

First Session – Forty-Third Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Social and Economic Development

Chairperson
Mr. Logan Oxenham
Constituency of Kirkfield Park

Vol. LXXVIII No. 3 - 6 p.m., Tuesday, April 9, 2024

ISSN 1708-6698

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday, April 9, 2024

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Logan Oxenham
(Kirkfield Park)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz
(Radisson)

ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4

Members of the committee present:

*Mr. Balcaen, MLAs Cross, Dela Cruz,
 Messrs. Nesbitt, Oxenham, MLA Pankratz*

Substitutions:

MLA Cross for MLA Moroz

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Tom Bilous, United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

*Bill 200 – The Firefighters Recognition Day Act
 (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act
 Amended)*

* * *

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Katerina Tefft): Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development please come to order.

Before the committee can proceed with the business before it, it must elect a Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): I nominate Mr. Oxenham.

Clerk Assistant: Mr. Oxenham has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Oxenham, will you please take the Chair.

The Chairperson: Order, please.

Committee Substitution

The Chairperson: I would like to inform the committee that under rule 85(2), the following membership substitution has been made for this committee effective immediately: MLA Cross for MLA Moroz.

Thank you.

* * *

The Chairperson: Our next item of business is the election of a Vice-Chairperson.

Are there any nominations? [*interjection*] Sorry, Mr. Pankratz.

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): I nominate MLA Dela Cruz.

The Chairperson: MLA Dela Cruz has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, MLA Dela Cruz is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the following bill: Bill 200, The Firefighters Recognition Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

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.

Just offer some public presentation guidelines: Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in a committee. 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. Questions shall not exceed 30 seconds in length, with no time limit for answers. Questions may be addressed to presenters in the following rotation: first, the member sponsoring the bill; second, a member of the official opposition; and third, an independent member.

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.

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 the signal for the Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

I will now call on MLA Pankratz—*[interjection]* Sorry? Oh, sorry.

I will now call on Mr. Bilous to please proceed with your presentation.

Tom Bilous (United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg): If you'll—if you and the committee will indulge me, before I do my presentation, being that this is about firefighter appreciation, we had a tragic suicide of one of our members today.

I would ask, if you'll allow for it, would just join me in a moment of silence before I begin, couple seconds. Thank you.

The Chairperson: Is there leave from committee for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Please rise.

A moment of silence was observed.

T. Bilous: Good evening. My name's Tom Bilous. I am the president of the United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg, representing 1,600 active and retired firefighters.

It's with great pride and gratitude that I'm allowed to speak on this humbling recognition. The fact that this government has taken steps and has put the effort in to formally recognize and appreciate Manitoba firefighters is fantastic, and yet not surprising.

The Manitoba government has always been there for Manitoba firefighters. It was in 2002 where we were the first province to enact presumptive legislation coverage for occupational cancers for firefighters. That legislation has not only been added to as science-supported information as it evolved, but it has meant better, faster care and proper compensation for firefighters and their families that have suffered or made the ultimate sacrifice.

We also now have our beautiful provincial firefighter memorial just across the street, where we can gather for ceremony every September. Again, we are

lucky to live in a province where we are appreciated and recognized for our profession.

I want to thank MLA David Pankratz, whom is also a UFFW member and Winnipeg firefighter, for putting this bill together. And, of course, without the support of his colleagues, our many great MLAs from all parties, and last, but not least, Premier Kinew, for their very much appreciated support on this endeavour.

Firefighters typically are humble people and often say they're just doing their job, which is true. However, we are lucky to be placed in a position to assist people on what is sometimes the worst day of their life.

That's why I speak in favour of this bill and urge everyone to support it. Its simple intent to recognize the good work Manitoba firefighters continue to do every day is warranted and will be appreciated.

On behalf of my members, we say thank you for allowing us to do this profession and for always having our backs.

Thank you. Happy to answer any questions.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation and under such terrible circumstances. I'm very sorry for your loss.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): More of a statement than a question. First of all, thank you for your presentation, and thank you and all of your 1,600-plus members in Winnipeg and more across the province for your service and your selfless sacrifices that you give.

