had problems early on.

And it's important that we recognize that people can grow and can mature and can advance and can contribute.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 240?

We'll now proceed with clause-by-clause.

Clauses 1 and 2—pass; clause 3—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 228—The Sikh Heritage Month Act

Mr. Chairperson: We will now proceed with Bill 228.

Does the bill sponsor, the honourable member for Fort Rouge, have an opening statement?

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Sure do.

All right, now something to bring everybody together and make the people feel happy and bring a lot of good vibes to the table. This is the Sikh heritage month bill that I'm very honoured to bring forward.

The reason why I'm honoured to bring it forward is because this bill did not begin with an idea of mine; rather, it was the Punjabi community members who practise the Sikh faith who, meeting with me several months ago at this point, shared their dream that, you know, we in Manitoba through legislation recognize Sikh heritage month here in the province.

It is recognized in some other jurisdictions. The federal government also recognizes it. But, again, it was important to the large and growing Sikh faith community here in Manitoba that we recognize this through a bill and pass it into law.

I was very happy to see this gesture from the community come forward, to have the community see themselves reflected in the legislation and also the tremendous amount of phoning and emailing and outreach that they did to lobby members for many parties to support this bill.

And so for us it certainly was very nice to see that committee's work be rewarded with a unanimous vote in the House.

I would note the Premier (Mr. Pallister) showed up also to vote for this bill, even though he typically doesn't vote on bills that are debated in the morning, so I thought that that was a very good gesture on his part and certainly did not go unnoticed.

So we know the Sikh community is—Sikh faith community is one that practises very awesome faith and demands that they serve the community, that they be humble, that they treat others with equality, and certainly we know that there's many, many people from this community that have served our province and our country and indeed every political party that's represented at the table here tonight.

I know our many ministers in the federal Liberal government who practise the Sikh faith. Our federal leader, Jagmeet Singh, and his younger brother

Gurratan are also members of the Sikh faith community.

And, of course, there have been many members of Parliament and MLAs who are Punjabi practitioners of the Sikh faith as well, including one young man from Alberta who perhaps I'll have a chance to speak to a bit more, a Conservative MLA from Alberta. I'll talk about—more about him at third reading.

But, for now, I think I'll just leave the comments at that and just indicate that this is something that the community wants, and certainly I think all members have gotten the message on that front.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 228?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Our government was very proud to proclaim Sikh heritage month earlier this month back in April. It was the first time that it ever has been proclaimed here in Manitoba, and we were honoured to be able to do that and, you know, also follow what other provinces do here in Canada as well as the federal government.

And it was wonderful to be able to work together with the Sikh community, meet with them many times and have the opportunity to formally present the proclamation to many of them in the many gurdwaras that here across the province, that I know that developing that relationship is so important, because they are very important members of our province and right across the country.

They've done so much to grow our country here in Manitoba and especially in—or our country here in Canada and especially our province here in Manitoba.

They are very well represented. We appreciate their hard work and you know, we're very, very pleased to be able to make that proclamation.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 228?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes. I'm pleased that we're going to, annually, have a month to recognize the people who are Sikhs in Manitoba and, indeed, in a sense, around the

world, to recognize the Sikh culture and the contributions of people from the community.

I think it's important that we continue to emphasize and build upon the diversity that we have in Manitoba, and it's a really important part of who we are and that young people growing up and older people can appreciate more the contributions and the nature and the benefits and the wisdom that comes from other cultures.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 228?

We'll now proceed with clause by clause.

Clause 1—pass; clauses 2 and 3—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

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Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 6:47, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 6:47 p.m.

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