

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	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	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Thomas, Hon.	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 13, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.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 and 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 afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 22—The Red River College Act

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I move that Bill 22—sorry, seconded by the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Ms. Wight), that Bill 22, The Red River College Act; Loi sur le Collège Red River, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Allum: I'm pleased to introduce The Red River College Act today. Better training and education opportunities are the key to keeping Manitoba on the right track, and we want students to have access to high-quality education and training that will prepare them for good jobs in our growing economy.

Red River College is a key partner in our post-secondary system and plays a vital role in serving Manitoba's economy and meeting labour market needs. This bill strengthens board governance, accountability and financial oversight at the college, while also ensuring the college is better positioned to fulfill its mandate and meet the needs of students and industry into the future.

Thank you.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

Bipole III Land Expropriation—Collective Bargaining Request

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

On November 19th, 2014, the Premier authorized an order-in-council enabling Manitoba Hydro to take valuable and productive farmland for its controversial Bipole III transmission line project without due process of law.

On November 24th, 2014, the minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act signed a confirming order for the province of Manitoba declaring that no notice to landowners is required for the seizure of property.

This waiver of notice represents an attack on rural families and their property rights in a modern democratic society. There was not even an opportunity provided for debate in the Manitoba Legislature. In many cases, the private property seized has been part of a family farm for generations.

Manitoba Hydro has claimed that it has only ever expropriated one landowner in its entire history of operation. The provincial government has now gone ahead and instituted expropriation procedures against more than 200 landowners impacted by Bipole III.

Since November of 2013, the Manitoba Bipole III Landowner Committee, MBLC, in association with the Canadian Association of Energy and Pipeline Landowner Associations, CAEPLA, have been trying to engage Manitoba Hydro to negotiate a fair business agreement.

For over 18—or for over 14 months, the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro have acted in bad faith in their dealings with Manitoba landowners and their duly authorized agents. These actions have denied farmers their right to bargain collectively to protect their property and their businesses from Bipole III.

MBLC and CAEPLA has not formed an association to stop the Bipole III project and they are not antidevelopment. The associations have simply come together, as a group of people, as Manitobans, to stand up for their property rights and to exercise their freedom to associate and negotiate a fair business agreement that protects the future well-being of their businesses.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the fact that the incursion on arable land without due impact on livelihood is occurring in Manitoba, the Manitoba Seed Growers Association is leading an effort to develop right-to-farm legislation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to direct Manitoba Hydro to immediately engage with MBLC and CAEPLA in order to negotiate a fair business agreement that addresses the many legitimate concerns of farm families affected by the Bipole III transmission line.

This petition is signed by S. Jarvis, M. Jamieson, C. Forbes and many other fine Manitobans.

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

Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Every day, hundreds of Manitoba children walk to school in Oakbank and must cross PTH 206 at the intersection with Cedar Avenue.

(2) There have been many dangerous incidents where drivers use the right shoulder to pass vehicles that have stopped at the traffic light waiting to turn left at this intersection.

(3) Law enforcement officials have identified this intersection as a hot spot of concern for the safety of schoolchildren, drivers and emergency responders.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the

intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by C. Heyens, J. Ziprick Baert, N. Thompson and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Beausejour District Hospital—Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The Beausejour District Hospital is a 30-bed, acute-care facility that serves the communities of Beausejour and Brokenhead.

(2) The hospital and the primary-care centre have had no doctor available on weekends and holidays for many months, jeopardizing the health and livelihoods of those in the northeast region of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

(3) During the 2011 election, the provincial government promised to provide every Manitoban with access to a family doctor by 2015.

(4) This promise is far from being realized, and Manitobans are witnessing many emergency rooms limiting services or closing temporarily, with the majority of these reductions taking place in rural Manitoba.

(5) According to the Health Council of Canada, only 25 per cent of doctors in Manitoba reported that their patients had access to care on evenings and weekends.

* (13:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to ensure that the Beausejour District Hospital and primary-care centre have a primary-care physician available on weekends and holidays to better provide area residents with this essential service.

This petition is signed by R. Glen Engel, W. Oneschuk, A. Cowan and many, many more fine Manitobans.

**Province-Wide Long-Term Care—
Review Need and Increase Spaces**

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And this is the background to this petition:

(1) There are currently 125 licensed personal-care homes, PCHs, across Manitoba, consisting of less than 10,000 beds.

All trends point to an increasingly aging population who will require additional personal-care-home facilities.

(3) By some estimates, Manitoba will require an increase of more than 5,100 personal-care-home beds by 2036.

(4) The number of Manitobans with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia-related illness who will require personal-care-home services are steadily increasing and are threatening to double within the current generation.

(5) The last personal-care-home review in many areas, including the Swan River area currently under the administration of Prairie Mountain regional health authority, was conducted in 2008.

(6) Average occupancy rates for personal-care homes across the province are exceeding 97 per cent, with some regions, such as the Swan River Valley, witnessing 100 per cent occupancy rates.

(7) These high occupancy rates are creating the conditions where many individuals requiring long-term care are being displaced far away from their families and home communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to consider immediately enacting a province-wide review of the long-term care of residents of Manitoba.

And (2) to urge the provincial government to recognize the stresses placed upon the health-care system by the current and continuous aging population and consider increasing the availability of long-term-care spaces, PCH beds, in communities across the province.

And this petition has been signed by G. Fuchs, G. Maynard, G. Scull and many, many more fine Manitobans.

**Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission
Line Route—Information Request**

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is a 500-kilovolt alternating-current transmission line set to be located in southeastern Manitoba that will cross into the US border south of Piney, Manitoba.

(2) The line has an in-service date of 2020 and will run approximately 150 kilometres with tower heights expected to reach between 40 and 60 metres and to be located every four to five hundred metres.

(3) The preferred route designated for the line will see hydro towers come in close proximity to the community of La Broquerie and many other communities in Manitoba's southeast rather than an alternate route that was also considered.

(4) The alternate route would have seen the line run further east, avoid densely populated areas and eventually terminate at the same spot at the US border.

(5) The Progressive Conservative caucus has repeatedly asked for information about the routing of the line and its proximity to densely populated areas and has yet to receive any response.

(6) Landowners all across Manitoba are concerned about the impact hydro line routing could have on land values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro to immediately provide a written explanation to all members of the Legislative Assembly regarding what criteria were used and the reasons for selecting the preferred route for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, including whether or not this routing represented the least intrusive option to residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

This petition is signed by R. Kube, L. Gagnon, M. de Klein and many more fine Manitobans.

Bipole III Land Expropriation— Collective Bargaining Request

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

On November 19th, 2014, the Premier authorized an order-in-council enabling Manitoba Hydro to take valuable and productive farmland for its controversial Bipole III transmission line project without due process of law.

On November 24th, 2014, the minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act signed a confirming order for the province of Manitoba declaring that no notice to landowners is required for the seizure of property.

This waiver of notice represents an attack on rural families and their property rights in a modern democratic society. There was not even an opportunity provided for debate in the Manitoba Legislature. In many cases, the private property seized has been part of a family farm for generations.

Manitoba Hydro has claimed that it has only ever expropriated one landowner in its entire history of operation. The provincial government has now gone ahead and instituted expropriation procedures against more than 200 landowners impacted by Bipole III.

Since November 2013, the Manitoba Bipole III Landowner Committee, or MBLC, in association with the Canadian Association of Energy and Pipeline Landowner Associations, CAEPLA, has been trying to engage Manitoba Hydro to negotiate a fair business agreement.

For over 14 months, the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro have acted in bad faith in their dealings with Manitoba landowners or their duly authorized agents. Those actions have denied farmers their right to bargain collectively to protect their property and their businesses from Bipole III.

MBLC, CAEPLA has not formed an association to stop the Bipole III project and they are not antidevelopment. MBLC, CAEPLA has simply come together, as a group of people, as Manitobans, to stand up for property rights and the right to collectively bargain for a fair business agreement that protects the future well-being of their businesses.

MBLC, CAEPLA are duly authorized agents for Manitoba landowners who wish to exercise their freedom to associate and negotiate in good faith.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government immediately direct Manitoba Hydro to engage with MBLC, CAEPLA in order to negotiate a fair business agreement that addresses the many legitimate concerns of farm families affected by the Bipole III transmission line.

And this petition is signed by A. Vanderveen, B. Gansekuele, E. Wieler and many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us the manager of our visitor tours, Vanessa Gregg, along with the 2015 summer tour guides, who are Rachèle Bosc, Amanda Fyfe, Natasha Chartier and Elizabeth Boileau.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Balanced Budget Government Record

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Here's a quote from the 2011 election, Mr. Speaker: Our plan to address these issues is affordable, responsible and fits inside a balanced budget each and every year. That was Jack Layton.

Contrast that to this provincial government's record: doubled Manitoba's debt, seven consecutive deficit budgets. This month's budget, of course, estimates a 20 per cent higher deficit than last year's budget: wrong direction. This is all due to waste such as the Bipole west waste line, untendered secret contracts, departure tax to give to their friends.

And, interestingly, in the last provincial election campaign, Manitoba's NDP dedicated their campaign to honour Mr. Layton's name. That was a nice sentiment.

But given their sorrowful record of broken promises and waste, I would ask them today not to

do a disservice to the memory of Jack Layton by trying to associate his good name with their record.

* (13:50)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start my answer by, first of all, acknowledging that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), after 21 years of service, the longest ever in the history of his constituency, has decided not to run in the next election, and thank him for his service to the Legislature.

And I don't think it would be too much of a stretch to say, Mr. Speaker, that the member of Dauphin would agree with me that the Leader of the Opposition has nothing to speak on behalf of Jack Layton on any issue with respect to this country.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is a balanced budget. It's a budget that puts the priority on growing the economy, doing it while—doing while there's fiscal prudence, reducing the deficit year over year, investing in infrastructure which will create good jobs for young Manitobans, ensuring that people have good training and education opportunities, ensuring that we continue to—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Pallister: I had the great honour of getting to know Jack Layton, to work with him, to spend a lot of time with him. In fact, we worked out together at the gymnasium that the members of Parliament frequently used to blow off steam. Some of the members need to get to a gym more often, Mr. Speaker.

He was an honest and he was a principled man, and we lost him far too soon. I want to quote from the NDP federal platform, the last platform that Jack was able to participate in developing and running on. It says: We will maintain Canada's commitment to balance the federal budget.

Jack understood the need for balanced budgets and he committed to staying out of the red.

Why does this government seem so committed to staying in the red?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that the memory of Jack Layton would be well served by this budget, and I do note that other federal politicians made strong statements.

I remember the minister of Finance Jim Flaherty saying he'd never run a deficit, and then he became

the federal minister of Finance and the great recession came to Canada, as it did around the world, and as a pragmatic and sensible minister of Finance, he decided that we needed to have stimulus spending and made a decision to put deficits in place to help the Canadian economy. That was a practical decision made by the federal minister of Finance under the Conservative government.

So let's not kid ourselves. People have to deal with the circumstances in front of them, make appropriate decisions, and they do it in the belief that it will serve the public interest, and that's what we've done in Manitoba. We've made sure that people have opportunities for jobs. We make sure that we're protecting communities from floods. We've made sure that we're building infrastructure, which will allow the economy to grow, and doing it while protecting health care, education and services to families.

Mr. Pallister: And some who commit to public service do so with a commitment to integrity, as Mr. Layton did, and some do not have that equal commitment to integrity, Mr. Speaker.

There's another quote from Mr. Layton: We have a policy of balanced budgets each and every year. That's the world I come from where you have to balance budgets.

Well, that's the world where we come from as well, and that's the world Manitobans live in. That's not the world this Premier inhabits. That's not the world his colleagues inhabit. They're strangers in that world. They're strangers in the world of balancing the books, Mr. Speaker. Their world is one where you raid the rainy day fund, take money from tomorrow and use it to buy votes today. Their world is the one where you double the provincial debt in a six-year period. Their world is the one where you raise taxes at record rates despite promising that you would not do that very thing.

Jack Layton's reputation should not be used as a political prop by political organizations that wants to—is not committed to sustaining common sense and is not committed to balancing the books.

I'd like the Premier to admit today that he is as far removed as anyone in this Chamber from the world of Jack Layton.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is quickly becoming noted for being the master of the double standard in this House, the master of the double standard.

Mr. Speaker, the budget that we put forward in front of the people was one that did use the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and the contrast is very clear. We did not take a surplus, like the members opposite did when they came into office, and immediately turn it into a deficit and turn it into a Fiscal Stabilization Fund and when that ran out sell off the telephone system and use that to balance the budget. We built up an \$800-million-plus Fiscal Stabilization Fund during the good times when the economy was strong, while we were expanding. We used that strategically to keep the economy steady and growing during the difficult times.

Our debt servicing costs are 5.6 cents on the dollar. When the members opposite were in office, they were over 13 cents on the dollar.

Fiscal prudence while growing the economy, protecting services and creating jobs is the approach we've taken, and it is serving Manitobans well.

ER Services Delivery Record

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, despite an NDP promise to end hallway medicine, the NDP broke that promise and today it is having dire consequences. We still have hallway medicine; we now have taxicab medicine; and for Heather Brenan, there was no medicine.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Health finally confirm that she and this NDP government have failed Manitoba patients because of their gross mismanagement?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for the question, and I'd like to reassure Manitobans that we know that they expect and deserve what they and their loved ones want is high-quality care at our health-care facilities.

I can assure members that the WRHA is fully participating in the independent judicial inquest and we support this process. We want the answers on what could have been done differently in the case of Ms. Brenan and to help make sure that patients are being discharged appropriately and safely. We need to be sure that patients are being discharged in this manner.

And the onus is on medical professionals to make sure patients are ready to be discharged. Anyone who feels that they are not well enough to go home has the right to let the medical staff know.

And I want to assure Manitobans that there were over 193,000 discharges from Winnipeg emergency departments—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mrs. Driedger: Thankfully, the doctors at the Heather Brenan inquest are telling it like it is, unlike what we are hearing from this Minister of Health.

Heather Brenan was stuck in the ER for three whole days. She was sick enough to need to be admitted, but there were no beds for her to be admitted into. So they were forced to send her home by taxicab. The NDP government then blamed taxicab drivers for her death.

Mr. Speaker, will this Minister of Health admit that her broken promises and gross mismanagement has failed patients?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, again, I'd like to remind the member and all Manitobans that there were over 193,000 discharges from Winnipeg emergency departments in a year. And even if one goes wrong, we want to know and know about it and learn about it. And that's what this process is doing.

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority has strengthened its discharge guidelines and enhanced the process for safe ER discharges, including the implementation of a regional discharge checklist. This new checklist is about making sure discharge-care plans are clearly documented and communicated effectively with patients. It will also help reinforce what front-line medical staff already do when they evaluate a patient's fitness to go home, ensuring that they can manage safely at home, they understand their care plan and they know what to do if their conditions change after they leave the ED.

Changes are happening. Changes will occur to—continue to happen in light of the report that I anxiously await so that we can—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Health is clearly in over her head and does not understand what the questions and the seriousness of this issue seem to be.

Mr. Speaker, under this NDP government, hallway medicine has become a full-blown ER crisis and patients have died. The WRHA has admitted they failed.

I would now like to ask this Minister of Health: Will she also admit that she and her government have failed and we now have a very, very critical ER crisis in Winnipeg ERs?

Ms. Blady: What I will admit to is the ongoing investments in patient care and front-line services: the fact that we have more doctors and nurses; the fact that we have been rebuilding and expanding ERs at the HSC, Children's Hospital, Concordia, St. Boniface, Victoria and Seven Oaks, and we're currently undertaking a redevelopment and expansion of the ER at Grace Hospital.

*(14:00)

We're also taking pressure off ERs for nonemergency cases by building ACCESS centres and QuickCare clinics, hiring more doctors and nurses and nurse practitioners and improving access to family doctors, including opening a new Mental Health Crisis Response Centre at HSC. We're investing to take care of Manitobans.

Altona Health Centre Suspension of Services

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, she's been taking pressure off of ERs in rural Manitoba at the count of 23 of them closed now.

This is the third day and the fifth time that I've asked the Minister of Health the same question, and it is clear she's incapable of answering it truthfully.

Why is the Altona operating room closed, or does she simply not know?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for the question and, as I have assured him over the past several days and in multiple answers, that there are service provisions that when doctors and nurses feel that care cannot be adequately provided, they choose to suspend services. And we are working with the RHA and with Altona to ensure that the nursing positions and other positions there are filled to ensure that they can give the quality of care that is required by Manitobans.

So I will repeat the same answer that I have given him over the past several days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, it's clear that front-line services are suffering due to NDP mismanagement.

Will the minister admit that the Altona operating room is closed because of a nursing shortage?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, what I will assure Manitobans of is that we have more nurses working in this province than ever before. We have a record number of nurses around the province. We have a record number of nursing positions around the province. We have more nurses working to fill those positions than ever before. And members opposite, when they were running the show, how they dealt with nursing vacancies was they cut the positions.

So, yes, we have vacancies, but we have money on the table. We have nurses training and we have nurses looking for work all around the province, and I look forward to welcoming more nurses into the rural areas.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, it's clear by the minister's answers that she doesn't know what's going on under her watch. Her priorities are to pay \$670,000 to political staffers rather than to protect the vital front-line services.

How can this minister say to the—to this House and to the people of Altona and the surrounding district that the OR will be open in six months when she doesn't know why it's closed?

I'll ask the minister for the seventh time now: Why is the Altona OR closed?

Ms. Blady: I believe I answered that in the first part of the question, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry the member did not hear it and understand it, but he can go back to Hansard and read that answer, because I did assure them that I know why and that we are working with the RHA.

