

Third Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 31, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam 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.

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee of the Whole

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered the following: Bill 34, The Budget Implementation Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, and reports the same as amended.

I move, seconded by the honourable member of La Verendrye, that the report of the committee be received.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook), that the report of the committee be received.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Robert Ullmann

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, this year saw the 50th anniversary of the East Selkirk volunteer fire department. Members of our East Selkirk volunteer fire department serve with distinction and have joined us in the gallery today. However, they are not here to see me acknowledge their 50th anniversary. They are here to see me

recognize one of their own: Mr. Robert Ullmann, who is the longest serving volunteer member.

Mr. Ullmann has served honorably as a volunteer for the East Selkirk Fire Department for 32 years now. His career began in 1986. He has maintained his strong commitment to the department and the community since the beginning.

The East Selkirk Fire Department responds to an average of 120 calls per year. That makes 3,840 emergency calls in Robert's 32-year career.

Robert has demonstrated leadership, currently serving as lieutenant, and is described as an ideal role model by his fellow firefighters. Robert's endless effort to making the East Selkirk Fire Department the best it can be is evident in the success of the department and in the commitment of all its members.

Robert's commitments extends beyond responding to calls, as both Robert and his wife Tracy take on the caretaking duties of the fire hall and were instrumental in organizing the 50-year anniversary celebration this year. The celebration included many past and current members, and was another testament to Robert's commitment to the department.

Over the years, Robert's recognition for his hard work, time and commitment given to the service has included: Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal for 20 years of service; the Manitoba Association of Fire Chiefs Fire Fighter's Long Service Award for 25 years of dedicated service as a 1001 level firefighter; and the 10-year bar medal for 30 years of exemplary service.

Mr. Robert Ullmann is here with us, along with his wife Tracy and fellow firefighters. I ask my Chamber colleagues to please rise and recognize Robert for his long-time service to the East Selkirk Fire Department and our community.

WOKE Comedy Collective

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to celebrate the WOKE comedy collective founded by Dione Haynes and Elissa Black Wolf Kixen.

It should be well-understood, Madam Speaker, that more often than not, women of colour, indigenous women and non-binary peoples of colour are often the butt of the joke. Couched in racist, sexist and homophobic language, these so-called jokes are meant to devalue, exclude, humiliate, shame and bully women of colour, indigenous women and non-binary peoples of colour.

Dione and Elissa—comedians with over 30 years' experience combined—took it upon themselves to create a space that flips these type of jokes on their head.

Members of the WOKE comedy collective's humour is informed by and highlights racism, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia and stereotypes experienced every day. While these are heavy and often painful topics, laughter 'offer'—offers a space of healing, safety and resistance not only for comedians but for the audience as well.

Last June, the WOKE comedy collective had a fundraiser for Drag the Red. The member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and myself had the privilege of supporting the event and, quite honestly, Madam Speaker, it opened my eyes to the talented roster of WOKE comedy collective comedians, including Dawn Lavand and Mayran Kalah.

Mayran is particularly spectacular as she dismantles every stereotype of newcomer and Muslim woman with her sharp, quick-witted and provoking humour.

To that end, I lift up and say *miigwech* to Dione, Elissa and Mayran and all of the WOKE comedy collective for their transformative humour while creating a safe space for Manitobans.

I ask my colleagues to help me in congratulating our guests.

Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Although many northern communities such as Tataskweyak Cree Nation on Split Lake face challenges such as remoteness and residential school trauma, there is still hope for justice and reconciliation throughout the North.

This hope comes from spiritual leaders like the Right Reverend Larry Beardy and his wife, Reverend Elizabeth Beardy, and members of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh of the North.

Created in June 2014, Mishamikoweesh, translating as Big Beaver House, is a diocese of the Anglican Church of Canada and includes more than 25 First Nation communities in northwestern Ontario and northern Manitoba.

Because training of new ordained ministers is a critical need in many indigenous communities and positions are not easily filled through traditional seminary education, training through Dr. William Winter School for Ministry, based in Kingfisher Lake, Ontario, ensures education is run by and for indigenous people.

Trapper Larry Beardy and his wife Elizabeth were identified as potential spiritual leaders by their community members and encouraged to attend the ministry.

* (13:40)

In March 2016, Elizabeth Beardy was ordained to be the deaconate to become Reverend Elizabeth Beardy, and on September 23rd, 2018, Isaiah Larry Johnson Beardy was consecrated as the Indigenous Suffragan Bishop of Northern Manitoba Area Mission of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh and the assistant bishop in the Diocese of Brandon and Missinipi Northern Saskatchewan in the Diocese of Saskatchewan, establishing the Right Reverend Larry Beardy as the first indigenous bishop to ever be ordained, helping to fulfill the dream of a self-determining indigenous church within the Anglican Church of Canada.

Accompanying the Beardys today are other founding members of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh helping the North are: Elders Joshua and Elsie Morris; Thelma Meade and Elder Sylvia James; Reverends Richard and Nancy Bruyere; Margaret Bruyere; Reverend Norman Meade; Michael P. Garrison [*phonetic*] and Theresa Garson; and youth Morgan Beardy.