And on behalf of myself, our colleagues and all of us in emergency services past, present, I am very sorry for the loss of a family member, because it's truly a member of your family that you have lost.

So, again, thank you, and we look forward to talking further on this bill.

The Chairperson: Any other questions for the presenter?

Well, thank you very much for your presentation. Appreciate it.

That concludes the list of presenters I have before me.

* * *

The Chairperson: We will now proceed with clause-by-clause of Bill 200.

Does the bill sponsor, the honourable member from—Waverley, have an opening statement?

MLA Pankratz: So, I prepared a bunch of remarks for this, and then I spent the last hour since the Chamber rose talking to co-workers and friends and family members about what happened at WFPS today with our brother.

And I think it's important that I just take a moment, since this is a bill for firefighters recognition day, and attempt to not get too emotional talking about it, but just say how difficult this job can be in a lot of ways that people don't necessarily expect. So, mental health is a major issue, obviously, as we've seen first hand today.

And there are calls that we go on—my apologies—that don't necessarily leave you, and so—and I'm looking across at a fellow first responder, fire—or, police officer, and I'm sure he could speak to many of these same sort of calls.

* (18:10)

I think it's just so important that we are consistently reaching out to people who are in our health-care system, who are on our front lines, to make sure that they're checking in on their own mental health, and that it's okay to tell them it's okay to not be okay, and to reach out to your friends and to be open about that.

So I just wanted to put that on the record very quickly before I also say that, you know, the firefighter family is such an incredible group. You go through things that you never could possibly—you could never imagine—with one another. You're volunteering in the community, you're cooking meals together and laughing about some of the ridiculous things that you deal with in your job. And then you also have nights where you're running into a house that's on fire, right?

So it's this incredibly wildly disparate set of experiences that you have when you're doing this work. And I'm just, again, as Tom mentioned, it's a humble group. They wouldn't ask for this. No firefighter would necessarily ask for this. I am really privileged and honoured to be in the position that I am in, as an MLA, and to be able to bring this forward.

And I sincerely appreciate all of the support from my co-workers on both sides of the Chamber on this. I know it got unanimous votes and support, and so I really appreciate that.

And I look forward to celebrating this with brothers and sisters across this amazing province on May the 4th, once this passes through. So thank you again to everyone for being here today.

The Chairperson: We thank the member. Thank you.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 200?

Mr. Balcaen: It's certainly very difficult—line of work; I can speak first-hand. And again, I appreciate all of the work that people in emergency services—and today, let's recognize the work that the emergency services in the firefighting area really look after. Mr. Pankratz spoke about, you know, you can go from nothing to a burning home in a matter of seconds.

So in our language from the police service, we used to say they moved from zero to hero in a matter of seconds. And it rings through today, because they're the first ones to run into the burning building while others are running out. So it's also not lost on us, and myself, that this is May the 4th. And we joked in the House, we said some things, but—and again, I think it's important today, may the force be with you, and your—sorry, your firefighting force and your group of people, and continue to gather around each other and provide support. Mental health, physical health and working together.

So we on this side certainly appreciate this bill being brought forward, and I'd be remiss if I didn't say that of all of the things I've learned with firefighters and emergency services, the mantra of firefighters has always stuck with me. And I hope I do it justice, but it's: I will risk nothing to save nothing, I will risk a little to save a little, but I will risk a lot to save a lot. And that says it all. They're willing to run into the most dangerous situations, risk everything that they have—including life—and make sure that others are taken care of.

So, again, we won't be laying out any hose to block traffic on this. We're going to make sure that we're here to hear line by line and make sure that this moves through for our heroes in the fire department.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Balcaen.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 200?

Okay. So, seeing now—none, we shall move to the clauses.

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

All right, the hour being 6:15, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Rise.

The Chairperson: Okay. Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 6:15 p.m.

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>