But, again, our government is proud to support nurses. We work with them; we come to agreements. But what happens when Conservatives are forced to work with nurses? Negotiations are forced into arbitration and nurses are forced to strike.

We don't even need to look to the '90s to see how Conservatives deal with nurses, because right now in Nelson House we're seeing that a Conservative government doesn't know how to work with nurses. Nurses from MNU have been forced to strike in Nelson House because the federal government refused to fund nursing positions. The Province has stepped up to work with those nurses, but the Conservatives can't be bothered.

If the member opposite is so concerned about nurses, will he call on his—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has expired.

Melita Health Centre ER Nurse Vacancies

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's bad enough that Manitoba has the highest ER wait times in the country. How many Manitobans can't even access ER services?

Is this Minister of Health aware that one of the reasons why Melita's ER is closed is due to a nursing shortage?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): As I've stated in earlier answers, we will work with Melita and the RHA to fill those vacancies. Money is on the table for those positions.

And there are more nurses practising in Manitoba and in rural Manitoba than ever before, more nurses' training seats than ever before, more nursing positions than ever before and more nurses at work in those positions than ever before. We've added nearly 100 nursing positions last year across the province.

But we know there's still more to do in recruiting and retaining more nurses, especially in rural Manitoba, and that's why we do work with RHAs to support nurse recruitment and retention strategies for communities across the province. It's why we established the Nurses Recruitment and Retention Fund and—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Piwniuk: Mr. Speaker, this minister's government mismanaged the resources that led to the nursing shortage throughout Manitoba that has resulted in the ER closure in Melita.

Today's Brandon Sun clearly states that there are seven nursing positions that are not being filled in Melita hospital.

Where are the nurses that this minister says that she—this government—her government has hired? They're not—I know one thing, they're not in Melita.

Ms. Blady: As I was saying, we established the Nurses Recruitment and Retention Fund and expanded nurses' training seats to record levels to bring more and more nurses into the workforce.

We do reject the cold-hearted, artificial way in which the former government addressed nurse vacancy numbers. They took the easy step, the easy road. They cut available positions. They handed out pink slips and they tried to force nurses into jobs that

they didn't want. We reject that approach. We're not cutting, we're building and we're training and hiring.

As the president of nurses' Manitoba union said, in the 1990s only one in five nurses would recommend their profession. Today four in five nurses would recommend being a nurse in Manitoba.

Potential Closure

Mr. Piwniuk: Mr. Speaker, does this minister even—aware that the government is endangering the lives of Manitobans? Is Melita's hospital next on the NDP's chopping block?

Is this minister planning on closing the hospital in Melita?

Ms. Blady: I'd like to thank the member for the question.

And I'd like to assure the folks in Melita that we're always making sure that they have the best health care possible and we'll continue to work with the RHA in whatever manner possible and that I know that nurses are a key part of that.

And, again, we work with nurses, and I'd like to again thank Sandi Mowat, the president of the Manitoba Nurses' Union, and her members and all nurses in Manitoba for the work they do and for knowing that they can work with us. She says that this government's focus on recruiting and training more nurses has been critical in making our nursing workforce stronger. But what she's most proud of is the work that we have done in the places where our nurses work in a healthier environment. In the 1990s, again, only one in five nurses would recommend their profession; today four in five would.

Correctional Facilities Accidental Release of Inmates

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): If the best health care is a closed facility, I'd hate to see the worst health care.

In 2011 there were seven prisoners who were accidentally released by the NDP government. And I want to make it clear, these weren't prisoners who jumped over a wall or made a daring escape, they just had the door opened by the NDP government and they walked right out.

In 2011 the former, former minister of Justice issued a news release and he said, any accidental release is a serious incident, and he promised, through a report, to end that practice.

Now a new freedom of information request shows that while there were seven in 2011 when the former, former minister made his promise, there were nine last year.

Why is it that there are more accidental releases four years after this government promised to fix the problem?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): This has been an ongoing challenge not only in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, but in justice systems across the country and beyond. It's an issue that I raised with the department when I was reassigned this portfolio, and my understanding is that the numbers were down last year.

But one is too many, and we're going to continue to drill down and discover how efforts can be better co-ordinated to guard against the risk of this occurring. We have had outside expertise come to assist and to look at the systems, but it's an ongoing effort and we're going to redouble those efforts.

Mr. Goertzen: I'm not sure why he raised it with the department; the former, former minister said that he was going to fix the problem.

In fact, CBC's Sean Kavanagh reported on October 19th, 2011: The minister of Justice said accidental releases of prisoners is unacceptable, and he's got a study coming that will fix it, Mr. Speaker.

Yet last year not only did it not get fixed, there were more people accidentally released from prison than there were when he said that the fix was coming.

On September 4th of last year, an individual was released accidentally by this NDP government, was set free, Mr. Speaker, and they were on the lam for more than two months.

* (14:10)

Can this minister indicate what crime this individual was in the Brandon Correctional Centre for, and when did they get picked up, and did they commit a crime while they were released?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, when I spoke about the challenge facing justice systems across the country and beyond when it comes to accidental releases, the member opposite might want to be reminded that Conservative administrations aren't immune to this challenge. They have continued for quite some time, and in my view, too long.

That is why we are hiring more court clerks, why we're enhancing training, and that's why we're continuing to drill down. We're going to have to bring some further work to this and provide Canadian leadership, because we're bound and determined to end this practice to the best of our ability.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the former, former minister promised that this would already be fixed. In fact, he already—he promised in 2011 that it was going to be fixed.

Last year there were nine individuals who were set free by this NDP government. Two were gone for more than two months. One was gone for a month. We have no idea what crimes that they committed because they won't release that information. We don't know if they committed more crimes while they were released because they won't release that information.

And yet the minister says, trust me. He doesn't believe the former, former minister, but he says this minister is going to fix it. None of them are going to fix it. They're making fake promises and they don't know how to fix the promise—or the problem.

Why don't they just acknowledge that they're incapable of fixing this problem?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, Conservatives have proven they've been incapable of fixing the problem as well, but the effort that we're bringing to bear on this issue is making a difference. We now have, of course, over 2,000 arrests for those with warrants. We're bringing new resources to bear.

You know what? I—quite frankly, I wasn't quite sure what the question is. I couldn't hear the question over the drama, Mr. Speaker, but I'll just remind the member opposite that when he asks questions, too, he has no clue—he has no clue whatsoever with even one suggestion. It's just all criticism.

We're working on this, Mr. Speaker. We're going to bring those numbers down. We're bringing new resources, better training and outside reviews to make sure that this issue is dealt with in Manitoba once and for all.

Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry Implementation of Recommendations

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): The minister of Child and Family Services has had 18 months to implement the recommendations from the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry. In January of 2015, official

government news release, the minister is quoted as saying the government is implementing 31 of 62 recommendations from the inquiry. Yesterday the minister told this Chamber that the government is implementing only 23 recommendations. That leaves 39 unaccounted for.

I would like to ask the minister: What happened to these other 39 recommendations? Aren't they important for children in care too?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I will help the member opposite understand the math of this.

Commissioner Hughes interviewed a number of stakeholders within the system. He worked diligently to come up with these recommendations that we value very much and are committed to.

Mr. Speaker, there were 62 recommendations; 31 of the recommendations we had already started implementation on, and we're committed to implementing the other 31. We worked with AMR Consulting to come up with a plan and to further consult Manitobans.

The recommendations that Commissioner Hughes provided us were broad and deep, and we needed to ensure that as we move forward with those recommendations that we implemented them correctly.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, based on the minister's own words, we're moving backwards.

The minister has known since 2010 that The Social Work Profession Act would need to be implemented. She even assembled a special committee to enable this implementation. Then at the last minute, she dismissed all of this by changing job descriptions.

Is this NDP government even capable of implementing their own legislation?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, the social work professional act encourages the development and has created the development of a college of social work. They will be—they will consist of a board of directors that will manage and monitor their practices as well as the legislation.

We are committed to this legislation. We have worked on this legislation since 2009. I had the opportunity to be a part of the development of it, and I was very proud to continue to work on it as I assumed these responsibilities.

Yes, there was a transitional board that helped bridge the conflict between some of the groups. We have been able to make that bridge, and we will continue to work with these groups to implement the social work professional act.

Mr. Wishart: Well, it would seem, in the meantime, the minister's solved the problem by changing the job description and eliminating about 500 social workers.

Can the minister tell us if she has implemented recommendation No. 24 from the Phoenix inquiry, ensuring that all agencies have access to an information system to assist them in tracking children in care? We know that Liquor & Lotteries can track every dollar. Why can't Child and Family Services keep track of the children in care?

When will we have a working system that will be in place to help protect children at risk?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'd like for the House to be aware that we hired over 400 more front-line workers within the Child and Family Services, and because of that, they are doing the good work every day supporting families and protecting children.

What the member is referencing with that recommendation is Cúram, and that is a commitment that we have made to develop that technology within our system. But I want to assure all Manitobans that we continue to have a system which we use today called CFIS. We will be continuing to work with all of our partners, the authorities and the agencies to implement Cúram as soon as possible.

Energy East Pipeline Costs to Manitoba

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of talk about the Energy East Pipeline, which is set to travel through Manitoba. It has been suggested that the government's support of this pipeline, through Manitoba Hydro, in particular, is quite significant.

Can the Premier tell the Legislature today what the full cost to Manitobans will be for the Energy East Pipeline?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Actually, Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Hydro corporation has applied for intervenor 'status' on the Energy East Pipeline. They're concerned about ensuring that they have an adequate supply of natural gas for their customers.

And going forward, in terms of cost, Mr. Speaker, it's the intention of the government to ensure that there is no subsidy of any energy pipeline in Manitoba.

Public Consultations

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, there is a concern, and I think rightfully so, about what will be the full financial costs and benefits to Manitoba and what will be the full environmental costs and potential benefit for Manitoba of the Energy East Pipeline.

Concerned Manitobans are calling for public hearings.

When will the government be calling public hearings, Clean Environment Commission hearings, into the Energy East Pipeline proposal?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the application is to the National Energy Board, a national agency, who will hold public hearings. The Manitoba government has applied for full intervenor status. They have posted their concerns in a letter to that body, and they will hold public hearings across the country, and we will make a full intervention.

We will be focusing on ensuring that water is safe in Manitoba and the environment is protected and communities are safe in Manitoba, among other concerns such as ensuring that there's no subsidy for the pipeline. We want to ensure that any transmission of that product through Manitoba is safe for all Manitoba communities and ensure that our environment and water is protected.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier hesitates to call made-in-Manitoba public hearings when these are clearly needed. Ontario and Quebec are doing public consultations to make sure that people in Ontario and Quebec can have input, can understand what the costs and benefits are in Ontario and Quebec. And yet this Premier is being silent on this. He is hesitating to call public hearings.

It's time that there are consultations. It's time that there are public hearings in Manitoba.

When will the Premier call the Clean Environment Commission's hearings in Manitoba into the Energy East Pipeline?

Mr. Selinger: The National Energy Board will be holding public hearings. Manitoba has made application for full intervenor status. They have posted their concerns online; they have a letter that they have filed in that regard.

Other members of the community have also applied. Other organizations have also applied. They are entirely entitled to do that. I understand that even a member of the Legislature has considered an application himself for that.

* (14:20)

We want to ensure that in any set of hearings held by the National Energy Board that we ensure that water is protected in Manitoba, we ensure communities are protected in Manitoba, we ensure that the environment is protected in Manitoba, that there's no undue subsidies of any of the energy going through the province, and we want to—all of those things will be fully presented to the National Energy Board hearings and we encourage anybody that has that interest to put forward their application for intervenor status.

Small-Business Tax Threshold Increase

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Last night here at our Legislative Building, we had a printing industry association had their annual general meeting, and I was there speaking on behalf of the government. And they were very, very pleased to see me because I have worked in that industry for a number of years.

Having operated my own small business for a number of years, it's known that I believe that small business is very important, create 80 per cent of jobs, and I'm also very pleased to see that our government has done everything possible to support the small business.

Could I ask the Minister of Finance to brief the House about the latest announcement this morning on supporting the small business?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): I do want to thank the member for Radisson for that excellent Finance question, Mr. Speaker, because earlier today I had a chance to visit The Tallest Poppy, a local restaurant owned by Talia Syrie. She spoke about her hopes and dreams about being a young entrepreneur and the challenges that she's facing as a young entrepreneur, and she said that business is the life of a community.

We all know that small business is the heart of our economy. That is why today we announced an additional 2,000 small businesses will be taken off the provincial tax rolls. We're doing that to help Talia and thousands of other small businesses succeed.

My only regret is that yesterday when the opposition had a chance to support small businesses like The Tallest Poppy, they said no.

**Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority
Physician Recruitment and Retention**

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the other day I had asked a very serious question about the shortage of doctors and the doctor recruitment in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, and the Health Minister decided to disregard the question and proceed to break yet another promise to Manitobans. She said, and I quote, we have said that we want every Manitoban who wants a family doctor to have one and we're well on track to fulfilling that promise. The promise was to—every Manitoban to have a doctor by 2015.

The Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority is short 26-plus doctors.

I will repeat the question that I asked the other day. Why are hard-working community members, volunteers and leaders doing her job?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question.

Every Manitoban does deserve a family doctor, and that's why we have committed that all Manitobans will have access to—who want a family doctor will have access by 2015, and there are more doctors working in Manitoba than ever before and our plan is to recruit and retain even more.

Well, we've already fulfilled the 2011 election commitment to hire 200 more doctors. We've hired 210 more doctors since 2011. In fact, we have seen a gain—a net gain of over 665 more doctors since 1999, including over 250 more family doctors, and I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that they are going out to rural areas.

I'll get my list out the next question around, because I can tell you that we've been training physicians, adding an additional 22 more medical residencies—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has elapsed for this question.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, we can't believe a word this Health Minister is saying.

Mr. Speaker, under this NDP government we have seen a major doctor recruitment crisis. In addition, we've recently had a retention problem in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

Concerned citizens, including Mr. Robert Baranoski, saw the writing on the wall that he would not have a doctor. He wrote to the Health Minister to ask for help back in December. He did not receive a response from the minister for over three months after the doctor had left.

Where was this Health Minister from December to March?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member again for the question.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure members opposite that myself and all members on this side of the House were working hard for Manitobans, and in that time I had opportunity to meet with the CEOs and the chairs of all of the RHAs as well as a variety of communities—even from the member opposite's region—members from the AMM to talk about these things.

So I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that, again, in increasing medical school spaces from 70 to 110 since 1999, replacing the 15 cut by members opposite and adding another 25, as well as establishing free tuition and recruitment grants, we're working to make sure that—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Ewasko: Another broken promise by this Health Minister. Mr. Speaker, 2,300 doctors have left this province, and the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority has a vacancy of 26-plus doctors.

This minister continues to fail Manitobans due to her inability to fulfill her responsibility of responding to individuals' needs in a timely manner. Keeping people with serious concerns in the dark for over three months is unacceptable.

Where was this Health Minister from December to March, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, again, Manitoba—according to CIHI, Manitoba is among the best in the nation on rural doctor retention. We have more doctors practising in rural areas than any other province west of the Maritimes, including more than our neighbours in Saskatchewan and Ontario. In fact, our doctors per capita compared to Saskatchewan is 204 per 100,000 whereas they only have 184.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition's values and priorities don't reflect those of today's Manitoba. Members opposite, and especially their leader, called

the government of the '90s one of the finest that it was—Manitoba was ever blessed with, yet it's the same government—the same government—that fired 1,000 nurses and sent over 100 doctors running from the province and cut medical student spaces by nearly 20 per cent—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council Use of Proceeds from Sale

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture authorized the sale of the Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council on Marion Street for \$650,000. Now, this money should have gone to ranchers and taxpayers of Manitoba.

However, the question is: Was this what the Premier (Mr. Selinger) used, this \$650,000, to pay for the departure tax for the political staff that left Manitoba?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): It's a privilege to stand up and speak on behalf of the livestock producers in the province of Manitoba, as the member opposite has brought forward a situation where I personally experienced when the BSE scenario hit the cattle industry in the province of Manitoba. This is a government that took the crisis seriously, and we moved forward to improve economic development for the province of Manitoba.

As we talk about the interests of the agriculture industry in the province of Manitoba, my question is to the member opposite: What do they think about the Canadian single desk selling off and the farmers in the agriculture grain industry losing \$3.1 billion in 2013—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Agriculture's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, back to the relevant question: What happened to the \$650,000 that this government took of ranchers' money?

Did they use that money to pay for the departure tax for the political staff that they booted out of the province to go to Alberta?

Mr. Kostyshyn: And, obviously, it's always entertaining how the member opposite would twist questions around. But I want to assure the member opposite that the producer levy contribution was

always voluntary, and, obviously, we have supported the producers to move forward towards the cattle industry and we continue to work on that for the betterment of what it is today.

But I'm also pleased to make announcement that we as a government made an investment of \$8 million to help the cattle—livestock associate guarantee that we want to see cattle numbers grow in the province of Manitoba, not see what we've seen since the BSE existed. This was money that was well [*inaudible*] because without cattle numbers, slaughter facilities do not have a place.

And I question the member opposite how we made some strong investments and we will continue to support agriculture in the province of Manitoba.

* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: Now, time for members' statements.

Lymphedema Awareness Day

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Lymphedema is a serious medical condition that does not get as much attention as it deserves. Lymphedema affects around 140 million individuals internationally and is common among individuals who have received cancer treatment. Mr. Speaker, this 'dilibrating' disease that affects that—the lymphatic system is difficult to treat and often goes undiagnosed and undertreated.