Please join me in welcoming them to the gallery today.

Elmwood Legion Branch No. 9

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize the executive and volunteers of Elmwood Legion Branch No. 9 and the important role that they play in our community.

As Remembrance Day approaches, the importance of our Legions becomes clear. On that day, I look forward to gathering with hundreds of community members, children and veterans as we

honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice. But Legions play an import role in our community year-round, and it's only made possible through the hard work of a group of dedicated volunteers.

The executive of the Elmwood Legion work hard indeed. They host important annual events, such as No Stone Left Alone, which is held every year at the Elmwood Cemetery. The unique ceremony provides students and youth from the community with an authentic experience that creates knowledge, understanding and appreciation for those who serve and of the sacrifice of Canada's fallen. They also host regular activities at the branch. From social events and the many indoor games and activities, to the ever-popular meat draws, Legion No. 9 is a busy place every night of the week.

The executive have been working tirelessly to improve the condition of their hall to ensure that it is a space in which the community feels welcomed and comfortable. Currently, they are in the process of redoing their carpets, a project for which they specifically worked to set aside funds. And I was proud to support this work by helping them apply for a grant. They also recently made the building handicap accessible by installing an elevator and a chairlift in the facility.

The Elmwood Legion Ladies Auxiliary, run by Carol McCall, who joins us here in the gallery, is truly the backbone of this organization. They work so very hard on behalf of the community as they prepare food for events, organize fundraising activities and put together hampers for those in need during the holiday season.

Also in the gallery is the president of Legion No. 9, George McCall. George served in the artillery and, shortly thereafter, in 1967, joined the Legion. He's been an active member ever since. While he took up the presidency this year, he has, at different times, performed almost every job in the branch.

Madam Speaker, members of the House, please join me in congratulating George and Carol McCall and the entire executive of the Elmwood Legion, who serve their fellow veterans and the wider community, for the good work that they are doing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Leonard and Eleane Baranyk

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): Pratts Wholesale has been supplying the retail grocery and restaurant business for over 100 years with Leonard

and Eleane Baranyk and their sons Lenny Jr., Jason and Jeff at the helm for just over 38 years. This local business sets the bar high in showing how you can be successful, treat people well and give back to your community.

In June of last year, I was honoured to bring congratulations on a very special surprise party celebrating Leonard's birthday, his 50th-year anniversary of being involved with Pratts and the celebration of his 50 years of marriage to Eleane. A huge tent, polkas and picnic food were served, but the icing on the cake was the renaming of Hutchings Street in front of the business to the Honourary Leonard & Eleane Baranyk Way.

The Pratts name and logo can be seen across the city, with hardly a community which hasn't benefited from their philanthropy, from our local cadet troupe in Transcona to local churches and community clubs.

Variety, the Children's Charity of Manitoba has been the main receiver of the Baranyk generosity. They have been the title sponsor of the Variety heart gala for many years, as well as the 27 years of Pratts invitational golf tournament, combined raising over a quarter million dollars.

In—Leonard, who had been surviving end-stage cancer for several years, was asked in spring to be the honorary chair for the Canadian Cancer Society Daffodil Gala. He agreed, knowing that the cutting-edge treatments he had been receiving had 'prodlonged' his time with his family. Sadly, shortly thereafter, Leonard succumbed to his illness, and in June of this year, a celebration of his life was held, Leonard-style, with a dinner, a Ukrainian band, a candy and ice cream bar and hundreds of friends whose lives had been touched by him and his family. The Candy Man went out in style.

His boys decided to jump in and honour their dad and raise money for research to find a cure to cancer. The Daffodil Gala was a spectacular event with over \$750,000 raised to support cancer patients, led by the family, who threw in \$150,000.

Please join me in thanking Eleane, and as her and her husband would say, my three sons, for all they do for our community.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you.

Seated in the public gallery from River East Collegiate we have 30 grade 9 students under the direction of Anita Stepaniuk and Sebastian Kukuk, and this group is located in the constituency of honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox).

On behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Reverting back to members' statements, the honourable member for Transcona?

Mr. Yakimoski: I just would simply like to ask leave to include members of the family who've attended here today in Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Baranyk Family: Eleane Baranyk, Jeff Baranyk, Lenny Baranyk, Lenny Baranyk Jr., Mary Baranyk, Nick Baranyk.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Management of Manitoba Hydro Government Approach

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Manitobans are sick of politics that divide people, and we saw a very powerful expression of that sentiment last night. Manitobans want leadership that is going bring us together and usher in a bold new future for Manitoba, and yet the Premier doesn't seem to understand that. The Premier doesn't seem to understand that it's his responsibility to bring people together. Instead, he wants to pit Manitoban against Manitoban.

We heard yesterday that the Premier is looking to back out of the Turning the Page Agreement and pick a fight with the Metis unnecessarily. The Province was beginning to turn the page on that chapter in our history, and the Premier said: Hold on; let's go back. In fact, let's go way, way back.

