

Privilege

I have the honour and the privilege of being a member of Parliament and it is my solemn commitment to my constituents to serve. But how is any member able to carry out his or her duties without total and unimpeded access at any time and by whatever means is at our disposal?

Number one, can a member of Parliament arrive at this place whenever and, more important, however he or she wishes? Two, is there a limit to the number of members of Parliament who can arrive at the front door of this place at any given moment? With all due respect, is there a set of rules governing this activity of which I am not aware, or is it common practice for the Sergeant-at-Arms to make himself available as chief negotiator, as some sort of conciliator, between the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the taxi drivers of Ottawa?

You have had put before you and this House, Mr. Speaker, the rules outlined by my colleague, the Hon. Member from Windsor West. I submit that we have a *prima facie* case of privilege and I would support my colleague's motion, if you so request.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I was one of four members in the office of the Sergeant-at-Arms at noon hour along with the Leader of the Opposition and two other MPs. I was there because I too was one of those who was at the rally of many, many Canadians who were here to protest the tax.

After the rally, I too tried to summon a taxi to return to Parliament Hill. My colleagues for Prince Albert—Churchill River and Saskatoon—Dundurn tried the same thing. There were RCMP cruisers blocking the path by the Centennial Flame.

I and the House leader of the opposition party asked why they were doing this and on whose authority they were acting and they would not tell us. We then went and disturbed the Sergeant-at-Arms who was half way through a lovely lunch in his office. He appeared not to know anything about it so we brought him down to the Centennial Flame and negotiations were undertaken.

The House leader of the official opposition has already referred to that in detail.

My point is really two-fold. I think it is important, because of the possibility of a real confrontation having occurred, because of some of the emotions and tempers that were around, to find out who made the decision that we were not to have access to the House of Commons in taxis.

I have always known since I was elected as a member of Parliament that I have the right to call a taxi and be dropped off at the Centre Block under the Peace Tower, and other members know that as well. We have access to the Hill. You know that, Mr. Speaker, and we all know that. We have access to the Hill, and you as the person in charge of Parliament Hill is the only person who can deny that access under certain circumstances.

I think we should look at this in terms of a question of privilege regarding access to Parliament Hill. Second, Mr. Speaker, I think you would want to find out who made the decision to have the RCMP block the lower road down by the Centennial Flame because that was something that could have escalated into an incident that none of us would have wanted to see.

On behalf of many members of Parliament, I too support this question of privilege. I think it is a pretty fundamental thing. It is something that you as Speaker certainly would want to get to the bottom of as quickly as possible.

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point as my colleague for Windsor West. This incident happened in an entirely different set of circumstances.

Shortly before one o'clock, I had a meeting off the Hill and I was returning to the Hill by taxi. We turned in to the entrance way in front of the East Block. As soon as the taxi got on to the property, we were stopped by a member of the RCMP who advised us that we could continue no further and would I walk from that point up to the Centre Block. I acquiesced, naturally.