Lymphedema Awareness Day is celebrated on March 6th every year. This year, the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba celebrated its third Lymphedema Awareness Day symposium on March 14th. I had this privilege of attending this symposium and am proud of the LAM's significant contributions to those affected by the condition.

Mr. Speaker, the keynote speaker at the event was Mitch Dorge, a Winnipeg musician and producer. Some of the other speakers included Dr. Richard Nason, Miriam Duff, Robert Harris and Karen Dobbin. There were several educational exhibits at the symposium and information about accessing resources was provided. The Lymphedema Association of Manitoba relies on memberships and donations to continue promoting awareness and education about lymphedema for patients, those at risk of lymphedema and for health-care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, last session, I introduced The Lymphedema Awareness Day Act. It was assented to on June 12th, 2014, and establishes March 6th as the official Lymphedema Awareness Day in Manitoba. I would like to thank Kim Avanthay and the other board members with the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba, including Debbie Davidson, Isabelle Thorvardson, Susan Tole, Sandy Funk and Suzanne Paintin, for initiating this bill.

I would also like to thank the volunteers with the LAM. It is thanks to the hard work of dedication of these people that the momentum regarding lymphedema awareness continues to grow. Lymphedema Awareness Day honours patients with lymphedema, recognizes health-care practitioners who care for patients with lymphedema and educates the public at large about this 'debilitating' disease.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members in the House to join me in recognizing the belated Lymphedema Awareness Day and to recognize the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba for all of its hard work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earl Grey School 100th Anniversary

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): This year is a special milestone for many students and teachers in Fort Rouge. This weekend, Earl Grey School is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

Earl Grey School is one of Winnipeg's grand old schools. It's named after the former Governor General of Canada, Lord Earl Grey, who also founded the Grey Cup. Construction began in 1914, and the first students attended classes the following year. It has been home to some of Winnipeg's most well-known citizens, including Neil Young and Marshall McLuhan.

Earl Grey is one of architect J.B. Mitchell's most picturesque designs. It has an impressive facade with a pair of asymmetrical entrance towers that are full of elegant details. The parents and staff at Earl Grey continue to make improvements to the school such as the recent addition of an outdoor classroom.

The school is a long-standing example of innovation. It became the first junior high school in western Canada. Today, the teachers at Earl Grey carry on the tradition of providing innovative programming, such as their all-girls program, conflict managers program and child guidance clinic.

Earl Grey School's 100th anniversary will be celebrated this weekend with several events reuniting

alumni and faculty. Everyone from the community is invited to attend and celebrate this important milestone. The CFL has lent the Grey Cup to the school for this celebratory weekend. Congratulations to the community of Earl Grey School on 100 years as a vibrant, caring place to learn.

We're fortunate in Fort Rouge to have several excellent community schools, including Gladstone, Fort Rouge, La Verendrye and Kelvin. All of these schools have served Winnipeg children and families for 100 years or more. Each one of these schools strives to provide an excellent education to our children and to be part of the community 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I'm newly impressed every time I visit these schools with the dedication of staff, parents and students.

Please join me in wishing Earl Grey students, families, alumni, staff and teachers a wonderful reunion weekend.

Dr. Johan du Plooy—Physician of the Year

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): On Friday, May 8th, Dr. Johan du Plooy was honoured as the physician of the year by Doctors Manitoba. When I visit with his patients, the words compassionate, caring, honest and sincere are most often used to describe Dr. du Plooy.

Dr. du Plooy was raised in Zimbabwe. He worked in a mine and noticed the respect given to the mine doctor, and he then decided that he would become a doctor. He worked in the mine until he had enough money to enter university. After spending some time in his studies, he ran out of money and returned to the mine until he had earned enough money to resume his studies.

Dr. du Plooy completed his medical training at the University of Pretoria in 1979. He and his wife, Suzanne, emigrated to Canada after his work in a family-practice clinic in South Africa. Dr. du Plooy has worked in family practice in McCreary, Neepawa and Brandon. A few years ago Dr. du Plooy began the move to part-time family medicine and part-time oncology with CancerCare in Brandon.

I have visited with a good friend, Mr. Vince Cristanti, during his chemotherapy, and he had this to say about Dr. du Plooy, quote: Little did I know that the man I had a few years ago as my general practitioner would later become my cancer-care doctor when I turned 49 years old. He has always been a professional and respected 'dauter'—doctor, but

more importantly, he has now become my trusted friend and confidant as he guides me through terminal cancer. A doctor so compassionate and dedicated to his patients makes the challenge of facing cancer a little less frightening for me and my family. He is most deserving of this recognition.

Congratulations, Dr. du Plooy, and thank you.

Principal Marc Poirier

Ms. Theresa Oswald (Seine River): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to celebrate a terrific Manitoba educator and leader. Monsieur Marc Poirier, principal of École Marie-Anne-Gaboury in the Louis Riel School Division, was recently chosen to receive the Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching in the Outstanding School Leader category. He is a worthy recipient indeed, and I'm delighted to speak to his many, many positive attributes.

Monsieur Poirier strongly believes in creating and nurturing a collaborative learning environment where students thrive by receiving quality education, and teachers and parents serve as authentic partners in building a positive school community. He works constantly to maintain and expand the networks that are critical for student success and for a school to truly welcoming and productive.

Monsieur Poirier is active on Twitter and in a blog, he participates enthusiastically with the parent council, and there is never a day when one visits the school that one doesn't find him present and engaged with people in the hallways.

On a personal note, I shall declare my bias concerning Monsieur Poirier, as he is the principal of my son's school. From his very first day in kindergarten, my son has known and trusted Monsieur Poirier as a solid force of support and encouragement in the school.

Monsieur Poirier connects with students on a personal level and takes a genuine interest in their well-being and achievement. He has a valuable intuition concerning children who need some extra time and help, or just a friendly conversation on a challenging day. While all parents wish Monsieur Poirier well in his new post next year, it is this personal, thoughtful approach that we will surely miss the most.

I know all members will join me in congratulating Monsieur Poirier for his years of

excellent service and wish him the best in the many years of his career yet to come.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further member statements?

State of Provincial Economy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in the first full week of this session, Manitoba Liberals exposed the major failings in today's—*[interjection]*—Liberals exposed the major failings in today's NDP government's mismanagement of the child and family services system. In the second week, we've exposed very concerning issues with the way the government is handling our provincial economy. Our employment numbers in Manitoba are still 9,000 less than employment was in June of 2013, before today's NDP government broke their promise and raised the PST.

Our manufacturing sales, instead of booming, are continuing to lag behind the growth in manufacturing in Saskatchewan. Our exports—and exports mean jobs are going far slower than those of Saskatchewan. For example, our exports to India are now only one twelfth of those of Saskatchewan. Today's NDP have to date been remarkably ineffective in improving our competitive position in terms of manufacturing and exports.

When it comes to fair business practices, including tendering and bidding processes, today's NDP government has been shamefully deficient. We saw this in the lack of a tendering process for the STARS contract and the lack of public bids when today's NDP privatized the Property Registry. We've seen this recently in the questionable tendering practices with respect to the new health centre in Selkirk that led one of our respected companies, PCL, to launch a lawsuit.

And most shamefully, today's NDP government, four years after the flood of 2011, still has no definite plans and no definite timeline to get people in Little Saskatchewan, Lake St. Martin and Dauphin River returned to safe and dry communities. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) said, and I quote: There's no economy for a community that's under water. Mr. Speaker, when you don't even have a home, it's very hard to build a community let alone worry about its economy.

* (14:40)

The economic policies of today's NDP leave much to be desired. Today's NDP government should

get to work for Manitobans instead of squabbling internally. Indeed, some wonder if the government's new amendments to The Boxing Act, introduced yesterday, were designed to give guidance to the conduct of infighting within today's NDP caucus.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements. We'll now move on to grievances. No grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Then move on to orders of the day, government business.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): First, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to indicate to the House that this Friday, the Estimates, Committee of Supply, will be meeting in all three locations, so I want to give notice to the House that that will in fact take place this Friday.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced, for the information of members of the House, that the three sections of the Committee of Supply will be meeting this Friday morning.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Selinger), I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), that Jennifer Howard, member for the electoral division of Fort Rouge, be Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole House and Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the House, I'd like to announce that we'll be dealing with motions, to be followed by Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that we'll be dealing with government motions, followed by the Committee of Supply.

GOVERNMENT MOTION

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Premier, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Jennifer Howard, member for the electoral division of Fort Rouge, be Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole House and Deputy Speaker.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Any debate?

Before recognizing the honourable member for Steinbach, the honourable member for River Heights.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Just a very brief comment, Mr. Speaker. As a result of her performance during the last year, Manitoba Liberals will not support the election of the MLA for Fort Rouge as Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate?

Before recognizing the honourable member for Steinbach, I want to advise the House that I have received notice from the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) that the member for Steinbach will be speaking to the motion on behalf of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, and therefore has unlimited time.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I want to assure the House my speech won't be unlimited. It will end at some point. But I do—[interjection] Finally, unanimous agreement of the House, Mr. Speaker.

But I do want to put a number of comments on the record. I don't think this is a insignificant moment for this Chamber, and it's important to speak about a number of things that impact this particular appointment.

First of all, I—well, I've sometimes had some differences, obviously, in policy with the member who's been nominated for this position. I would say on a personal level that I've always got along quite well with the member during the time that she was House leader for the government. We had quite a debate, of course, over the issue of the PST, and that session—and not unlike that—this one, I suspect, Mr. Speaker—went long into the summer and beyond.

And during those discussions and—there were many times when we talked about a variety of different issues, and, of course, we didn't come to an agreement quickly in terms of how we were going to deal with them, but it was important that we have those discussions. And I've said it publicly before, Mr. Speaker, so I don't mind repeating it on the record now, that at the end of those discussions, when the session ended in September or October or whatever it was, when it ended, I think I came out on the other side with more respect for the member than I went in with that session, and not that I didn't respect her at the beginning of the session, but I did certainly appreciate the conversations that we had and learned that she has some good ability to negotiate and I appreciated that we could do it on a

non-partisan level many times and maintain, I think, a respectful working relationship coming out of that.

This particular role, though, of course, and not unlike the role that you have had, Mr. Speaker, as the Speaker of this Assembly, is important. It is an important one for all of us as members, and I think sometimes the role of the Speaker is overlooked, and it's unfortunate that it doesn't get, perhaps, the attention that it deserves because it plays a very important role within our particular parliamentary system. And I'm going to spend some time informing the House and members about the importance of the role of Speaker and, of course, Deputy Speaker, because the Deputy Speaker is not a heartbeat away from assuming that role. It doesn't happen that way and we wish you nothing but a long health, but it does certainly mean that that person assumes the Chair quite often and, as a result of assuming the Chair, they're often called upon to make rulings and make decisions.

But the role of the Speaker here in our Assembly and throughout the Westminster role of government, I think, is one that just simply doesn't get the attention that it deserves. Now, I'm glad that we've moved to a system in the last 10 or 12 years or so where we've gone to an elected Speaker system, and I don't remember the year of the first election—it might have been 2000. It was Speaker Hickes who was elected at that time, and I think that that particular system was good for us as legislators because it gave, you know, a sense of confidence for the person who was being elected, and I know you maintain the confidence of this House, Mr. Speaker. I've said that publicly in the past before as well. Recently, I think, it was published, my admiration for your role as—your work as Speaker, and the fact that a person can be elected into that role, I think, brings a lot of credibility to it.

Now, I'm not sure how many legislatures have an elected Speaker. I suspect that it's the majority, though. I certainly know they do it in the House of Commons in Ottawa, and the Speaker there has been elected for quite some time, and I think that's a benefit, obviously, for the Speaker. And I don't know that we'd ever go back to another system.

Now, there has been some discussion, I know, even in this Chamber, about the possibility of electing a Deputy Speaker. I was perusing some rulings, as I do sometimes in the evening, when, you know, I want to be—have exhilaration in terms of reading material. I look through past rulings and

things that have happened here in the House, and I remember that the former member for Inkster, I believe, now a Member of Parliament for Winnipeg Centre or somewhere, Mr. Speaker, in Winnipeg, Mr. Lamoureux, raised the point of order or a matter of privilege or some sort of procedural aspect about the role of Deputy Speaker and suggested that the role of Deputy Speaker should, in fact, be elected. And he was ruled out of order because that's not what our rules actually say in terms of the process, and that's why we're here today, because the process actually allows for the appointment of the Deputy Speaker and not an election.

Now, I know that this isn't a particular portion of this debate, but it is interesting, I suppose, to consider the possibility of electing the Deputy Speaker at some point, Mr. Speaker, because, you know, the Deputy Speaker does—while they don't have the authority that's vested in you, of course, they do occupy the Chair for a great deal of time, and not an insignificant amount of time, and that's why we're here today.

Now, I know that the former Deputy Speaker, the now Minister of Conservation, I think, would probably concur with me when I say that the role of the Deputy Speaker is one that probably flies below the radar, a little bit, of the public, Mr. Speaker, when they talk about the kinds of things that they do in the Legislature and beyond.

* (14:50)

Even for yourself, I suppose, when you look at—speaking to your constituents and you tell them about the role of the Speaker, it probably takes some amount of information, some amount of discussion about how it is that you've come about your role and the role that you have, because, of course, you are elected as an MLA, as all of us are here in the Legislature. But you take on this special role, and I suspect that in the overall system of government people would understand much more clearly the role of a minister, for example, within the government and not as clearly the role of a Speaker or a Deputy Speaker as the case is today. And so it's important, I think, to put some of those words on the record about the source of things that speakers do and to have a bit of a historical perspective.

And I appreciate the fact that it's not an easy role to go to constituents and to talk to them and to tell them about the role of a Speaker or of a Deputy Speaker, but there's been a number of initiatives that the current Speaker of this Assembly have

undertaken and I think to their credit—and some of them might actually be to the credit of the former Speaker, Mr. Hickes, and I don't want to take any shine away from him if he brought forward any of these particular initiatives. He might very well have been the architect of some of them. But I know that the—we have a system where the Speaker now goes out into schools, for example, or some of the schools will come here, and the Speaker will visit schools and give a description of the sort of things that a Speaker does, and I think they run sort of almost a mock parliament within the context of the high school.

I had the opportunity, when I was at the volunteer appreciation awards a few weeks ago here in Winnipeg at the Convention Centre, I was seated beside a teacher from—or instructor from Brandon and, you know, we were talking about this, about how the—there is this particular role. We were talking about the Legislature, and I said, well, you know, the Speaker does actually offer not only a teachers institute, but does go to the classrooms around the province and offer this sort of a perspective, not an instruction so much, but a perspective on the role of the Speaker, and she wasn't aware of that. And so she was quite interested in it and I—when I got home a couple of days later, I sent her some of the information links to the Teachers Institute that's run here in the Assembly and I sent her the link to the ability to bring yourself and some of the Clerk's staff out to school, and I think that that's probably something she'll take advantage of.

And I would encourage others who are in the education field to consider looking at that, and it's a great way to have a—an instruction in the classroom about what happens here in the Legislature without actually being here in the Legislature.

And I don't know, Mr. Speaker, how many schools you and your staff have had the opportunity to visit. I suspect it's a great number already. But I would encourage you to continue to advertise that program and to make aware to the various schools that there is this opportunity for a classroom and those students to participate in that and to really learn how things function in the Legislature. Not every one of them will be elected as an MLA, of course. We don't want all of them running for our positions. We might not find ourselves with employment if that were to happen. Not all of them will become pages of the Legislature, and I haven't had the opportunity yet, but I'm—welcome back the pages. And the pages get a first-hand opportunity to see on a daily basis

how this place functions, and I guess they form their own opinion of that and it either encourages them perhaps to move into public life or for some it might have the opposite effect. But whatever the effect is, I would encourage everyone to really see how this place—because it is the democratic seat of government—see how it operates. And I know that when you go out to the schools, that's really your intention, and I appreciate that, you know, you do it in a non-partisan way. It's not done with any particular political motive in mind; I think that that's important.

I have heard some very positive feedback from students and from teachers who have been able to have you or others in their classroom from this Assembly and to hear about how the Assembly works, and I would encourage you, Mr. Speaker, to continue to do that fine work. Now, you're restricted, of course, by time and budgets and all those other things that all of us are restricted by, but it's an important thing.

Also, the Teachers Institute I'll mention because it falls under the purview of the Speaker. I think it's something that's important and that it started to happen here five or six years ago, I believe, and when that was first raised as a particular issue—possibility—and I think it may have come to LAMC at that time, Mr. Speaker. I don't think we had a clear concept of exactly what it would be, and it was described to us. And after it started to function, I think we realized how important it is to be able to bring teachers, educators here and they can see how the Legislature operates. And so that, I think, has also been a great benefit and I'm glad that it continues on here in the Legislature and that those staff who were involved with that continue to make it a priority. And I think that it serves us all well here as members of the Legislature.

So, Mr. Speaker, your office, of course, does a great job, then, and of informing people as much as they can, but even with all of that I suspect that if you were to stroll down Broadway on this lovely afternoon on this Wednesday, this beautiful spring day—*[interjection]* Well, I haven't been outside for a few hours, and the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) tells me it might not be that lovely. Perhaps, by the time I'm done this speech, it'll have warmed up quite a bit. But, if you were to walk out on Broadway and to talk to a number of people and ask them about the role of the Speaker of the Assembly, I suspect you'd get a quizzical look from many of them. They wouldn't know what the role of

the Speaker truly is, and I think that's unfortunate because it is one of the most important roles here.

I don't remember when in this particular Assembly—I wasn't here when it happened, but, at some point, I think, they elevated the status of the Speaker to become sort of akin to a minister in terms of salary and the different statuses in terms of a minister, and I think that that is appropriate. And I think it's important because the work that you do and that others do in representing all of us as elected members here in the Assembly, I think, is equally as important as others would do, Mr. Speaker.