Now, the real damage here to the province in the long term is that this is putting hydro exports at risk, and it's causing future uncertainty, which could threaten the affordable rates that Manitoba Hydro ratepayers pay.

Will the Premier stop blaming others? Will he take responsibility and build Manitoba Hydro up for all Manitobans?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, it's a matter of public record that a \$15-billion investment in Keeyask and the bipole west line was a wasteful investment undertaken by the previous government. But they went further than that and tried to stop the Metis people from actually protesting the project by buying—offering to buy them off, including the Turning the Page Agreement. A payment of over \$20 million to not participate in a consultation process is hardly consultation.

And so what we are doing is improving the approach to consultation and accommodation with indigenous communities, which involves removing the barriers to unfettered participation in the processes of making decisions. Rather than paying people not to participate, we'll encourage all Manitobans to participate in these processes.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Kinew: The Turning the Page Agreement was the result of consultation, Madam Speaker, and it shouldn't be up to the Premier to just change his mind and back out at a whim.

Now, we know the Premier wants to pick this fight because he doesn't want to talk about other things. Does he talk about keeping rates low? No, because he cheerleads for higher rates for Manitobans.

Does he talk about why it's important for Manitoba Hydro to stay public? No, Madam Speaker, because he cuts a two-and-a-half-million-dollar cheque for somebody who worked to privatize BC Hydro so he could come here to Manitoba and perhaps repeat the same playbook.

* (13:50)

Does the Premier talk about managing Manitoba Hydro? Well, no, of course not. His hand-picked board walked out on him, and it took him, not one, but two tries to attempt to name their replacements.

The real cost, aside from sowing the politics of division and dividing Manitobans against one another, Madam Speaker, is that the Premier is putting further uncertainty over Manitoba Hydro at a time when we need more clean power than ever.

Will the Premier please back off from these politics of division and get back to building Manitoba Hydro for all Manitobans?

Mr. Pallister: Nothing jeopardizes the future of Manitoba Hydro more than the \$15 billion the NDP spent unnecessarily, Madam Speaker, and that is a matter of fact.

Nothing would jeopardize our relationships with fellow Manitobans more than continuing the old, misguided practice of paying people not to participate in our environmental processes, Madam Speaker. That is what the NDP did and that is disrespectful, and we will not engage in disrespectful practices. Rather, we will work with the Metis and indigenous people of our province generally and individually and collectively—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —by respecting their rights, not by trying to buy away their rights as the NDP did. We have too much respect for the Metis people to try to buy away their rights, Madam Speaker. It will not happen with this government.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: There can be no clearer example of the paternalistic attitudes of the past than the Premier's answer right there.

What Manitobans want is leadership that can bring us all together, and under my leadership the Manitoba NDP has committed to not playing these politics of division and, in fact, we will serve to advance—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —the health and well-being—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —of all people in Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: And it sounds like there's quite a constituency for that message, Madam Speaker.

Now, we know that the Premier wants to pick a fight with the Metis, but we're—we also are very conscientious of the people he will never pick a fight with. If you ever see what—the—want to see the Premier back down from a fight, simply mention the name Sandy Riley.

Now, we know that Mr. Riley and other Conservative business leaders in town disagree with this Premier's approach to leadership. They can't talk to him and he doesn't listen, and now more and more Manitobans are getting fed up with this style of leadership.

Will the Premier finally admit that he needs to change his approach, begin listening to his own base, as well as other Manitobans, and—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Pallister: The NDP approach, Madam Speaker, was paternalistic, it was colonialistic. It was designed to tell indigenous people to go away and be quiet, I 'getta'—cutting a cheque. That's not how we work in this province. The member should be ashamed of himself for making the accusation.

The reality is, Madam Speaker, that indigenous people in our province and all Manitobans are the real owners of Manitoba Hydro and they want the chance to speak when projects are proposed, not be bought off, not be cut a cheque. The member said he'd cut a cheque to David Chartrand for \$70 million for a proposal he hadn't even read yet because he's so busy—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —because—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —he's so dedicated to wanting to buy support.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, you don't buy your friends and you don't buy respect. The member needs to be corrected.

What we are interested in doing here and what we are dedicated to doing is respecting the people of Manitoba and making sure that they have a voice in their Manitoba Hydro.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Action on Climate Change Request for Government Funding

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Madam Speaker, I am serious about bringing people together, and that's why just yesterday I extended a hand to the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –leader of this government.

Now, when the—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –federal government said that big polluters should pay, we agreed with them. No one should be able to pollute for free. But now we've learned that the federal Liberals are letting one of the biggest polluters in New Brunswick, a coal plant, off the hook. The pollution won't really be subject to a carbon price. That's not right, that's not fair, and most importantly that's going to do tremendous damage to the environment. This is the second biggest polluter in Atlantic Canada.

Now, Manitobans know that coal is one of the dirtiest forms of energy. That's why we got rid of it in Manitoba.

Now, it's snowing today—probably because I agreed with the Premier yesterday, Madam Speaker—but that doesn't absolve the Premier of his responsibility to bring forward a real plan to fight global warming in this province.