But I wanted to give in the time that I have remaining—which I know is unlimited, but, in the time that I have, I wanted to speak a little bit about the historical perspective of the Speaker. And I would encourage anyone who has a few extra dollars to pick up a copy of the House of Commons practice and procedure and to read through it. And I—it's not the cheapest book you're ever going to find in a bookstore. In fact, you probably won't find it in the bookstore at all. But, you know, if you have the opportunity to look through it, it's really quite an interesting read and you'll learn a lot about the different systems.

Often here, as MLAs, you know, we aren't always sure how things have come to be and how different traditions have started. And we're not captive to those traditions, but, you know, they happen and we just accept them and don't really know what the origins of them are. And, if you're ever interested in determining what some of those origins are, Mr. Speaker, this is a great place to start. I know I'm not speaking to you—of course, I have to speak to you because the rules insist that I do, but I know that you, more than any of us here in this Chamber, understand full well and understand clearly and fully exactly how these rules have come to be.

But I want to speak a little bit about the office of Speaker and how it relates to our role here. In the—and I'm reading from an older version, I think, of House of Commons practice and procedure. I have a newer version but it's—nothing will have changed in terms of this particular context, Mr. Speaker. But, in the version that was authored by Marleau and Montpetit, it says that it was during the speakership of Shaw-Lefevre that the principle of continuity of office began. Upon election, the Speaker renounces all party affiliation and, when seeking re-election into the House, runs as the Speaker.

No Speaker of the British House of Commons seeking re-election in his or her constituency has been defeated. Now, that's different, of course, than what's happened here, but it's interesting that in a time gone by in different legislatures that the Speaker actually had their own constituency per se and that they ran as the Speaker.

Now, I know that that's not how our tradition is currently. When the Speaker at this particular time—in this particular time in our legislative history, when they run for re-election, they run back under the party affiliation that they were elected to begin with. But there was a time—and I hesitate to say not so long ago—but in the context of the history of the Legislature wasn't that long ago where the Speaker essentially had this sort of continuity of the office and they ran under, essentially, a constituency of Speaker and they ran for re-election as a Speaker.

And it was interesting for me to read when I was perusing it, Mr. Speaker, that no Speaker of the British House of Commons seeking re-election in his or her constituency as a Speaker had been defeated, which says to me a couple of things: (1) I think it shows that when people are educated in terms of what the Speaker does, they see an important role of it and they see the value of it, and I think that that's clear.

* (15:00)

Now, I'm not advocating going back to this model. Others have, you know. I remember it may have been Mr. Walding. At one point I read—I don't know if it was a book that he wrote or maybe it was an article that he'd authored, but he spoke at one time about changing how the role of Speaker was run, and I think he was advocating at that time, so this would go back to the mid-'80s, I suppose, Mr. Speaker. He was advocating for a particular Speaker's constituency. Now, I don't know how, though, it'd really work within our system and I'm not sure if the—if those who are in that constituency would agree to that. But it was interesting that even not so long ago in the mid-'80s that the—Minister Walding in this very Chamber was talking about having a different kind of model in terms of how the Speaker was elected.

Now—[interjection]—and I know I hear the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) referring to Mr. Walding. Now, I think he is referring to something else, though; I think he's referring to the fact that Mr. Walding defeated the government of Howard Pawley in 1988, and so, obviously,

that's something that bothers Mr.—the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and continues to bother him. And, you know, he should be bothered by that because, actually—and I won't digress too far, but there are a lot of parallels between what was happening, I think, in 1988 where you had a number of people in Manitoba, the vast majority of Manitobans that turned out who were very concerned about the high-tax regime, the high cost of fees, Autopac fees in particular at that time, under Mr. Pawley and in 1988, and when the government was defeated by Jim Walding the people had a chance to speak at the polls and, of course, they spoke loudly and with great concern.

Now, I know that the member for Kildonan wasn't referring to the speakership and the concerns that Mr. Walding raised around the Speaker, but I do appreciate him reminding us that in 1988 Mr. Walding brought down the government and the Manitobans spoke very loudly and very clearly that they were concerned about a government that had extraordinary fees; they were bringing in taxes on Manitobans and they removed them from office as the electorate has the right to do, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate that the member for Kildonan also has an appreciation for that history.

But, in terms of how Mr. Walding related to the Speaker, it's actually quite different, and his proposal was considered, you know, radical and radical, I suppose, in parliamentary terms. I'm not sure that the public was sort of hanging on that particular debate, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how the Speaker would be run. But it brings up an interesting conflict that many Speakers have felt at different times, because when the Speaker is elected, of course, they leave their seat and they're ushered in by the different political parties as a sign of unity that that Speaker is going to be impartial, and I'll speak to that a little bit further on. But, if they're going to be impartial and that they're going to rule judiciously on behalf of everyone in the House—and yet there is that sort of, I imagine, not having served in the role of Speaker—but I imagine that there is that internal conflict, because one is elected by virtue of one political party, and then you essentially leave the auspices of that party and you take on the role of the Speaker and you act impartially. And that—but that can't be easy, and I know that there are probably times when there's a conflict and when constituents don't quite understand how that works and they wonder, you know, how it is, you know, that they elected somebody under a particular banner and then they

become the Speaker, and in many ways they shed that banner.

So, you know, it is an oddity. And I have admiration for you and the former Speakers, Mr. Hickes and the Speakers that came before Mr. Hickes, who deal with that because it's not an easy thing. And I imagine that you have lots of conversations with constituents who don't quite understand that, that that's your role. And I want you to know that we support you in that because it isn't an easy thing, but we appreciate the fact that you have to do it and you do it on behalf of all of us.

I also want to speak a little bit about—going on, it says within Marleau and Montpetit: in contrast to the established British practice of continuity in the speakership, the experience in Canada has seen the length of tenure limited normally to one or two parliaments. The issue of continuity of speakership has often been raised in the House and in committees. Only two of the more than 30 Speakers since Confederation have served more than two parliaments.

And that, probably—and not having done a historical search and maybe when I have the opportunity in the future to speak to this motion I'll have the information in front of me. But I'd like to look, to see how many terms past Speakers have served. I know that in this Assembly there are portraits of Speakers; someday you'll have your—someday you'll be hung in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker. I mean that, of course, in the best way, with your picture in the Legislature here. And we'll be invited and, God willing, I'd love to be able to attend that. And I suppose if I went and looked at the portraits in the hallway in the Assembly I'd be able to see how many terms different Speakers have served and for how long. And I'll look to take that opportunity at some time, but my guess is it's probably not significantly different. And so we have a different sort of model than existed for Speakers and for Deputy Speakers, of course, under previous generations, where instead of this sort of continuity of speakership where they're there for an extended and lengthy period of time, often our Speakers only serve for one or two terms.

Now, that's really not much different than MLAs, I suspect. I—my guess is that the average length of tenure for an MLA is probably somewhere between six and eight years. I think I remember hearing somebody who did this particular study, and I always hate to sort of speak off the top of my head,

so if I don't have the numbers exactly right, Mr. Speaker, the members will forgive me, but I think that the average MLA serves for about six and a half or maybe seven years.

So it's interesting that the—well, and some serve longer and some serve shorter, but, I mean, all of the service is distinguished and we're not trying to suggest that a longer tenure—there's a lot of people who I think make a bigger impact in a shorter period of time than those who've been here even longer. And then, of course, there's some who've been here for a very long time who make a tremendous impact, so I don't think we should judge one's impact by the length of their service.

But I do think it is important that we consider to look at the speakership, that it—in our system of government, that it isn't really a long tenure, Mr. Speaker. Now I want to read on here, it says that in Marleau and Montpetit that the Speaker has almost always been elected from among members of the governing party. And, although the Speaker eschews partisan political activity, he or she does not make a complete break. Only one Speaker has chosen to sever himself from all party affiliation and to present himself as an independent candidate in a general election, now Speaker Lamoureux, who resigned from the Liberal Party and ran as an independent candidate and won in the general elections of 1968 and 1972. And that is interesting, I think, because, you know, it shows the different conflicts that I suppose Speakers have and how do they continue to represent themselves as MLAs but be the Speaker without having a particular sort of party brand while they are the Speaker.

Now, I'm not suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that you do as Mr. Lamoureux did and run as an independent. It's not my suggestion here at all, or any Speakers, but I do think it's an important element to discuss, about how it is that there is such an internal conflict sometimes, I think, with Speakers, and perhaps it will be the same with the Deputy Speaker when she takes the Chair, that it's a difficult thing. It's often a—perhaps a painful thing; not a physically painful thing but a painful thing to try to balance that out and to provide both sides.

And so, I mean, I say that as much as—not a caution for the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) as she assumes this particular position, but I always think it's important that people take on positions with their eyes wide open and that they know exactly what it is that they are getting into

before they take on a particular role. And so, you know, it is important for us to remind this member and other members who in the future might look to be the Deputy Speaker of the House or the Speaker, of course, that it's difficult. It's a difficult balance.

You know, maybe that balance is even more difficult for the Deputy Speaker, because when you look at the fact that the Deputy Speaker isn't in the Chair and doesn't hold the office of the Speaker per se, they are still within their own seating arrangements within their own caucus and they are still fully engaged within their own caucus as long as the caucus is fully engaged. And I don't intend to sort of go through all the history of what we've seen in the last months with the divided caucus of the NDP, but with the Deputy Speaker still being within the caucus but then having the role, this added role of Deputy Speaker, the conflict might even be greater in many ways, Mr. Speaker, because you have to, you know, make that break.

And I know that the former Deputy Speaker, the now Minister of Conservation, you know, at times he can be quite political. He can be quite a political fellow, and he would bring that to the floor of the Assembly and then he would have to take the Chair as the Deputy Speaker, and I'm sure that that wasn't always an easy transition to make, but one that falls upon anyone who accepts that role.

*(15:10)

And so my hope would be that the member for Fort Rouge, being someone I—who I don't think makes decisions quickly and without thought, will have given considerable thought to this and to the fact that she will be asked to act in an impartial way within the Chair and—but then, of course, have to, at some point, return to her position in the Assembly and act perhaps in a more partisan way, Mr. Speaker. And so, it is a very interesting role that one has to take. But I—and I do think it's an important role.

Now, returning to that quote, though, when the issue comes out—or comes up about, you know, completely running as an independent, I mean, I think—I raise that more as a point of thought, Mr. Speaker, about how one needs to sort of consider how difficult it can be. And I don't know the history and the context of Mr. Lamoureux. I've not had the chance to go back and to look at the different pressures he faced. Maybe the—there were party pressures at that particular time. Maybe it was contextual to what was happening in the House of Commons and why he decided that he felt he needed

to actually sit as an independent. But I do find it interesting that he decided to do that. But, of course, the vast majority, and everyone except him, didn't do that. It continued on, it continued to play that balance, it continued to play that role. But recognizing it's not an easy balance and it's not an easy role, and I think it's important that the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) understands that as she takes on this particular role.

Now, I want to move on from that, Mr. Speaker, and a couple pages later within the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, it says that certain developments in recent years have served to strengthen and enhance the office of Speaker. In 1968, the official order of precedence of Canada was amended to move the Speaker of the House of Commons from the 10th position to seventh, immediately after the Governor General, the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of Canada, former Governors General, former prime ministers and the Speaker of the Senate. Since the mid-1970s, the salary and allowances attached to the office of the Speaker have been comparable to those of Cabinet ministers.

Now, I mean, that is interesting, I think, Mr. Speaker, when you look at it. And you can see that as our parliamentary system has evolved and has matured that there's been a greater importance placed on the role of the Speaker and, of course, also as Deputy Speaker. And I think that that probably is largely due to the fact the members themselves have realized the important role that the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker play in ensuring that this particular Legislature and legislatures across Canada and, of course, the house of Parliament are able to function in an appropriate way.

So, you know, that particular passage that I just read shows that the stature of the office of Speaker has increased as history has moved along. And, as I mentioned, there was a movement within Parliament to ensure that the salary and the allowances that were attached to the office of the Speaker had become comparable to that of a Cabinet minister. And I don't remember when that change would have been made here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, or if it's always been that way. I'd be interested if there are other members within the Assembly who know that answer—they could provide that to me and we could discuss it and, perhaps, have a historical discussion about it. I would be curious to know when that change was made in the Manitoba Legislature. I'm sure that it is something that was done with a great deal of thought

and, ultimately, I think it's served us well, and it's made the office more prestigious, not simply because of the salary, but there's a recognition that, in fact, the Speaker brings forward lots of rulings that are important with the assistance of the very suitable and capable assistants that they have in the Clerk's office. But it is an important role within our Assembly.

Now, I want to spend a bit of time speaking about this next passage. The—and this one will be particularly important to you, Mr. Speaker. A long-standing rule providing for appeals to the House from decisions of the Speaker was removed from the standing orders in 1965. Provisional rules adopted on June 27th, 1985, in the—and made permanent in June of 1987 provide for the election of the Speaker by a secret ballot.

Now, we—I spoke a little bit about the secret ballot issue and how at—our Assembly came about that in 1999. Obviously, that started in 1987 in Parliament, and so I like to say that Manitobans are often leaders in things, Mr. Speaker. In this particular case, when it comes to the election of the Speaker, we were followers and weren't on the lead of that, but still, I'm glad that we made that change. But the issue of challenging Speakers' rulings, I think, is issuing—interesting.

Now, I'll be corrected quickly by yourself or by members of the Clerk's office. Now, I don't believe that there are other legislatures in Canada that allow for the challenge of Speaker's rulings. I'm looking for some guidance, I'm not sure that I'm getting clear guidance but I think I'm pretty close to that. If there are any, there aren't many, Mr. Speaker.

And I've had discussions—and I've said this publicly—with previous House leaders in this Chamber from the government, and there's been numerous previous House leaders over the last few months, Mr. Speaker, but I have had discussions about rule changes. And I don't intend to negotiate on the floor of the Assembly, that's not my point here. But I have said that, you know, we do need to look at the rules of this Assembly and how this Assembly works, and there are a number of things that I think need to be changed.

Now, I'm only one member, so in many ways I'm speaking in terms of how my feeling is, and some of it has evolved. I first served as House leader for our caucus in 2006 or 2007. Now, I was younger both in terms of my actual age, of course, but also younger in terms of my time here in the Legislature, and that was an interesting time for me because I

think having only been here at that time for three years I maybe didn't have the appreciation that I might have needed at that time for some of the rules in this Assembly. But, having been here for a longer period of time now and on my second go round as a House leader for our caucus, I mean, I think that I have observed enough to know that there are things that do need to change, and I have talked to government House leaders about that and we've talked about the issue of being able to challenge Speakers' rulings, and that is something that I've said that I'm certainly willing to discuss.

Now, the challenge always is that none of these things can be done in absence of other discussions; it can't be done in a vacuum. So simply changing that without changing other things is difficult because there has to be a way for—in opposition—to achieve certain things that an opposition needs to achieve. And I don't just say that as us being the opposition now, because someday—and we'll have a disagreement about when that might be, Mr. Speaker—but someday government will change. Whether that's, you know, during the next election or whenever, that's really not my point. But my point is that we have to make rules that work for not the current opposition and not, you know, the future opposition; it has to be made proper for government generally and opposition generally regardless of who are holding those particular positions.

And when I've had my discussions regarding a potential rule changes with other members of this House, I've talked about things like a set sitting schedule, about the importance of having some predictability for members, and it's not just for members, of course. I mean, all of us have responsibilities to meet with constituents and to hold meetings with stakeholders, and sometimes those are difficult to plan when you don't have a consistent schedule. It's one of the things that I think we achieved well through the summer of the PST debate. And when we came out of that, myself and the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), the individual who is being nominated as Deputy Speaker, we came to an agreement and, of course, the leaders of the parties were involved and caucus members were involved. But to have a sessional order which took place last year, where we sat from almost the very 1st of March until the middle of June and then we came back in the fall for around five to six weeks, I believe, and I thought that that was a respectful way to do it.

And the other thing that we were able to do within the sessional order, and it came partially out of the PST debate, was to allow the opposition to select a certain number of bills to hold over because, again, there's a balance. There's a balance between a government that has a right to move on its agenda at some point because they are the government, but also between the opposition who has a responsibility as the official opposition, the loyal opposition, to be able to make a point on certain pieces of legislation that are of concern to them or the general public or, more often, both. And to be able to have a sessional or a change in the rules so that you had some specific dates that probably went from about March 'til the middle of July, but also to allow the opposition of the time to select a few bills to hold over to the fall session where they then could be voted on, I think it's important and I think it strikes that balance. It strikes the balance between being able to allow a government to have an agenda passed, but also allows an opposition to be able to make a point by holding certain bills over for a few months, not forever, but for a few months.

And that's the kind of discussion that I was interested in having with the various House leaders, and in the context of that I think there are other things that could be discussed like the challenging of Speakers' rulings. Now, it might not feel that way to members of this House or to yourself, Mr. Speaker, but we have tried to limit the amount or the number of times where we've challenged Speakers' rulings, and we've instead done things, you know, like ensuring that we're speaking fully to bills and to different resolutions because they need to have a proper debate.

* (15:20)

Now, that doesn't mean we've—there are some rulings that get challenged because you're trying to make a particular point and there are some that are achieving other things, Mr. Speaker. That is just how it works, but if we were able to achieve those things in a different way, those are the sort of discussions, I think, that need to be had.

Now, the difficulty I've had as the current House leader for our party is that every time these negotiations and discussions have started, everybody on the other side thinks that they're reasonable suggestions, but there's continuous change, and the discussion never actually happens, Mr. Speaker. And that bothers me, because I do think that there are ways that this Legislature could operate better and

more effectively for all of us as members and for constituents, but within the absence of being able to have a discussion with a consistent House leader on the other—and I don't mean consistent in terms of their position, I mean just in terms of they're in that position—it's very, very difficult.

So the notion on challenging Speakers' rulings is not one that I take lightly and it's not one that I do frivolously, and I suspect that if I had somebody do an analysis, and I'm not going to because it wouldn't be the best use of their time, but if somebody did an analysis on how often we've challenged Speaker's rulings in the time that you've been the Speaker to a comparable time of others Speakers, my guess is that it would be particularly less. And it's not just because we have confidence in you, Mr. Speaker. It is partly that, but it's also because we try to achieve, as an opposition, our point in other ways. But, unfortunately, the way the rules are right now, there are just some times you can't achieve those objectives in any other way other than that.

And so I continue to be available and interested in having discussions with members of this House in different ways that the House can operate, but it has to, of course, involve how this Legislature sits and how often it sits, and this is the perfect example. I mean, members on the other side might be frustrated at different times by some of the things that happen in the Chamber here, but I can assure them that the frustration was equal on our part and other individuals' part when this Legislature didn't open for debate in March and it didn't open for debate in April, or at least until the last day of April, when every other legislature in Canada save for one, which, I believe, was going to an election, was already in session.

And that is a particular concern, and I raised it, and our leader raised it, and other members raised it in the public and in private with members of the government repeatedly, that we needed to be in session earlier and that by not sitting earlier, all that was going to do was extend the session into the summer.

And you don't have to be an expert in math to do the math, and when you look at the fact that a budget takes approximately two weeks to pass, give or take, to realize that there's 100 hours of Estimates and then there's the concurrence that goes with it, to realize that there's another 40 or 50 bills, I mean, you're talking about a significant amount of legislative time. And I've always said that this

Legislature needs to sit somewhere between three to four months in the spring to get the work done appropriately.

Now, members of the government have argued to me, well, we can do things very, very quickly. We can rush through bills and we can pass all the bills in the afternoon if we want. And even if bills aren't controversial, Mr. Speaker, I would offer to you and I would suggest to this House, that's not a respectful way to deal with bills. Even a bill that the vast majority or all members of this Legislature agreed with deserves some amount of debate, and, you know, we debate somewhere between 2:30 and 5 o'clock every day, so two and a half hours. If one were to debate a bill for two days, that's five hours of debate. Even on a bill that everybody essentially agrees with and may want to put comments on the record on, that is a bill that's going to last longer, more likely, last longer than any of us are going to last, both in this Assembly and potentially on this earth. These bills are often there for hundreds of years and they last there, and to not be able to debate a bill for four to five hours that's going to be lasting for as long as we're going to be here, I think, is disrespectful.

So that is why I've made a very strong and, I think, sometimes impassioned plea to members opposite that there needs to be that sort of respectful time for the Legislature, and I'm not trying to say that as a political point, Mr. Speaker. I honestly believe that. I think you have to be able to debate legislation and to allow the public to hear about legislation, and this is a point that I don't want to dismiss. There have been times in this Legislature where bills have passed that everybody thought was—were appropriate bills and they weren't controversial, and they passed within the context of a couple of hours because agreements were made and there were no presenters and things moved very, very quickly, and then a year later I had people come to me and they'd say, well, I'm impacted by that bill in a way that I would not have expected, and they say, how did it pass? And, you know, it's a pretty humbling moment when you have to admit to them that a bill passed within the context of a day or two, and, of course, they didn't hear about it because how would they hear about it because it was moving so quickly.

So, even when we have legislation that is considerably lighter in terms of the political debate—and I would say, looking at this agenda, Mr. Speaker, in the—that we have so far, this would be considered a light agenda in terms of bills, in terms of their

discourse in the public—we have to be sure that the public has the ability to hear about the legislation, comment on the legislation, allow us, as MLAs, to be able to comment on that legislation and to reflect their views.

And I know what's going to happen in the days and weeks ahead. There are members opposite who are going to say, well, you know, nobody disagrees with this bill, let's just rush it through. Why are you holding it up? Why aren't we moving things quicker? Why aren't things going at lightning speed? Because we could do all of these bills in one afternoon.

Well, that's not the issue, Mr. Speaker. The issue is I don't want to have to explain to somebody in a year from now how a bill got passed with lightning speed, and they are somehow impacted by it and didn't hear about it, because it was something that we didn't foresee, that we didn't realize that was going to somehow impact them.

And that is why I've always argued that the Legislature needs to come back, you know, at a respectful time, early in March, and then if it does its course through the middle of June, you know, at least, we, as MLAs, have the ability to get the word out to stakeholders and to people about bills. People have the ability to come and learn about the bills and comment on the bills.

But this sort of notion, Mr. Speaker, that we should rush through things as quickly as possible because the government doesn't think that there's anything controversial about the bills, well, of course they don't think that because they brought them forward. But what we don't know what everybody else thinks, and we have to have the ability to do that.

So, you know, I'm—I speak with some passion about this. I think this is important. And I—you know, 13 years ago, as a new MLA, this wouldn't have been the top priority that I had, Mr. Speaker. But, having seen this place function now, over the course of a decade, I really believe that we do a disservice to it when we come back at the end of April and everybody expects that things are going to pass in five weeks.

It's not a respectful way to run a legislature. It's not a way, when you explain it to people, that they think government should operate, Mr. Speaker. And I've had more than a few conversations with members opposite in the early part of this year, that if they're expecting to come back really, really late

and have everything pass really, really quickly, that that's just not on. That is not how an operation should operate, and let alone a government should operate.

So I say that in the context of overall concerns and discussions about, you know, where we're going with rules, I do think that the rules need to be a priority. I do think that we need to look at a proper sessional schedule that provides a respectful amount of time for debate, that allows for a respectful amount of time for public accountability, that allows government to essentially—eventually, sorry, move forward with their agenda, but also allows the opposition to fulfill their role as a loyal opposition, Mr. Speaker.

And in the context of that, one could certainly have the discussion on the rule that allows for the challenging of the Speaker's ruling. And I've never said that that door was closed, and I've never said that that isn't something that shouldn't at least be considered, but it has to be considered in a broader context, Mr. Speaker.

Now, on to a couple of other things, I want to just read further into Marleau and Montpetit. It indicates that, this is under governing provisions, that the Constitution Act of 1867 establishes that the office of Speaker, the requirement for the election of the Speaker, certain of the Speaker's duties and the right of the Speaker to vote only in the case of a tie, referred to as a casting vote.

Now, I don't remember in this Assembly if the Speaker has ever cast the deciding vote. And I'm not actually sure how that might relate to the Deputy Speaker, if the Speaker for some reason wasn't in the Chair or wasn't available to take the Chair, Mr. Speaker. I would be interested in learning that. It might be—it's a heavy burden and a heavy responsibility to place on any one member of this Chamber, and I'd be curious to know what the answer to that is, whether or not—*[interjection]*

* (15:30)

The member for the Thompson, who I'll defer to this, being the—one of the senior statesmen, maybe the ranking member here in the Chamber, there have been tied votes before, obviously not in my time or perhaps recent time, but it is something that's worth considering. And what role the Deputy Speaker would play in that if the Speaker wasn't able to preside on that, Mr. Speaker, I think is something that is also something I'd be interested in hearing about. But it does speak to the importance of the

role; it does speak to how important the role of the Speaker is.

Now I think that there are guiding principles, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how a Speaker breaks the tie, and this was particularly important in Parliament a few years ago. I believe maybe under the minority government of Mr. Harper at the time. But I believe that there was a tie, and that the Speaker was asked to break that tie. And there was a number of guiding principles that they used, and I think there was quite an explanation of the Speaker at the time provided to the Parliament in terms of why it was that they were casting their vote in particular way. And it seems to me in my memory, although my memory isn't always as strong as I'd like it to be, but it seems to me in my memory that at—the Speaker at the time had indicated that they had some obligation to rule in the context of consistency or stability, and so ultimately decided to rule, I believe, in favour of the government of the time, the minority government. But that the wording, I'm sure, isn't correct, and if I have the opportunity to pull the exact wording from the Speaker at the time, I would share that with the House.

Now it does say as well, Mr. Speaker, within Marleau and Montpetit, I want to make sure that I have the right citation. Right, it says that the Parliament of Canada fixes the Speaker's salary and remuneration as we spoke about. The act also provides for the Deputy Speaker or any member called upon by the Speaker to preside over the House during the Speaker's absence.

Now that is something, when I first became elected, Mr. Speaker, I found that curious because I hadn't, in my previous political work and my previous political life, I haven't spent a lot of time looking at the operation of the Chair of the Speaker. But I noted very quickly that almost any member could occupy the Chair at almost any time. Traditionally, there was, you know, this one of a few members who would ultimately do it, but it didn't have to be the Deputy Speaker; it could be somebody else. But it was almost always a member of the government. I don't think I've ever seen a member of the opposition take the Speaker's Chair.

Now the Speaker might be indicating to me that he did that at one time and when he has the opportunity to—when we have the opportunity to speak privately, I'd be interested in hearing the context of that, because it's not something that I've viewed but I suppose that that speaks very well of you, Mr. Speaker, that the—that a government, other

than the one that you were elected to, would offer you the Chair at a particular time, and I'd be interested in speaking to you about that.

I know that in our context, in our parliamentary context, the one committee where an opposition member is the Chair of the committee is the Public Accounts Committee. And I know that the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) does an exemplary job of being the Chair of that committee. In fact, as a small digression, Mr. Speaker, I would say that I think that the work of the Public Accounts Committee has done good work in the last number of years. There was certainly a time when there was a great deal of concern about the Public Accounts Committee, and the amount of reports that it had backed up and, really, how it operated. And I think that that's been not entirely cleaned up but there's certainly been progress that's been made. There's more progress to go.

We've talked sometimes in the context of witnesses at some of these committees, and the ability to call witnesses. And we've been frustrated sometimes that it's difficult sometimes to get answers out of those who are able to present at committee. It's not just the Public Accounts Committee, but other committees of the House.

And I think if there's, you know, one deficiency that I've seen during my time in the Legislature here, it is often about committees. And I've never been on a committee of Parliament, obviously, in Ottawa, but I've seen them function a number of times. And, of course, they can sometimes dissolve into partisan debates within those committees as well. I mean, they're politicians and they're elected to a specific political party, and they represent certain political interests, obviously, Mr. Speaker, but I do think that the committees in Parliament often are able to study issues in a less political way and to bring expertise to their committees.

And that is also something that I've talked about in the context of rule changes. It's something that I tried to bring to a committee not—a couple of years ago, I think, Mr. Speaker, where I was part of a sessional-ending agreement where we wanted to have a particular issue brought to a committee and to have a discussion among the MLAs in a way that was less partisan. I wouldn't say it was a smashing success, I think it went okay. But the challenge, of course, is there's no historical context in this Legislature sometimes for those committees to operate in that way. I've commented sometimes that

our committees often become an extension of the House where the debates that happen in the House just simply move over to the committees and essentially become the same sort of things.

Now, not the Estimates process, Mr. Speaker. I think the Estimates process is something entirely different, and often that becomes a bit more studied in terms of the discussion. But in the committees generally, when you're debating a legislation, for example, I think it becomes an extension of this House. And I do think that there are ways we could look at to improve it so that the discussion that happens at the committee could be more thoughtful in terms of the things that are being discussed. Things other than legislation could be referred to those committees and you could have experts that are presenting to those committees and reports could actually come from them, and I think that members would find that a fulfilling thing. Now, that is very different than what we have now. It's not different in the context of Parliament and so I understand it would take some adjustment, but it's not something that I think is not worth looking at.

But in terms of the—this particular motion in front of us, it does specifically refer to the fact that the Deputy Speaker also has the opportunity to take the Chair and to essentially be the 2IC, the second in command, to the Speaker. Now, I don't know practically, Mr. Speaker, it's not something me and you have discussed nor have I discussed it with any other Speaker of the Assembly prior to you, how much interrelation there is between the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, if there is a great deal of discussion on things, if they're brought into the discussion on rulings at all, if that sort of back and forth happens. It may not happen that way. It might be more of a thing where the Speaker is advising the Deputy Speaker of how they see the proceedings of the House happening that afternoon and—or the Clerk maybe does that in terms of advising them and just ensuring that they are around and available for those sort of discussions. And I guess that that would be appropriate, because the Deputy Speaker, of course, doesn't eschew political partisanship in the same way that the Speaker does, and so probably bringing them into the discussion into the context of some of those things wouldn't make as much sense.

You know, there's another point that I wanted to raise here when we were talking about the Speaker and the role of the Deputy Speaker, and that is the role that the Speaker has in this building and in this Assembly. Now, the public wouldn't know and,

frankly, I don't expect the public would be sort of hanging on this as a key issue, but in this Assembly my understanding is that the Speaker is responsible for the Chamber, is responsible for what happens within the place that we're sitting in right now, but is not—the Speaker is not responsible for the building. Now, I've raised this before and in different contexts within the—within this building, within the Chamber—that I do believe that we need to look at giving the Speaker the authority over the building and perhaps the grounds itself. Now, I don't know. I've seen the reports—I think, you know, we have got them from the Clerk in the past—how many legislatures allow the Speaker to essentially operate the building and the grounds. I think it is the majority within Canada, and I think it makes perfect sense and I'll give you a couple of examples of why I think that.

There was a case—not a legal case, but a situation that happened here in the Legislature a few years ago where we had a committee hearing going on, and it was either the committee hearing on the hog moratorium, Mr. Speaker, or it was the committee hearing on the bill that was brought on the vote tax, and it was an omnibus bill; there were other things contained within it. And during the course of the evening I think there was a closed sign that was put on the door of the building. It became a bit of an issue because there was some members who wanted—or some people, the members of the public, not members of the Legislature, who wanted to make a committee presentation, who wanted to come to the building and make a presentation. And they were faced with this sign that said closed, and so they left because they didn't think the building was open. Now, that became a political issue and it be—came to the floor of the House here, and I think the previous speaker, Mr. Derkach, raised it and was quite concerned that this looked like it was somehow political.

* (15:40)

Now, at the end of the day, I'm not suggesting that it was or it wasn't political. I don't remember the outcome of that debate. I don't remember the discussion. But I do remember that had the Speaker been in charge of the building, I think that that would've played out entirely differently, and I think that the discussion about whether or not it was a political thing would have played out entirely differently.

I also know, Mr. Speaker, that there are members of this House who have been involved with

trying to organize displays within the Chamber—or, sorry, not within the Chamber, within the building. And they sort of got to a certain point and were well organized and were going to have a display within the building, and the government essentially took it over and decided that they were going to become the sponsor of this, and the individual member who had done all the arrangements was essentially pushed out. And this happened quite recently. And I don't raise it to make a political point. That member could raise it himself if he wanted to. But the issue being that if you, or any future Speaker, was actually in charge of the building, more than just this Chamber, I don't think that would have happened either.

And I think we'd have a greater comfort—and I don't mean we as in opposition, I mean we as members would feel better about the fact that this building was being operated in a way that we believe would be non-political, and we would believe would be to serve all members and would serve the public, because, ultimately, this is a building that—and I always say this to school kids when they're coming through and they're doing their tour here, and I spoke to the class of Elmdale School a few days ago and a school that I used to attend when I was a bit younger than I am now. In fact, I asked the class, I asked them if they knew how long it had been since I'd left Elmdale elementary school, and the first response was 20 years. And I said, well, you know, are there any other guesses? And the next answer was, I think, 60 years, so I should have stopped at the first one, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes you have to quit when you're ahead.

But I do think that, you know, in the context when I'm talking to these classes, I often tell them that, you know, this building is really yours, and you should feel at home in the Legislature. It doesn't belong to us as MLAs, and it doesn't belong to the tour guides, and it doesn't belong to the ministers and it belongs to Manitobans. And I always remind them that not—don't act like you're at home, you don't have to put your feet up on the furniture like you might at home, but realize this really is your home. This is the home for Manitobans. And I want young people to feel that way.

And, because of that, Mr. Speaker, you know, I'm reminded that the building and the grounds aren't owned by the government, per se, they're owned by the people of Manitoba. And I think Manitobans, while they might not think about it on a daily basis—but I think they would be better served if the Speaker was, in fact, the one who was in charge of the

building overall and the grounds. And I think—now I see some laughing from the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross), and I don't—I'm not trying to suggest that this is, you know, the top priority of the government, that it's something that's as important as what's happening in Family Services. But it's not an unimportant issue. It is something, I think, that does need be addressed. It's something I've raised many times both in this Assembly, I've raised it in the context of other committees. And it just never seems to happen. And I'm disappointed by that.

Now, I want to speak to a few other things, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the role of the Speaker. The—it 'inditute'—it indicates here in the House of Commons Procedure and Practice that a number of other statutes have an impact on the role and responsibilities of the Speaker of the House. For example, the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act establishes the Speaker's role in appointing two members to each provincial election's boundaries commission—electoral boundaries commissions.

Now, I don't know, you know, if that role falls into the same purview for the Speaker, for the Speaker of our Assembly appoints people to the electoral review commission—or boundaries commission. I know that it comes up once every 10 years and so probably, you know, there's a new Speaker every time it comes up, and so I don't think you would have served under the last boundary redistribution, which happened in 2007, I believe, or perhaps 2011. But, I mean, obviously, that's another indication, another sign that they allow the Speaker to appoint individuals to sit on the electoral reform commissions when those come up every 10 years in the provincial context in Manitoba. [*inaudible*] of the confidence of the Speaker.