When will this Premier bring forward a real plan to fight climate change?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, we have worked with Manitobans very diligently. I congratulate the previous minister of Sustainable Development and the present one for their work in reaching out across the province to all groups and developing a real plan for climate change action. That's why we're saying yes to green and no to the federal carbon tax.

The federal government is making their proposal all about fighting among provinces, fighting over a carbon tax, when we should be joining together and we should be fighting climate change. That's what this province is dedicated to doing, that's what we'll continue to do.

And, Madam Speaker, as far as our ability to bring people together, I would say nothing—nothing—demonstrates that better than the Manitoba green plan, recognized by the Prime Minister of Canada as the best green plan in the country.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Federal Carbon Pricing Legal Challenge Inquiry

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, the feds and the Premier are playing a dangerous game here, Madam Speaker. Climate change is a fight for our future and it is the defining issue of our time.

But on the one hand, you've got the federal Liberals who signal left and then turn a hard right when they want to make coal power free in this country. Then, on the other hand, you've got a Premier who wants to let all big polluters off the hook.

Caught in the middle of this political fight, of course, are the everyday Manitobans who want to see action so that we can leave a clean earth, air, sky and water to our kids and future generations in this province.

Now, the best way forward here is to negotiate, negotiate a good plan for Manitoba and maybe, in the process, tell the feds off of—back—to back off of giving a pass on coal power.

So the Premier has floated the idea of a lawsuit. We think that's a bad idea.

Will he therefore commit to returning to the negotiating table with the federal government and not launching a court challenge?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): We'll do whatever we have to do to defend Manitobans from getting the federal government into their hard-earned money. We'll keep the federal government out of the pockets of Manitobans while the NDP advocates that they should put their hands in the pockets of hard-working Manitobans.

This is the political organization that raised taxes at every opportunity, from cottage fees, haircuts, beer, benefits at work, home insurance, you name it, every chance they had to raise taxes, they did. Every tax they saw, they liked. Every tax they liked, they hiked. That's the government that took money away from Manitobans. This is the government that will make sure that money stays where it was earned and saved, Madam Speaker, in the pockets of hard-working Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: Actually, I'd like the record to reflect the truth, which is that this is a government that loves

pointless legal challenges, both when they were in opposition and also now, going to Nova Scotia and other—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —jurisdictions to launch other pointless legal challenges—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —now that they are in office.

Now, I don't mind the heckling—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: That just gives me more time to tell the truth about this government, Madam Speaker.

Endless legal fights won't help Manitobans preserve the environment for the next generation. All that will do is put money in the hands of lawyers, when, rightfully, we should be putting money into the hands of everyday Manitobans who want to reduce their carbon footprints.

Now, if the Premier, instead of launching a legal challenge would get pack—back to the table and negotiate, maybe he could come up with a good deal for Manitoba's climate plan. Maybe he could also tell this federal government to back off this terrible plan to give coal power a pass when it comes to carbon pricing. He could negotiate certainty on the \$67-million Low Carbon Economy Fund.

But underlying all that is—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]* The member's time has expired.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, let's talk about the NDP's love for lawyers and putting money in their pockets for a second. The government of Manitoba is forced to defend over three dozen court cases launched by indigenous bands in this province against the previous NDP government. If the conduct of the previous government was so admirable, why is that the case?

Secondly, in terms of putting money in the hands of lawyers, I understand that the NDP actually did that when they went to court to fight for the right to take away Manitobans' ability to vote on their proposed PST hike.

So let the record show—let the record show—that the NDP demonstrated, often and repeatedly, through their misconduct and their direct court actions, their love for putting Manitoba's hard-earned money in the hands of legal representatives.

* (14:00)

Madam Speaker: Prior to proceeding, I just would like to indicate to members that electronic devices are not to be allowed—to be used during oral questions. And for those that might be looking at their phones, I would just indicate that that is a rule that is to be respected in the House.

Meth Cases at Health Sciences Centre Expanded Powers for Security Officers

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): So many voices now in our city and our province are telling us about the impact of meth addiction on our communities, and we know there's been a huge increase in the number of Manitobans using meth seeking medical treatment, and we've all seen—we've all heard about the growing violence at our hospitals.

Those working in health care tell us that this government's response has been out of touch, threatening discipline in the media against those who are speaking out to try and draw attention to the crisis. Now this government's latest move, after hearing from all these concerns, is to lock down parts of Health Sciences Centre in the evenings—and it's too little, too late.

Where is the minister's plan and funding to address the meth crisis in Manitoba?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): On the contrary, Madam Speaker, everyone in Manitoba understands that Health Sciences Centre is a very, very large campus—36 buildings, 100 entrances, 20 unique portals to go in in the evening hours—and it's complex when it comes to security, as well.

That's why we're striking the right balance when it comes to patients and the right for their—to have their family members come and see them, and also at the same time, those who work in the facility and those who visit need to be protected. We're taking some very reasonable steps on behalf of safety that we think will serve all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Minto, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, simply locking down Health Sciences Centre is a band-aid solution. If this minister would talk to people working in health care, he would understand the biggest threat is from patients using meth who come to the facility, who act out, who are violent against the very people that are giving them care.