Obviously, members of the Assembly who have a lot of—a lot at stake when redistribution happens in a particular boundary—it can sometimes be a difficult thing for members to go through. You have a lot of people who are—[*interjection*] I'm glad that this is a passionate issue for members of the government. I'm more than happy to continue on with their—in their encouragement.

I know that they're very, very interested in this topic, but I do know that when boundaries are redistributed that it's an important issue for all members, and there's often a lot at stake because how boundaries get redrawn have an impact on future elections. And the fact that at least in the House of

Commons context and perhaps also in Manitoba, and I'd have to check that, that the Speaker is involved with that appointment. I think also it is an indication that people have a great deal of respect for the Speaker and a great deal of trust for the Speaker as well, and I think that that is something that is worth noting and something that's very, very important.

The House of Commons Procedure and Practice book goes on to talk about the procedural role of the Speaker, and, of course, this would apply to the Deputy Speaker as well when the Speaker is not in the Chair. So I want to ensure that the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) is well aware of the different responsibilities that she might have to take on if, in fact, she is found to be successful in this particular nomination. It indicates, Mr. Speaker, that the House devises its own rules, develops its own practices and it is master of its own proceedings. The office of the Speaker derives its authority from the House, and the House-holder of the office can accurately be described as its representative and authoritative counsellor in all matters of form and procedure, and that's something that I learned over time being here in the Legislature.

I ran into a constituent just this past weekend, and we were chatting about the Legislature and different sorts of things. I don't remember the context of the discussion, but for whatever reason they referenced Robert's Rules of Order and they said, you know, that somehow the Legislature is bound by Robert's Rules of Order, and I'd almost forgotten about Robert's Rules of Order. When I used to serve on a local food bank in Steinbach—I was one of the people who was involved with the South East Helping Hands food bank in Steinbach. I was its vice-president for a number of years. But I drafted their bylaws and was often involved with their meetings in ensuring that things were done appropriately, and we used the Robert's Rules of Order and so that became something that I thought was quite important, and I almost forgot that it existed, Mr. Speaker, because I'm so now ingrained from being here into the issue of Beauchesne's and the books that we use, the House's practice and procedures.

But he referenced the Robert's Rules of Order, and we had a good discussion, and I talked to him about how actually the House is, in fact, in many ways its own master and that it can make its own rules and it can make its own procedures on a lot of things, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, we are guided by the various precedents that we have and we're guided by

the books that we have, but, ultimately, if the House wants to make certain rules and wants to change certain things, it has the ability to do that. And so the members might not all know that, and I hope that that's informative and instructive for them to hear that, that in many ways the rules that happen here in the Legislature, you know, sometimes we get a sense that they are very arcane, and some of them are, and that they're rooted in hundreds of years of history, and some of those are true as well.

But we are vested with the power to change things, and you, as the Speaker, are the presiding officer, Mr. Speaker, over those changes and over those rules that are put in place, and it's your responsibility to enforce them and to ensure that they're maintained and they're—and that they're done properly. But I say that because it's important to remind members, I think, on the other side and the members of our own caucus as well, because it doesn't form the context of a discussion in caucus very often, but to remind them that, you know, where there are challenges and people don't like the way things are done here in terms of certain rules and certain practices, that we do have the authority to change many of them and to look at them and to look at things—how things can be done better. And so I would encourage all members to consider that and to go back to their various caucuses and encourage those discussions in terms of rule changes and things that they think could be done even better.

It indicates as well that the—it is in this spirit that the Speaker, as the chief servant of the House, applies the rule. The Speaker is the servant not of any part of the House or any majority of the House but of the entire institution and the best interests of the House as distilled over many generations in its practices. I really like that passage.

* (15:50)

I—you know, there's a lot of things that I highlight in the House practice and procedures, but this is one in particular that I highlighted because I like how that speaks to a number of different issues. And I want to read it again for emphasis, Mr. Speaker: It is in this spirit that the Speaker as the chief servant of the House applies the rules. The Speaker is the servant not of any part of the House or any majority of the House but of the entire institution and the best interests of the House as distilled over many generations in its practices.

And that speaks to a few things, Mr. Speaker. It speaks, of course, to the fact that the House, whether

that be an individual Legislature in Manitoba or any legislature across Canada or the Parliament in Canada in Ottawa, is very much the maker of its own rules and it is very much the maker of its own practices if it chooses to use those powers. But it speaks more specifically to the fact that the Speaker has a particular role, that the Speaker has a particular responsibility to ensure that they are representing the House in its entirety, in its—as an entity almost, not as an individual member or as an individual caucus, but the House as a whole. And I know in the discussion—and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), we, you know, typically refer to him—and I think it happened earlier in the day as well—as sort of the lone Liberal. And so he has a particular party affiliation, of course, as we all know, and we generally recognize that in the House.

But we also know that in a technical term he's an independent and that he sits as an independent member; he doesn't have the required four members to form an official caucus and so he is an independent member. And it is also the responsibility of the Speaker—and the previous Speaker, Mr. Hickes, often reminded me of this as well—that he has a role to in some ways not protect independent members, but to ensure that they themselves have a role within the Chamber, that they themselves have some ability to be able to speak within the Chamber.

And so, when discussions are happening about what particular question the independent member might have, it's within that context. And we've had other times within this Chamber, only a couple when I've been elected, but I know that it happened more often prior to that where there were independent members that needed that protection and where the Speaker would protect—and not unlike, I suppose, and maybe it's not a perfect analogy, Mr. Speaker, but I'm not pretending that it is perfect—but in a legal context where you have a litigant who is unrepresented and there is a responsibility of the judge, in many ways, to ensure that they are able to still be able to make their case. Even though they don't have the protection and the expertise of a lawyer with them, the judge has a particular responsibility to ensure that that person is still getting a fair trial.

And it's often—actually, as a digression, it's often one of the great challenges in the legal field these days to ensure that an individual who is self-representing is able to still get that fair trial and not entirely clog up the legal system. And the—it's a

great challenge within the legal system these days because many more people are self-representing for a variety of reasons. I certainly know that some people have a difficult time accessing legal aid, and yet—so they might not fall within the economic criteria or perhaps they've been denied for another reason. If Legal Aid decides not to take on the case because they don't believe there's a likelihood of success, that individual self-represents. There are those who, because we have access to the Internet just like those who self-diagnose themselves as medical professionals, there are some who believe they can be their own lawyer because they can go online and they can find different expertise through that.

But I do think that when you look at a relationship between a judge and somebody who is self-representing, it is not unlike a Speaker who has some role in ensuring that independent members are still able to participate in a fair way within the legislative process. So I like that particular passage because it speaks to that. It speaks to how the Speaker is really a servant of the House as a whole, not an individual, a majority, nor a minority, but really is there to protect the institution as a whole. And I say that because the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), if she succeeds in assuming this office, Mr. Speaker, will need to know that and will need to know that she also has that responsibility and that her responsibility—and her responsibility to the Chamber isn't to an individual, isn't to a party, it's really to the entity of this particular House that we call the Manitoba Legislature.

Now, there's a couple of other points that will be important for the member of Fort Rouge to know if she considers this particular nomination. I know, Mr. Speaker, and I don't believe, and you'll correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't believe you've missed a question period. Now, I know we're not supposed to speak of attendance or absences of members, but I am suggesting that you've been to every question period that we've had here as the House has sat.

I think—thinking of previous Speakers, there's only been a handful of times I can ever remember where the Speaker wasn't there for question period and the Deputy Speaker had to fill that role. And reaching back a little bit in time, I think I remember the former member for St. Norbert, Mr. Laurendeau, filling in as the Deputy Speaker one time in question period for, I suppose, then-Speaker Dacquay at the time. But it was a rare thing. It didn't happen very often, Mr. Speaker.

And I do know that, you know, there's probably good reason for that. And I appreciate the fact that Speakers are particularly diligent in ensuring that they're around and they are here for what is often the most controversial part of the day.

But, when we talk about the role of the Speaker, it's important that the Deputy Speaker understand this as well because they may have a responsibility to fill in, in fact, for whatever reason the Speaker wasn't able to attend a particular day.

So it says within the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, under the issue of order and decorum, and this falls under the responsibilities as a Speaker or the Deputy Speaker if the Speaker's unable to attend, it says: As the arbiter of House proceedings, the Speaker's duty is to preserve order and decorum in the House and to decide any matters of procedure that may arise. When a decision on a matter of procedure or a question of order is reached, the standing orders provide that the Speaker identify which standing order or authority is being applied in the case.

Now, the issue of, you know, preserving order and decorum will certainly fall to the Deputy Speaker when the Deputy Speaker is in the Chair, when the Deputy Speaker's presiding over Estimates, whenever we get to Estimates, Mr. Speaker. And ensuring order and decorum is, I'm sure, a difficult balance and can be a bit tricky because, you know, there's a lot of people who comment about question period. And I've heard comments about question period as recently as a week or two ago when I was speaking to the constituents of the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko).

And, you know, I sympathize with many people who watch question period and don't think that it's a particularly fruitful exercise and maybe question some of the value of it. And I do think that there are ways that question period could be improved upon. I do think there are ways that it could be made more meaningful. And I'm not just talking about the answers, Mr. Speaker, although I am, in some ways, speaking about the answers. It is important to ensure that we have a question period system where the answers are, I think, not only thoughtful, but are fulsome. I think, for whatever reason, in the context of the Manitoba Legislature, question period has dissolved—or evolved to such a point where there's very few answers that are really ever given in the context of question period.

And you'll hear those things, too, Mr. Speaker. Your office will get the letters and get the emails about people who've watched question period and will have concerns about it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to go to such an extreme or to such a point where members can't appropriately voice their concerns about government. I am reminded from my new Canadian friends, of which I have many, who've come from countries where they're not able to challenge government, and, when they come and see question period, many of them talk to me about how they are excited about the fact that you can actually question government in such a forceful way, because in some of the countries that they used to call home, to question government in that public and that forceful a way would have put their own liberty in jeopardy.

And so, for some of them, when they see question period they don't view it as a weakness of our democracy, they almost view it as a strength of our democracy because they have a different context than we have as Canadians, who've never really known the threat of a government that didn't allow you to speak their mind or don't understand what it really is to not be able to challenge government in a public way, Mr. Speaker.

So, you know, I—some of it is contextual, and you have to think about it from the view of the person watching it, Mr. Speaker. And so for those new Canadians who sometimes come and watch question period and they are amazed that we can speak about government so forcefully and so openly, I don't want to say that that's not important and not to remember that we should always remember that we have a great privilege to do that.

But, of course, you know, there is an element of respect, as well, in this House and in this Chamber, and if you want to do things in an appropriate way and in a right way—and, you know, there are times when I think all of us have crossed that line, Mr. Speaker, where we go further than we'd like to.

* (16:00)

And I remember a few times—not 100 times, Mr. Speaker, but a few times where I've gone to ministers on the other side of the House and said, you know, I think maybe I went a little further than I wanted to on a particular question or, you know, maybe I didn't phrase something the right way and I don't want to leave any interpretation that that was a particularly personal attack. And so, you know, that's

something I think all of us as MLAs and all of us as elected officials could keep in mind. And by doing that I think it is one step in improving question period. But it's not just about question period. The issue of ensuring order and decorum for the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker is something that is critically important. It's very, very important.

I know that when the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), the—she hopes to be Deputy Speaker. I do have some confidence that she'll be able to ensure that there is that level of decorum, that there is that level of impartiality, Mr. Speaker. I think that she is hopeful in that, and time will tell if she's able to assume this position. We'll find out in relatively short order, I suppose, whether in fact that is the case and that whether or not she is able to act in the way that all of us do.

And I do, why I have the floor, Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment you, and I think you do a fine job of ensuring that there is a respectful amount of order and decorum. We probably don't make your job easy at times and you have some difficult positions.

Mr. Speaker, I know the summer where we sat through the entire summer during the PST debate was a particularly difficult time. And, you know, when you're in a building that doesn't have air conditioning—the building as a whole doesn't have air conditioning—and it's plus 40° outside and it's probably plus 60° inside certain parts of the building, temperatures—or tempers get a little bit frayed, and it can be a bit of a challenge. And I think that that particular summer was difficult and, you know, we might have a chance to atone for that this summer. But I know that that was not an easy time for you and it was your—maybe in your first summer as Speaker or maybe your second—second. But you certainly did well, I think, in that, even though it was not an easy thing.

And so, I mean, I hope that the member for Fort Rouge, the incoming Deputy Speaker—I'm not sure if there's a—sort of a training that happens for Deputy Speakers. I don't know if they go through some sort of a Deputy Speaker course or if they're just given a bunch of books to read or if they just rely upon their experience, Mr. Speaker. But I hope that if she is successful that she will rely upon your experience as Speaker and take much of the guidance that you have given us to heart as she takes on that role.

And it won't, of course, just be in the context of question period. In fact, it probably almost never be

in the context of question period because I assume that you'll be as diligent of being in the Chair as you have been to this date, Mr. Speaker, but certainly in committees. And they can be—as I mentioned earlier, often the committees become an extension of the House. And so it'll be up to the Speaker to ensure that things operate in the way that we would expect, not just in terms of order but of course in terms of impartiality as well.

And I do want to speak a little bit further about that, on the issue of impartiality, Mr. Speaker. There was a particular passage within the procedures and practices book which talks about Speakers' impartiality, and let me just read that into the record: When in the Chair, the Speaker embodies the power and the authority of the office. Strengthened by the rule and precedent, he or she must at all times show and be seen to show the impartiality required to sustain the trust and the goodwill of the House. The actions of the Speaker are not to be criticized in debate or by any means except by way of substantive motion. Such motions have been moved against the Speaker or other presiding officers on rare occasions. Reflections on the character or actions of the Speaker, an allegation of bias, for example, could be taken by the House as breaches of privilege and punished accordingly.

A couple of things I want to highlight in there, and I see the Deputy Clerk looking very seriously at me when I read that, and I don't read the issue of motions against the Speaker because I don't think you're in any danger of that, Mr. Speaker. I think you have the full confidence of this particular House and I expect that you'll maintain the confidence of the House. But it is important to look at the issue of reflections of the Chair.

And there's been a few occasions in this House where things have been said, certainly, I think, more prior to you becoming Speaker, but where it could have been considered a reflection on the Chair. And it's important to remind all members that just as you show us respect and just as you, I think, have very been—been very fair with members of the House where there have been issues or concerns, that that respect has to go both ways, not just because we want to and it's the right thing to do as individual and honourable members but, in fact, it is—it's a rule.

It's a rule that we shouldn't have negative reflections upon the Chair, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's worth repeating that for all members that to question your impartiality or to suggest that you've

done something for reasons of bias would, in fact, be a reflection on the Chair.

Now, I don't think that that extends exactly to the Deputy Speaker, and in some ways this becomes a bit of a confusing proposition, and perhaps at some point you can clarify that, Mr. Speaker. I suspect that when a member is in the Chair, regardless if they're the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker or just a member without either of those titles who are occupying the Chair, that something can still be seen as a reflection on the Chair, although I'm not entirely certain of that and I'd be open to clarification on that. It's my assumption that that rule exists regardless of who is occupying the Chair at that particular time, but I don't know.

Now, we should all be governed by the fact that, you know, generally regardless of who's in the Chair, that that position should receive respect and that there shouldn't be those sort of assumptions against the Chair, whether it's you occupying it or a Deputy Speaker, if we ultimately have a Deputy Speaker, Mr. Speaker, or any other member of the Chamber who is occupying that Chair, that we should always ensure that we respect the Chair and the person who is in it, regardless of whether the rules suggest that we have to. It would be the right thing to do. But it is important to remember that it, in fact, is a rule, and it is something that is there and it is something that all of us have to be mindful of. And so I say that because it is something that's important for all the members of this House to recognize, that when we're speaking about decisions that you've made, that we not reflect negatively upon the Chair.

You know, I haven't mentioned it yet in my comments and I'm glad that I still have time to do it, Mr. Speaker, but I know that you work, you know, closely with your staff in the Clerk's office and, you know, at the beginning of sessions we usually thank the Clerk's office for the work that they do and usually put that as part of our opening comments. But I think it's importantly reflective now when we talk about the role of the Deputy Speaker and the Speaker to really thank those who are working within the Clerk's office. And this, you know, has become more true for me since I've become the House leader and certainly going through the debates that we went through a couple of years ago when we sat through the summer on the issue of the PST. You know, I—a lot of times when we were in our constituencies, people would reflect on the fact that we were, you know, still sitting into the summer and through the summer, and they would talk about, well,

is that difficult or is it a challenge. Well, wasn't really our—us as MLAs that I was most concerned about; it was the staff, because the staff obviously, you know, are here with us, and they have to be a part of that. And I always say that our staff are tremendously professional. They do their jobs with impartiality. They give the best advice, but they don't give direction and they don't give strategic advice. But they do inform us of the rules and how things work, and that's really what we would expect from the Clerk's office, and I think they do an excellent job of that and ensuring that we're really doing things the right way, but that they aren't putting upon their own motives into how we're doing things. So let's continue to respect them and to thank them for the work that they do.

There's also the issue—and I think this goes back a little bit more to the issue of no appeals, and I don't want to dwell on this because I touched on this a little bit earlier in my comments, Mr. Speaker, but this is a more fulsome description from Marleau and Montpetit: The present standing orders prohibit any debate or decisions of the Speaker and prohibit any appeal of a decision to the House. From Confederation until 1965, however, it was possible for any member who disagreed with a Speaker's decision on a question of order to appeal it immediately to the House, i.e., to move a non-debatable motion on the question of whether or not the House upheld the Speaker's ruling. In the early years of Confederation, this was rarely done. After the turn of the century, however, members began asserting their right to an appeal to the House. By the 1920s and thereafter, hardly a session passed that did not see at least one appeal. The practice reached a peak—some might see and not a happy peak—but the practice reached a peak in the session of 1956 when 11 appeals were made, mostly during the very contentious pipeline debate.

* (16:10)

And so, I mean, that gives a bit of a historical context, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that while we are one of the remaining, if not the only jurisdiction that continues to allow appeals when it comes to rulings of the Speaker, it was not uncommon in Parliament up until 1965 for those appeals and those challenges to happen.

Now, I want to, you know, reflect on the fact that while the more recent history would have members of the opposition appealing rulings of the Speaker, most often not because of the content but

because of other contextual things that were happening in the Legislature, it was not limited to us. Mr. Speaker, I remember quite well members of the current government, when they occupied roles in opposition—the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), for example, and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak)—raising many more points of order and raising many more appeals than we ever have, I think, as an opposition, and certainly during my time as House leader.

So I often—it's not that I don't appreciate the barbs and the discourse that I hear from the member for Kildonan or the member for Thompson, Mr. Speaker. I have respect for them as legislators and I know that they have a lot of history in this Assembly, but they shouldn't speak too fast when they criticize others for sometimes raising points of order or matters of privilege or challenging the odd ruling. Not odd in terms of the—how the ruling was, but the—not challenging very often a ruling. Because they did it much more when they were in opposition, and I would challenge them to total up the number of times they may have challenged a ruling or raised points of order when they formed the opposition here in this Assembly compared to when we have, and they would find, I think, that there are many more times that that happened when they were in opposition than we have been as an opposition.

But, again, I want to again re-emphasize that most often when those challenges have happened, certainly in the context of our caucus—and I won't speak to theirs, Mr. Speaker—it's been not the content of the ruling that has caused the concern, it's the context of what is happening in the Legislature more generally. So, while it might sometimes feel like a reflection on the ruling itself, again, it is often much more an issue of context than content. And I think it's important to re-emphasize that for the record.

I want to speak to just a few other things in terms of the specific duties that are there for the different individuals who occupy the role of Speaker. And I say this because there will be times, I suspect, that the Deputy Speaker—if the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) is successful in being appointed as the Deputy Speaker for this House—will have to fulfill those roles, Mr. Speaker. And so I would direct her and all members of this House to the section within our House of practices and procedures which talks about specific duties for the Speaker or, of course, specific duties for the Deputy Speaker when an individual isn't able to preside. In fact, it says—within the context of the procedures and

practices book, it says that the Speaker—when the Speaker is absent at the opening of a sitting, the House is so informed by the Clerk and the Deputy Speaker takes the Chair.

Now, I don't remember that happening for a very long time, but clearly it is something that can happen and it's something that does happen and the rules provide for it, Mr. Speaker, because it does say that if, as sometimes happens, the Speaker is absent at the opening of a sitting, the House is so informed by the Clerk and the Deputy Speaker takes the Chair. So this is why I put this in the record, because I do think it's very important for the Deputy Speaker to understand what her responsibilities will be if she in fact is successful in achieving this particular position.

So one of the duties of the Speaker—or, of course, the Deputy Speaker, if the Speaker is unavailable—is reading motions, putting questions and announcing the results of votes. It says before a debate begins on a matter, the Speaker proposes the question by reading the motion on which the House is to decide. And that's no small formality, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important that when a decision is being made within the context of this Legislature that obviously members know what it is they're voting on. And I think, you know, to the credit of members here, the vast majority will know what they're voting on at any given time, but it's important for the record that the record clearly show what it is that a member is voting upon for historical significance. And, of course, if it needs to be relied upon at some point in the future, it's important that individuals know what it is that was being voted upon. If there's any ever dispute, somebody says, well, that's not really what I meant and it's not really what I said or not really what I was voting upon, then at least it's accurate for the record. And so the Deputy Speaker will be required to ensure that they are reading motions and putting questions and announcing the results of votes.

Now, we often have the results of votes announced here by the Clerk of the Assembly, and so there is obviously some differences between the different rules that we have within the Legislature and what can happen within Parliament, and again that's because we are able to have our own rules made, Mr. Speaker.

The other duty that's outlined within the context of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice is recognizing members to speak in the House.

You know, I suspect that when you would ask members of the public about how this individual place operates, and I've had members actually ask me. Often, it's in the context of question period where people will say, well, how do you gain the floor in question period, and do you have a decision, you know, before that, in terms of who—it's going to speak and when they're going to speak, or is it just—you know, everybody sort of stands up and then whoever gets recognized, and I think that happens in the British Parliament, Mr. Speaker, when you see it on tape.

And, you know, actually where it happens most often is in Youth Parliament. I've had the opportunity now for the last, oh, six or seven years to come and watch Youth Parliament, and for members who haven't had the opportunity to watch Youth Parliament I would encourage them to do so. It happens, as they know, I think between Christmas and New Year's, and I know that that's often a family time and people are off doing other things, and I understand that, but most often I am home between Christmas and New Year's and so I take the opportunity to come and watch Youth Parliament, and when they're doing their speeches and when they're doing their questions and answers, literally, those who want the floor, they just simply stand up and try to be recognized by the Speaker, and it seems somewhat unorderly, and I don't know if they have their own way of organizing that internally within the context of Youth Parliament. I've never asked them. I should next time, next year, when I get a chance to watch, Mr. Speaker.

But for you, of course, I know that it's your role and it will be the role of the Deputy Speaker, if she assumes this position, to recognize a member to speak, and that's how they gain the floor, whether it's in question period or any other time. In fact, you know, I'm speaking right now, Mr. Speaker, and you recognized me. You recognized me to speak and that's how I gained the floor here this afternoon to speak to this very, very important motion.

And other Speakers, you know, I wouldn't say I've had a dispute with them but I've sometimes wondered how other individuals gain the floor, and those Speakers indicated to me, well, that's who I saw. That's, you know, who I recognized because that's really who I saw. And I think that that is something that's important to remember. It can, of course, be conventions or various informal arrangements as it's described in terms of how an individual is recognized but, ultimately, you are the

arbiter of that, Mr. Speaker, and you are really the gatekeeper in terms of who is able to speak at any given time on any particular matter. And I think that's important.

The next role it indicates is for the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker, when they're not able to take the Chair, is deciding questions of order and questions of privilege. It says that, in presiding over the deliberations of the House, the Speaker is responsible for deciding questions of order and questions of privilege and for ensuring that the rules and the practices of the House are respected. The Speaker rules on questions of order and questions of privilege as they occur and not in anticipation of them. A question of order may be brought to the Speaker's attention by a member, or the Speaker may intervene when he or she observes an irregularity.

In ruling on questions of order and questions of privilege, the Speaker cites the standing order or other applicable authority. At times the Speaker may be called upon to deal with situations not provided for in the standing orders of the House. In such cases the rules give authority to the Speaker to consider parliamentary tradition in jurisdictions outside the House of Commons of Canada.

Now, this is particularly important here, because there are often points of order and matters of privileges that are raised. And they're not raised as often as I think maybe they once were. I raised the point of order last week and may have an occasion to raise matters of privileges in the future as they occur.

* (16:20)

And I often say to members of the House not to take those things lightly, and I've sometimes been criticized and others have been criticized in this House for raising matters of privilege. But I think, in some ways, it's almost like the duty of a lawyer in court and—[interjection] Well, and I'm glad that the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) is enjoying this discussion. I hope she's learning something, and I hope to learn to something as well from you as we discuss this further in the days ahead.

But it's important when you talk about the responsibility of raising a matter of privilege. Now, there's not a legal responsibility as there is with a lawyer in a court, and I—people often think that lawyers who are in court, they're simply, you know, acting on behalf of their client, and, of course, that is their primary responsibility. But the lawyers are also officers of the court and they do have a responsibility

to ensure that things aren't being—that there's not perjury that's happening within the context of a court, Mr. Speaker, because they are themselves officers of that court.

Now, we are not officers of the Legislature in that same fashion, but we do have a responsibility. And I think that each of us should take that responsibility and we should act as though, in fact, we have—not as officers of this House, but that we have a responsibility when we see a rule that's been broken or whether it's a matter of privilege that needs to be raised, that we should feel a special obligation to raise that, Mr. Speaker, that we should feel a very, very important obligation, because ultimately how this House functions is in many ways based on precedent and is based on tradition, and if we don't uphold that precedent and if we don't uphold that tradition, well, who will do it? It does fall to us to ensure that individuals are cited when rules are broken and that when privileges are not upheld, that we uphold them, because a lot of the privileges are very, very significant.

Now, we talk about freedom of speech, for example, as one of the privileges. Now, that doesn't come without its limits, because we have limitations. Generally, in speeches—not in this one in particular—but there's a limit in terms of time, in terms of how much time you're able to speak. And so on most cases we're able to speak 30 minutes to certain things or 10 minutes to other things, and so there's a limitation on that freedom of speech; it's not without its limits. But, as a general rule, as a matter of privilege in this House, we are given that freedom of speech to be able to say things that are important for Manitobans, that are important for our constituents.

In fact, we have privilege in this House, and it's not a small thing. I think many of the public would know, but not an overwhelming majority would know, that we have certain legal protection for the things that are said in this House. Now, that doesn't mean that MLAs should be—or any members of Parliament or elected officials who have privilege should be saying things that require privilege. It doesn't mean that they should be, you know, using that and abusing that particular ability; they shouldn't be talking about slanderous things or libelous things if they're writing things.

And, well—and, you know, the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) raises the issue of Pat Martin. And, you know, he learned, I think, a difficult lesson for him, and I don't say that lightly. I

think a lot of legislatures watched that and saw what happened there and how difficult that was, and it was a caution for all of us, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how we operate. Now, of course, his comments were outside of the House of Commons, and that's, of course, why he ended up in the difficult situation that he did end up in because they were said outside of the Chamber. Had he said them inside the Chamber—not that it would've made them right, but there would've been privilege as a result of that.

But we have that freedom of speech, and we have the responsibility to protect that freedom of speech. And how do we protect it, Mr. Speaker? Well, you know, we protect it by using it, of course. When you use a particular privilege that you have, you're protecting it in a certain way. So, when you're speaking out freely about issues in the Legislature, in many ways you're exercising that freedom of speech and protecting it by virtue of that. But you also have to ensure that when that privilege is impinged, when somebody's impinging that privilege, that you raise it, that you raise that as an issue and you bring that forward and you let people know. Well, in our context here, I mean, how we let people know is we raise it as a matter of privilege, Mr. Speaker, and then you consult the various authorities and the relevant authorities and you bring back your ruling here. In that way—and sometimes the ruling doesn't go in the favour of the person who raised the matter of privilege, but at least they had the opportunity to speak about it and they had the opportunity to say that they were concerned about something, and that's just as important sometimes.

Now, of course, we all—when we raise issues, we want the ruling to go in our favour. But often just the ability to raise the concern is a way to exercise that freedom to ensure that you're maintaining that freedom. And so I want the possible incoming Deputy Speaker to understand that, because there may be times when she's in the Chair when a matter of privilege arises because it isn't just, you know, at the beginning of the day that a matter of privilege can be raised, although I imagine if we look statistically at it that more often than not those matters of privilege would happen at the beginning of the day, but not always. That's not always the case, and because, you know, something could happen on the floor right this moment and I—and somebody could observe it and they could raise it as a matter of privilege. Now you're in the Chair now and so you would hear the particular arguments either way, and you would presumably either issue a

ruling from the Chair or return with a ruling at another time.

But the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), the incoming Deputy Speaker, might very well be here at some point in the Chair as the Deputy Speaker, if she obtains that position, and she herself would have to hear the arguments at least on the matter of privilege. She might not rule herself, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if I can remember a case where the Deputy Speaker was in the Chair during a matter of privilege, but I'm sure it's happened. I'm sure that it's happened, and it can certainly happen and it's within our rules to happen. And then, of course, a ruling would come back at some time. So it's important that the member understand that.

It's also the conducting of private members' business, indicates that it is the overall responsibility of the Speaker to make all necessary arrangements to ensure the orderly conduct of the hour of each sitting day devoted to private members' business, and that's an important time, Mr. Speaker. And we'll be entering into private members' business tomorrow morning as a reminder to all members; it's been a while, several months, perhaps almost a year, since we've had private members' business. And tomorrow at 10 o'clock we'll be debating a resolution. In fact, it just happens to be my resolution, not that I haven't had the opportunity to speak enough, but I'll have the opportunity to speak again tomorrow at 10 o'clock on an important resolution regarding the issue of departure tax that was levied as a result of severance that was given to a number of NDP employees following the leadership race, and so I would encourage members to come for that and to express their own views.

And I know that there are members within the NDP caucus who would have concerns about that. Many of their friends would've been impacted by that, and I say that because they know who I'm speaking of and they often worked on different leadership campaigns and they were ushered out the door as a result of it. Ushered out with a mighty cheque I'd say, Mr. Speaker, but nonetheless ushered out the door. So tomorrow during private members' business, which indicates as an important part of the role of the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker, we'll hear those debates in discussion.

And, of course, we also have private members' bills that are brought forward by individual members, and it's important that the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker does a good job of ensuring that

everyone gets to hear about those private members' bills because, you know, often there's a discussion and a feeling that only government brings forward bills. Some of the best pieces of legislation that I've seen passed in this House were brought forward by individual private members, weren't brought forward by Cabinet ministers at all. And, you know, it's to the credit of all members of this House that some of those private members' bills get passed. Often that's the result of negotiation. Sometimes it's just because it's a really good idea and the idea should pass.

And, you know, I rarely quote the former premier, Mr. Doer, but he used to say, you know, there's no monopoly on a good idea, and I think that's very true. And there are members of this House who have their own ideas for bills and they bring them forward. Members of this House often have constituents who have their own ideas and they bring forward those ideas. And, however, a private members' bill gets here to the floor of the House doesn't matter; if it's a good idea, then it should be debated and it should be discussed. And that is one of the things that you have the responsibility for and that the incoming Deputy Speaker would have the responsibility for as well. And I don't want to say that that should be taken lightly. That shouldn't be taken as—in any small matter, Mr. Speaker, because it's one of the best ways that we as members who aren't members of the Cabinet—members of the Executive Council, get to bring forward ideas and get to represent our constituents.

* (16:30)

I know, in my case, some of the bills that I've brought forward and I think back—and ideas, it's not just bills, Mr. Speaker, but I think back to the issue of ensuring that individual youth who are under the age of 18, who are dealing with addiction, that their parents have the authority to be able to get initial treatment for that detox treatment, essentially, and then, hopefully, the young people—once they've detoxed off of whatever drug they've found themselves addicted to—have the ability to make a good decision to get longer term treatment. But that's an idea that came from a constituent of mine, and they brought that forward. And we brought that forward as an idea, and, ultimately, it ended up in a bill, in a government bill.

I know that there are other bills, and the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) has brought forward important pieces of legislation regarding safety around schools. And, unfortunately, that is the

result of a tragedy that happened in his particular area, but he didn't just let that tragedy go by without any sort of recourse. He decided that he was going to bring forward a bill, and it was debated during private members' bills, I think—or private members' hour—you may have been in the Chair, Mr. Speaker, but it could've been the Deputy Speaker who was in the Chair, as well, and it was important that there was an—a proper and an orderly debate. And we rely on the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker to ensure that that debate happens and that private members' business is recognized as an important part of the legislative agenda and an important part of the day.

I don't say that lightly because often, as members of an opposition who aren't in government, and, frankly, that would be true for members of the government who weren't actually in Cabinet—so members of the NDP party who didn't hold a particular Cabinet position—sometimes, you know, you feel a bit frustrated that you're not able to get your ideas forward in the same way that a Cabinet minister might. And that's where private members' business comes in, that that opportunity actually does exist and that you can form an idea into a bill and put it into a bill and bring it forward and actually have it pass in the Legislature. And that happens many times—the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) said it happened, I think, a few times.

The member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) has brought forward legislation, I believe, on licence plates to honour those who are veterans. And, you know, it's not really about seeking credit, and I know sometimes members opposite might not believe that, and maybe sometimes members of the public feel that people who are in politics are always just seeking credit for certain things. But I know the member for Lakeside, when he brought forward the bill on the veterans' licence plates, did it because he felt it was a very easy way to recognize people who had contributed through the sacrifice of serving in our Armed Forces. And so he brought forward that private members' bill, and I believe it was supported by all members of the House. There were some changes, I think, that happened, and ultimately it was a negotiation between government and the opposition in terms of how it would proceed. And it was done not with the hope of gaining credit—and he would probably tell me to stop talking about it because he's not really interested in being somebody who is pointed out as having brought forward the bill—but it's important to recognize him and to remember that good ideas don't just come from the

government benches, and good ideas don't just come from the Cabinet; that all of us, when listening to our constituents and looking at different things that they think are important, we can bring those here in the context of law.

Now there are limitations, of course, and those who operate in Legislative Counsel will tell you that you have limitations. You can't bring forward money bills and those sort of things. And so, as individual members, we're not without limitation. There are certain things that we can't do in the Chamber, and so—when it comes to bringing forward bills—and so it's not, again—and maybe that talks about sort of the limitation of freedom of speech. We as individual members who aren't part of the Executive Council aren't able to bring forward spending bills or bills that appropriate funds, essentially, and so there is limitations to these things. But, as the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker, you do have a special responsibility to ensure that private members' business can happen in a way that those who aren't members of the Cabinet can bring forward those things.