At Health Sciences Centre, security officers tell us they don't have the assurance they need to ensure that any actions they may take are within the law. The minister today can give that assurance not by just repeating existing policy, but by committing to expanding the powers of security officers inside hospitals like Health Sciences Centre to deal with these new, serious, real threats.

Will the minister commit to doing so?

Mr. Friesen: That member knows that this government is committed to dealing with these new and real threats, as we have been collaborating with all forces out there: with the police force, with health professionals, with community leaders. We've been speaking with leaders in other jurisdictions about what to do.

So when he refers to the WRHA new policies for restricting access overnight, it's exactly that. It's taking another step to provide more assurance, a higher level of confidence to those who work in these facilities, and also, at the same time, making sure that people who are in these facilities can still see their loved ones.

We believe we're getting it right. We're continuing to listen, and we'll continue to act.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Minto, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Swan: The number of violent incidents against staff at Health Sciences Centre alone has doubled in the past year, and it's clear that the tools that may have worked in the past to address this crisis are not working.

Security guards are telling us that they're uncertain about their legal status when they intervene to protect staff, protect patients, protect other people there from a wave of unpredictable violence, which I think we can agree is unprecedented in this city's history.

The minister's responsible for looking at the tools he has to fight this crisis. Security officers say that they need an expansion of their powers to fight the scourge of meth.

Now, maybe the Minister of Health won't answer the question, so I'll ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen): Will he commit to reviewing this and giving security officers the powers and the authority they tell us that they need?

Mr. Friesen: That member knows that the government has taken real action when it comes to enhancing security provisions at the Health Sciences Centre, as well as in other places.

That member also knows that security forces at Health Sciences Centre are the highest trained in the province of any health facility. They are former military, former police, private-trained and trained ongoing on issues like threat de-escalation, verbal de-escalation, safe takedown. We've seen, in the past, some very 'unfortunatal' incidents, but we've also seen security responding.

If there are more and additional steps to take, our government is always committed to take those steps. We are committed to getting this right and serving all Manitobans by our actions.

Family Conciliation Services Staffing and Budget Concerns

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): We raised the issue of a lack of staff in the Family Conciliation Services weeks ago. We revealed in this House how judges in our own province are deeply concerned about this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Minister of Justice's cuts.

Justice Doyle said in July, and I quote: there's a dramatic loss in resources in regard to Family Conciliation Services. They've lost assessors. It's dramatic, and to have an assessment by October the 2nd is not going to happen. End quote, Madam Speaker.

Why has the Premier and his Justice Minister cut supports for Manitoba families in crisis?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): In fact, we stand for all of those families that are in crisis in Manitoba. We are trying to get them the programs that they need to—in order to survive, and we will continue to work with those families. We'll continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that they have the tools that they need.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to conciliation services, we know that there is a broader family law reform that's on its way. There has been a review that has taken place and we will continue to work with judges, with stakeholders, with lawyers, with all

those in the community to ensure that we get what is in the best interests of families and children.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, freedom of information reveals that a massive cut to the family conciliation budget is in the amount of \$350,000 this year, Madam Speaker. That's on top of the fact that the Province underspent the budget by over \$100,000 last year. This is a huge cut, explaining why our courts are bursting at the seams and why children are not getting the services or supports that they need.

Why is the Justice Minister cutting Family Conciliation Services by hundreds of thousands of dollars?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the member opposite is just plain wrong. She needs to get her facts right.

The fact of the matter is that the money that goes into conciliation services in Manitoba is more than was ever put into conciliation services in Manitoba under the previous NDP government.

Now, having said that, just putting more money at situations isn't necessarily the be-all and end-all, Madam Speaker, we recognize that we need value for money. We need to ensure that we're helping those families that need it. We will continue to work with all stakeholders in the community to ensure that we protect those families and those children.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Fontaine: Clearly, the minister doesn't know, and so I'll table this, because she is actually wrong, and the minister is refusing to answer the question when we first raised it and isn't being clear now.

Children and families need supports when they are navigating a very difficult court system, Madam Speaker. They need the services of social workers who can make sure that the best interests of the child are protected. They don't need reductions or cuts, but that's what they're getting from the Premier and whoever—whichever minister decides to stand up.

Why is this Minister of Justice cutting hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Family Conciliation Services?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Madam Speaker, the member opposite is just plain wrong.

In fact, conciliation services falls under the Department of Families, and that's why I am standing before you today. We will ensure that we do everything we can to protect those families, to protect those children as they're going through various very difficult stages in their life when it comes to do with separation of family units. This is a very difficult time for those families. This is the time where they need those programs to ensure that. That's why we've embarked on family law reform.

Members opposite, where they failed in family law reform, we will get it right.

Manitoba Hydro Financial Position

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Premier has a habit of picking fights in order to divert attention from some tire fire or crisis of his own making.