There's also the role of decisions on motions, Mr. Speaker, and it talks about, within the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, that it is the responsibility of the Speaker to have some decisions on motions. The standing orders confer on the Speaker certain responsibilities in connection with motions coming before the House for consideration. The Speaker has the responsibility to act in the event that he or she judges a motion to be contrary to the rules and the privileges of Parliament. In such a case, it is the Speaker's responsibility to inform the House at the earliest opportunity before the question is put and to refer it to the applicable rule or authority.

And there's been a few different contexts where we brought forward certain motions where they have been ruled not to be in order and where we've got that advice from you or from previous Speakers. And that's good advice. I mean, we as MLAs and as elected officials—we're not always the best arbiters of the rules. I often say that I don't know if there's anybody in this House, and I would include myself in that, who ran to be an elected official because they wanted to be an expert on the rules, because they wanted to be an expert on the proceedings of the Legislature.

Now, I've grown to enjoy it a little bit more, I think, Mr. Speaker, than maybe I would have in my earlier days. And I've learned to believe that the rules are something that are quite important to know and

not just to follow, of course, but to know and to understand because when you get a chance to understand the rules, you really do see this place in its full colour, in its full context. And so—but, having said that, I mean, the MLAs who are running, of course, they don't—and people running for elected office don't do so because they want to become ingrained in the rules of the Legislature or Parliament. Some ultimately do by virtue of their position that they obtain within their caucus or within a government, but that's not the primary motivation.

The vast majority of people who run for public office do so because they want to better their communities or want to help out in some particular way or they've had an experience in their life, and they feel that that experience brings something to them and they want to extend that in the Legislature or in Parliament. I do think that that is something that when we look at why people run, those are the vast majority of reasons why they run. They don't run because they're interested in the rules of the House. And so we rely, Mr. Speaker, on you, on the officials that you work with, and, of course, the Deputy Speaker will have to rely upon that as well to ensure that we are following those rules, that motions are in order, that different things that we bring forward to the Legislature are put in the proper form and that they're done in the proper way. And I think that that is something that is very, very important. And I hope that the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), the—hoping to be brought forward as the Deputy Speaker, I hope that she understands that that will also be part of her responsibility, should she obtain that position in the future.

I know there are a number of other things, Mr. Speaker, that are put forward here within the rules. The Deputy Speaker or the Speaker, as the case may be, is responsible for tabling of documents, statutory provisions, as well as rules of the House state that the Speaker receives and tables certain reports and documents to the House. And we see that at the beginning of many days here in the Assembly, where, as one of the early things in the orders of the day, you'll stand up and you'll table a report, whether it's a report of an independent officer or whether it's a report of the LAMC, the Legislative Assembly Management Commission, that you'll provide those reports to the Assembly. But, really, you're providing them to the public. You're allowing the public to see those particular reports that were provided by the officers who are responsible for them.

And, in the case of independent officers, there's some very, very important reports that you end up tabling. You know, just to name a few, the Ombudsman, of course, provides an annual report. And the Ombudsman is one of those individuals who has a name that many people would have a difficult time pronouncing, perhaps, and not understanding what the role of it is. And I think that the office of the Ombudsman has done a good job in going out there and telling people more about what their role is. And they really are, in many ways, a referee when things happen within government that they feel are not in the standard practice, that are not in keeping with the practice and the rules of government. A person can go to the Ombudsman and raise that concern and say: Here's an issue that we want you to look at. And my experience with the Ombudsman is more often than not they take that seriously and they look at the particular concern and they say, yes, we're going to do an investigation, and sometimes the investigation comes back and says, well, things were done within the proper context, and sometimes they say that they weren't done according to the particular rules that the department was operating under. And that's an opportunity for individuals of the public to feel that they're getting their case heard by somebody who is not the decision maker.

* (16:40)

And that's an important part of law as well, Mr. Speaker, where you have, you know, in many cases, the judge or a magistrate or a presiding officer, in an administrative case, who is that independent arbiter of a particular situation. People, of course, grow rightly suspicious when they're appealing a decision to the person who made the decision. And so, when a department or somebody in government has made a decision that somebody feels is wrong or that broke the rules of procedures, it doesn't make a lot of sense to ask that person to go back to the same person who made the decision to ask for an appeal.

Now, that sometimes is the first place they have to go to get a reconsideration, but ultimately the Ombudsman is there as an individual that the public can go to and say, we want you to take an arm's-length look at this as an independent person and to see whether or not things were done properly and done right. And the Ombudsman then produces a report. They list the various complaints that they get throughout a year. They put it in their annual report. I know they put examples of the different concerns and complaints that they have, Mr. Speaker.

The Ombudsman has also been given a lot of other responsibilities as a result of different legislation that's happened, so the freedom of information legislation that we have that governs all of us and that governs different departments and different entities in government. The Ombudsman is also responsible for decisions and appeals on freedom of information. And I've had the opportunity to appeal some decisions to the Ombudsman. We've appealed issues around government when they haven't disclosed data to us, when they've hidden emails, actually, when they should've been released, as is the case with the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) in the famous incident now where they brought forward civil servants to hear a political debate on civil servants—or government time, and we appealed a decision about an email that we weren't provided under freedom of information. And the Ombudsman did an investigation and they provided a report. Now they provided, in that case, a special report, but, of course, there's also an annual report. And so the annual report would have a variety of different things in there in relation to that, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the auditor, another independent officer of this House, also provides reports—special audits on certain issues. And you are responsible for tabling that, or, in the case where you're not available, the Deputy Speaker, the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), if she's successful, would have the responsibility for tabling that report as well, and she should be aware of those responsibilities.

We know that you table the annual LAMC, the Legislative Assembly Management Commission report that, I think, in the Ottawa context, in the Parliament context, is called the ways and means committee or something along those lines, I think, and it's a similar sort of thing where there are internal discussions that happen around the operations of the Legislature. And you provide, through the tabling of a report, the minutes of the LAMC, of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission, and you're also the presiding officer of that.

Now, that wouldn't impact the member for Fort Rouge, the Deputy Speaker. I don't believe that they take on that role in your absence. I don't believe so, anyway. I could be—that's another question perhaps that needs to be answered. In your absence, does the member for Fort Rouge become the presiding officer of LAMC? I don't know the answer to that, Mr. Speaker. You know, that would probably entail a longer term absence which I know wouldn't happen,

but, you know, that is something that needs to be considered as well because that is another responsibility that the member would have to take.

So, you know, in considering this motion, Mr. Speaker, there are a variety of things that I think we need to consider and that the member for Fort Rouge needs to consider. And I know that she's a thoughtful individual and I think that she would've considered many of these, but it is important that she has the time to understand that this is no small role. This is no small undertaking. This is an important role, and I think in—I hope that in the, you know, the time that I've had over the last couple of hours that I've been able to impart the importance of this role.

I don't know that we've ever really had a proper discussion about the role of the Speaker and the role of the Deputy Speaker here on the floor of the Assembly. I—in my time, I don't think it's happened, and maybe that's to our shame that we haven't had that discussion, that we haven't talked about it.

I mean, obviously at the beginning of every new session after an election, we have the vote for a Speaker, and I guess there's some media discussion on that, but there really isn't a lot of discussion about the role of the Speaker and how an individual acts within that context.

And, if there hasn't been a lot of discussion about the role of the Speaker, one could imagine there's been almost no discussion about the role of the Deputy Speaker. And I hearken back to an area that I started with at the beginning of this about the election of a Deputy Speaker. Now I don't want to suggest I'm recommending that. I'm not recommending that. I guess it's something that could be discussed, Mr. Speaker, but I—it's not truly a recommendation for my part at this point. I think I would have to be brought to that position by a fairly convincing argument that that would be important.

Nor do I know if that happens in any other Legislature. I don't believe that the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons is elected, but I could be corrected on that. And maybe there are other jurisdictions in Canada that elect their Deputy Speaker in their Legislature, but I'm not aware of that either. But, regardless, that's not going to be the case with this particular situation because our rules don't allow for it at this particular time.

But it important to know that the Deputy Speaker will essentially be assuming all of the responsibilities, or 95 per cent of the responsibilities,

that the Speaker would entail as well, Mr. Speaker. And I hope that the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) has dutifully considered that.

Now, prior to my opportunity to speak, I heard the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) speak, and he didn't articulate as much as I did on this particular issue, but he raised concerns about the role of the member for Fort Rouge given actions of the last year. Now I'm not sure—I've not had the opportunity to speak to the member for River Heights, if his concern emanates from the rebellion that happened within government or if it relates more particular to a departmental issue when the member for Fort Rouge was a member of the Cabinet. But I do want to speak to him about that, and I want to hear his concerns a little bit more fully, because he didn't articulate it very strongly what his concerns were.

I started off my comments saying that I do have respect for the member for Fort Rouge, and I do. And, if there are concerns, though, that the member for River Heights has that are stronger than what he put on the record, I'd like to know that. And I'd like to know what some of those are, because, you know, it is important. It's not as important, obviously—I mean, you know, that we have the same sort of unanimity that we had with you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, as the presiding officer of this House, you have a lot more responsibilities and a lot more influence over the day-to-day happenings.

And it's important always that this House maintains the respect for—and the confidence that we have in you, Mr. Speaker. I know that that's not the same kind of thing that is necessary for the Deputy Speaker, but it would be nice. It would certainly—would be nice if there was a feeling of unanimity when it comes to that. So I will undertake to meet with the member for River Heights and hear some of his particular concerns.

There are also some ceremonial and diplomatic roles that the Speaker has to fulfill. And, I suppose, in the absence of the Speaker, that the Deputy Speaker would fulfill those roles. We've seen some of them. I think back to when Prince Charles was here last fall for the presentation of the Order of Manitoba awards, and the Order of Manitoba awards will be coming up again soon. It won't be quite the same ceremony as we had last year, but they're always very distinguished ceremonies regardless of whether they're held in the Chamber here and whether Prince Charles and Camilla are here or

not. But that was a particularly significant one, and I know you played a significant role in the organization of that, and I thank you for that. And, in the actual event, you were prominent in the actual event, Mr. Speaker, as well, when it began, and I think that's important. So there's the ceremonial role as well for the Speaker to play, and the Deputy Speaker, I suppose, might be called in on certain occasions to ensure that that happens as well.

You know, this is a smaller point I want to make, but it's not one that I say lightly. And actually it's a point that was made by the former member for Portage la Prairie, one David Faurshou, who I know had a great love for procedural rules and procedural ceremony and to make sure that things were done properly. In fact, he used to speak at length within our caucus about certain things in terms of procedure here in the Legislature. And I probably didn't listen to it as strongly as I should have at that time, and now I regret, perhaps, not listening as much as I should have to the member for Portage la Prairie—the former member for Portage la Prairie, who I have good respect for, Mr. Speaker. But he used to admonish us often for not—when we're leaving the Chamber or when we're entering the Chamber—for not bowing to the Chair of this place. I'm not sure if, technically, if we are bowing to the Chair or bowing to the mace, but, regardless, the point is the same. That often—that doesn't happen, or, when we're crossing the centre piece of the Legislature, that there should be that stop and that bow as well.

* (16:50)

And I would remind members, regardless of who is in the Chair, whether it's you or the Deputy Speaker, the member for Fort Rouge or whether it's another member of the Assembly, that when we enter and exit this place, that it is a respectful thing for us to do to stop and to acknowledge the Chair by bowing towards it.

And I think it's, you know, it's not a small thing. I think it feels sometimes like a small thing. Again, returning to the issue of Youth Parliament, I—when I observed Youth Parliament, if there's anybody who adheres to that rule, it's youth parliamentarians, and they do it very strongly. In fact, I think that they do the bow at almost every intersection of this place, which I find interesting to watch. But they're very, very ardent about it, and they're very 'vociferous,' Mr. Speaker, and there's another opportunity for us to learn from young people.

And, you know, I think maybe it's because sometimes, when we have been elected for a little while, we make the mistake of taking something for granted, you know. And I often say to people that I've now worked in the Legislature for a number of years, and I have to remind myself sometimes about what a grand place this is. And it's easy sometimes, you know, you park in your parking spot and you walk in the side door, and you head to your office, and, you know, depending where your office is in this building, you often never get to see the Grand Staircase because you never really go that way, and I often remind myself to go to the Grand Staircase, to walk up the Grand Staircase, because it is a very unique place to be and it's a very majestic place to be.

But often it becomes a bit of a place to work when you've been here, often, for a long time. And it's hard to remember what it was like the first time you walked into this Chamber when you've been here for a few years. And so maybe that's part of the reason why people, you know, don't acknowledge the Chair as often as they should or in the way that they should when they're coming into the Chamber and exiting it because it becomes a little bit too commonplace.

And so it's a reminder for all of us, Mr. Speaker, and I put myself on top of that list in terms of the reminder because I need to ensure that I do that as well and that I remember that we are in a very unique position and we are—each of us are one of 57 people who are able to occupy our chairs in the Assembly. We are one of 57 people who are able to have a very unique role in Manitoba. And there are many others who, I think, would be quite happy to have a shot at this. And many have tried and not been successful. There are many who've tried multiple times and not been successful. So it's important for all of us to remember that it's a special place to be, and we should treat it in a special way.

So the issue for the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), I think, is one of contemplation, and I think she needs to carefully consider the different roles that she's going to be asked to take on, the different responsibilities she's going to be asked to take on. It'll be very different than the role that she had as a minister, in fact, a senior minister, in the government where she was one of the most ardent defenders of government policy up until the infamous day when she joined four others to leave the caucus, in a way, Mr. Speaker. But she has to recognize that this role is very different and that it's

unlike any role that she's held in this Chamber before. And I'm not suggesting that because of the roles that she held before that she's incapable of doing that. I think, in many ways, she is. But she has to consider that and recognize that this is a different sort of thing and that she's going to be called upon at different times to put herself into a position that eschews political partisanship and that doesn't reflect a position of a party. And so I hope that she has the opportunity to consider that and the various things that we've discussed.

You know, I also hope that those who occupy the leadership positions within the government also take seriously my words that I put on the record regarding this House and the rules of this House because I said them with a great deal of sincerity and I mean them, that there are things that we could change that could make this Assembly better, make it function better, make it better for members of the Assembly, make it better for staff, make it better for visitors and constituents and Manitobans. But it takes a will and a desire to do it. And I think there's been many times when we've tried to do that, and I'm not going to blame anybody here on the floor of the Assembly; I'm just going to say that it didn't happen several times. And some of what we're experiencing today, being only two weeks into a session and almost being into June, is the result of the fact that action wasn't taken when it should've been taken and when that window of opportunity existed for it to be taken.

And I hope that members of the government—and they'll know who they are—who I've approached about these issues will take that seriously and reconsider, perhaps, some of the positions that they've taken or the lack of desire to move ahead on some of those issues because I do think that it's important that they consider those changes for all of us because, ultimately, none of us know what side of the House we may be serving on after the next election. None of us know if we'll be here after the next election. That's the nature of—well, except for the officers that are at the table, Mr. Speaker; they'll be here. But I actually think it would be a benefit for them, too, and I—you know, I think that many of them would, you know, would look at things that could be corrected here and changed that would be a benefit to all of us here in the Assembly.

So, you know, I am hoping that she's—that the members opposite will consider that and will think about that as we move forward in the days ahead, and I suspect we'll have many days and many

opportunities to talk about it and do it, to think about it and to make those changes, Mr. Speaker, as we go through this session that has just started. And let's remember that it has only been two weeks that we've been here and that we have a long way to go in terms of examining the Estimates. There are some 30 to 40 bills which have to be debated. And, as I said earlier on, every bill needs a reasonable matter of debate, whether it is a bill that is generally agreed with or not.

People have the right to know the legislation that is before the Legislature. They have a right to be able to come to the Legislature and express their opinion. They have the right to be advised of that. And they have the right to tell us as MLAs how bills might impact them. And, if there are 30 bills before the Legislature and if we take two days to discuss each one of them, well, it doesn't take—hard to do the math. But it's important that we have that opportunity to ensure that Manitobans' views are respected, that the rules of this Assembly are respected, and that we do things in a fashion that in a year or two from now, if somebody comes to us and says, well, how is it that this bill passed, we can look at them with some respect for ourselves and say that the bill was debated thoroughly, that a bill was debated appropriately and that there was an opportunity for the public, including themselves, to make comment on that legislation.

And it's why I very passionately believe that there has to be a sessional agreement, generally, and a rule in terms of when this Legislature sits because, ultimately, we end up in the situation where we are in today, where we're two weeks into a session, we're almost into June, and we haven't even gotten into the issue of Estimates. That is concerning. And some members might think that's funny, and some members might not think it's important to ensure that members of the public get to see legislation, but I would disagree with those members. And I would take that argument to the public any day because I believe, in my time, having viewed how things sometimes happen here, they don't happen in a way

that shines glory on any of us, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to legislation and how legislation is passed.

So I look forward to those discussions with the government about how we're going to ensure that legislation is given a proper vetting in this place, that the public is able to come and hear about the legislation in an appropriate fashion, that they are given proper notice, Mr. Speaker, and they're given that opportunity to ensure that they have their voice heard because, ultimately, we are their voices. They do not have the privilege of coming to the floor of this Assembly and expressing their concerns. We ultimately become their proxy. We become their voice. And, if we are not going to be their voice and allow their voice to be heard in a way that is respectful, in a way that is thoughtful and in a way that is dignified, then we've done ourselves no service.

So I understand that I'll have a bit more time to debate this motion when it comes back before the Assembly. And I hope that the government will consider my words seriously, that they'll think about the different issues that have been raised, and when this motion comes back before the Assembly that we can bring it to a vote because, ultimately, that is my desire, that this motion come to a vote, but not without the proper discussion that should happen between a government and an opposition, and not without a respectful amount of debate on the issues that this Legislature will face over the next several months.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) will have unlimited time.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Steinbach will have unlimited time.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 13, 2015

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