It's important to recall that when nine of the Premiers' hand-picked Hydro board members resigned in April, they said it was because the Premier had refused to meet with them to discuss what they described as a looming financial crisis that threatened to take down Hydro.

It was the Premier, and no one else, who said it was about the MMF. The two deals with the MMF the Premier has ripped up to date average about \$1.7 million a year over the next 50 years. Compare this with the \$200 million that was given to the Blue Bombers for the Investors Group Field fiasco—perhaps David Chartrand to put on a Blue Bombers jersey.

The question is: Who's calling the shots of Hydro now, is it the new board or is it the Premier?

* (14:10)

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): When it comes to improving our approach to consultation, this government will pursue that with focus and expects to be supported by the board of Hydro in that process.

We also recognize that paying people not to participate in consultations is not fair or right.

Mr. Lamont: Manitobans should understand that this government is taking approximately 200 times more out of Hydro this year alone than was on offer to the MMF.

The capital tax, the debt fee and water rentals all add up to \$380 million that goes into Manitoba's

general revenue. Let me say why these fees are so dangerous: the more government can force Hydro to overbuild, the more government gets in capital tax. The more the government can force Hydro to borrow, the more the government gets as a debt fee.

This government, like the one before it, is taking money from Hydro and putting its own debt on Hydro's books, raising rates, the cost of living and doing business across Manitoba. The Hydro board—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —resigned because Hydro's existence is at risk and the Premier wouldn't listen or meet with them.

What is going to be the impact on the Province's bottom line and credit rating if Hydro's debts are included with the government's?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, I can only tell the member that we should agree that Hydro's in a mess because of the NDP waste and mismanagement of the last number of years.

We also know that the government of Manitoba is being sued by dozens of First Nations because of Hydro fiascos which occurred under the NDP, and we also know that projects which went ahead under the previous administration did so while they spent \$1.2 billion in compensatory payments to First Nations, much of it to tell them to get out of the way so that they could move ahead with the projects without considering the best interests of First Nations in the consequential discussions they should have been part of and were not.

So Madam Speaker, what we're saying is Hydro is a problem but we're facing up to the challenge of fixing it. Hydro is a problem, and we're facing up to the challenge of fixing it, and I would encourage other members to understand that Hydro is worth fixing, because it doesn't belong to them; it belongs to Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Second Opposition on a final supplementary.

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, the Province of Manitoba has about \$16 billion in revenue, with more than a quarter of it from the federal government. Our provincial debt is around \$22 billion.

Hydro's revenues are about \$2 billion and its debt is headed to the same levels as the Province. Its profit this year is \$37 million.

I agree with the Premier. It is all provincial debt. We are on the hook, but by picking fights and tearing up contracts the Premier is trying to distract from his government's catastrophic mishandling of a file that poses a threat to the Province's finances, because Hydro cannot sustain this debt. In an eight-month period Hydro will have seen a total turnover in the minister, the CEO and the board.

When is Hydro and this government going to come to grips with the serious work that needs to be done to clean up Hydro's finances?

Mr. Pallister: We've most certainly accepted the challenge of working to strengthen Manitoba Hydro. It is an onerous challenge, there is no doubt, but the member has just gone on record as advocating that we pay \$100 million out to David Chartrand so that he won't participate in processes around discussing projects for the next 30 years or so.

That's wrong, Madam Speaker, and just because Hydro's debt's big doesn't mean it should get bigger because of mismanagement or recommendations emanating from the Liberals or the NDP to cause it to get even further into debt.

So, Madam Speaker, the member also puts on the record payments made by Hydro to the Province and I should help correct him on this. We allow Manitoba Hydro to borrow on the Province's credit rating saving them hundreds of millions of dollars every single year.

We'll keep working with Hydro to strengthen it. They made a mess of it under the NDP, but we're fixing it now.

Northern Patient Transfer Program Funding Coverage for Patient Escorts

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): At the annual NHRA meeting yesterday, CEO Helga Bryant replied that complaints about changes to the Northern Patient Transportation Program and coverage for escorts should be directed to the Province. Ms. Bryant explained that the NHRA administers the program for Manitoba Health but cannot change it.

We know that changes to the NPTP and escort coverage are being directed by this government, and we know these changes are hurting northern Manitobans.

Will the government restore coverage for escorts and stop cutting the Northern Patient Transportation Program?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for the opportunity to answer the question.

Just because the member continues to advance a fiction, it does not make it any more true. There are not changes to the northern patient transportation system that this government has undertaken. Now, if the program under the NDP lost its focus and lost its discipline and individuals did not enforce the rules, well, then that could have been the cause of many of the challenges that people in the North now point to.

We must ensure that the program stays strong in order to provide those necessary flights to individuals and their accompanying people when they need them to seek services in the south. That's exactly what we're going to do.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, from a freedom of information request, which I table, shows that this government cut—cut—\$1 million from the NPTP escort 'subsidiar'. We know this decision was made at the Cabinet table because the information comes from a Department of Health funding letter.

Just last week, and again today, the minister said over and over: No change has been made to the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

Will the minister retract that false information that he has put on the record and reverse the harmful cuts he's made to the northern transportation program?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I want to be clear for this member and all members of this House that the northern patient transportation system that we have in Manitoba is essential. It's essential to make sure that individuals who are in the North can have access—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —to appointments in the south in places like Winnipeg, and that's why that program has to be well managed.

We became aware, as the member knows, of all kinds of abuses to the program. It's exactly the reason why the rules that he speaks about must be enforced, to make sure that that program continues to be able to have the capacity to be able to respond to those who legitimately need the travel—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —subsidy in respect of air travel to the south. And we will continue—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —to make sure that that is the case.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Lindsey: Last week, and again today, this minister said that the transportation method is chosen by the doctor. But we know that this government is forcing doctors to choose the bottom line over patient safety.

The same freedom of information request shows that the NRHA was forced to find an additional \$450,000 in savings from the Northern Patient Transportation Program by making it harder for northern Manitoba patients to get escorts.

Madam Speaker, this is direct political interference by this government, by this minister, by this Premier (Mr. Pallister), into the accessibility of health care for northern Manitobans.

Will the minister retract the false information he's put on the record, reverse his cuts and stop interfering in northern patient transportation?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, today, a noted reporter in Manitoba wrote the following. He said the problem with the opposition NDP is they still can't get past the false notion that the only way to improve public services is to throw more money at it. Those were the—it was the approach of the NDP for 17 and a half years, and it's an approach that failed miserably.

Madam Speaker, we are a government that is determined to make a transformation in health care. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Why? To get better patient outcomes, to make sure that we have stronger health-care provision for Manitobans today and long into the future. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: And he can be assured that that is exactly the agenda we said we're on, it's exactly the agenda we intend to complete.

**Inuit Art Centre
Funding Announcement**

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): Our government has made significant investments in the arts and culture in our province. This, as we continue to fix the finances, repair the services and rebuild our economy. In fact, we have increased investment to the Winnipeg Art Gallery's Inuit Art Centre, for a total contribution of up to \$15 million.

This funding will inspire a greater understanding of northern art and culture while serving as an important resource to our community.

* (14:20)

Can the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage please provide us an update on this very important project?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I'd like to thank the member from Southdale for that absolutely delightful question.

Our government is very proud to be investing in the arts and culture, and I was very pleased, actually, earlier this year to be able to join our Premier (Mr. Pallister) at the announcement at the Inuit Art Centre to announce a \$15-million investment in the Inuit Art Centre.

For 17 years the NDP government ignored our arts and culture sector, Madam Speaker, and our government is putting Manitoba on the map. The Inuit Art Centre will host—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mrs. Cox: —the world's largest public—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cox: —collection of Inuit art.

And I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that the piles are in the ground and construction has started, and I am so proud to be able to announce that in 2020 we will have the Inuit Art Centre opened here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

**Fisheries Management
Lake Winnipeg ECO Certification**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I table graphs which show the declining commercial harvest of walleye on Lake Winnipeg and the increasing proportion of small walleye. The small walleye caught are not mature, and only half the female-sized walleye are mature.

As a 2011 quota task force review says: Ideally, one to two years of maturity should pass before the fish become vulnerable to the fishery. But in Manitoba this year, about 80 per cent of the fish being caught were immature. Catching young fish is putting the Lake Winnipeg walleye fishery in danger.

To ensure better management of the fishery, I ask the minister: When will she have the ECO certification of the fishery of Lake Winnipeg completed?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): I want to thank the member opposite for a question about the sustainability of our fisheries, which is something that our government takes very seriously.

The former minister of Sustainable Development had moved on mesh sizes, and we are working towards ensuring that we do have sustainable fisheries and that our fish stocks are well-maintained for now and future generations of fishery.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, it is not just walleye that are threatened. The sauger population is in grave danger, as this 'papel'—paper I table shows. Under the NDP the sauger were extirpated in Lake Manitoba in 2007. In Lake Winnipeg, 'sauga', an important fish, has declined 96—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —per cent.

I ask the minister: Is her Conservative government going to be like the NDP and have sauger extirpated from Lake Winnipeg on her watch, or is she going to deliver, as soon as possible, a recovery plan for Lake Winnipeg sauger and move rapidly to ECO certify the Lake Winnipeg fishery to save the sauger and the walleye in the lake?

Ms. Squires: Well, I can assure the member opposite that we will not do like the NDP and ignore

the science when it comes to our fisheries and the sustainability of our fisheries.

However, I can also assure the member that catches on the lake are very seasonal and weather dependent, and there are certain datasets that are showing that sauger catches have been increased on certain areas of the lake. We're looking at all the data and making decisions based on the best interest of the fish in our lakes.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Gerrard: I have reviewed the science on the sauger, and they are in dire straits. In October 2016, the former minister of fisheries said of ECO certification: We'd like to have it done sooner rather than later. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: In May of this year, the current minister, when asked about ECO certification, said: We're pursuing this with great excitement.

The mandate letter to the first minister of fisheries was to develop a credible strategy for fishery certification. The mandate letter to the second minister no longer has the word credible.

I ask the minister: When will she—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —implement ECO certification on Lake Winnipeg, and will it be a credible implementation? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Squires: While members opposite are busy counting the adjectives in my mandate letter, we're busy looking at the fisheries and ensuring that we have a sustainable fishery for all Manitobans.

We will not ignore the scientists like the former NDP government. We will not ignore international bodies who are talking about the sustainability of our fishery. We are taking action to ensure that we do have sustainable fisheries here in Manitoba.

Affordable Housing Units Maintenance Budget

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Thanks to the NDP there's been thousands of social and affordable housing units built here in Manitoba.

Unfortunately, under this government there's been zero social housing built. Making matters

even worse, they've cut funding to maintenance by 62 per cent, and I'll table pages from the annual reports from 2016 and 2018. By the end of March 31st, 2016, the—our NDP government spent 122—\$120 million on upgrades. This government, just \$42 million.

Why is this minister deferring these upgrades and putting the cost on necessary maintenance on the backs of Manitobans?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): Well, Madam Speaker, you know, I—we take the issue of affordable housing very seriously in Manitoba and, in fact, that's why the previous minister of Families announced more than 750 units—affordable housing units in Manitoba, more than 550—or almost 550 of which have already been built, delivered and are there for those Manitobans that need them.

Certainly, we know when it comes to affordability of housing, Rent Assist is a very important component of that and, in fact, we are helping almost more than 3,000 people more than the previous NDP government in Rent Assist in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we will take no lessons from members opposite.

Madam Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Seven Oaks General Hospital Emergency Room

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition as—is as follows:

(1) The provincial government has announced closures of three emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre in the city of Winnipeg, including closing down the emergency room at Seven Oaks General Hospital.

(2) The closures come on the heels of the closing of a nearby QuickCare clinic, as well as cancelled plans for ACCESS centres and personal-care homes, such as Park Manor, that would have provided important services for families and seniors in the area.

(3) The closures have left families and seniors in north Winnipeg without any point of contact with front-line health-care services and will result in them

having to travel 20 minutes or more to St. Boniface Hospital's emergency room or Health Sciences Centre's emergency room for emergency care.

(4) These cuts will place a heavy burden on the many seniors who live in north Winnipeg and visit the emergency rooms frequently, especially for those who are unable to drive or are low income.

(5) The provincial government has failed to consult with families and seniors in Winnipeg regarding the closure—closing of their emergency room or to consult with health officials or health-care workers at Seven Oaks to discuss how these closures would impact patients in advance of the announcement.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the decision to close Seven Oaks General Hospital's emergency room so that families and seniors in north Winnipeg and the surrounding areas have timely access to quality health-care services.

Signed by Connie Barkoun [*phonetic*], Florenza Marcia [*phonetic*], Raymond Palladou [*phonetic*] and many, many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

The honourable member for River Heights? No.

Concordia Hospital Emergency Room

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the reason—sorry, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government has announced the closures of three emergency rooms and an urgent-care centre in the city of Winnipeg, including closing down the emergency room at Concordia Hospital.

(2) The closures come on the heels of the closing of nearby—of a nearby QuickCare clinic, as well as cancelled plans for ACCESS centres and personal-care homes, such as Park Manor, that would have provided important services for families and seniors in the area.

(3) The closures have left families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg without any point of contact with front-line health-care services and will result in them

having to travel 20 minutes or more to St. Boniface Hospital's emergency room for emergency care.

(4) These cuts will place a heavy burden on the many seniors who live in northeast Winnipeg and visit the emergency room frequently, especially for those who are unable to drive or who are low income.

(5) The provincial government failed to consult with families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg regarding the closing of their emergency room or to consult with health officials and health-care workers at Concordia to discuss how this closure would impact patient care in advance of the announcement.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge—pardon me, Madam Speaker. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To urge the provincial government to reverse the decision to close Concordia Hospital's emergency room so that families and seniors in northeast Winnipeg and the surrounding areas have timely access to quality health-care services.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

Medical Laboratory Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly:

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provision of laboratory services to medical clinics and physicians' offices has been historically, and continues to be, a private-sector service.

It is vitally important that there be competition in laboratory services to allow medical clinics to seek solutions from more than one provider to control costs and to improve service for health professionals and patients.

Under the present provincial government, Dynacare, an Ontario-based subsidiary of a US company, has acquired Unicity labs, resulting in a monopoly situation for the provision of laboratory services in medical clinics and physicians' offices.

The creation of this monopoly has resulted in the closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in

and around the city of Winnipeg. Since the acquisition of Unicity labs, Dynacare has engaged in anti-competitive activities where it has changed the collection schedules of patients' specimens and charged some medical offices for collection services.

These closures have created a situation where a great number of patients are less well served, having to travel significant distances in some cases, waiting considerable periods of time and sometimes being denied or having to leave without obtaining lab services. This situation is particularly critical for patients requiring fasting blood draws, as they may experience complications that could be life-threatening based on their individual health situations.

Furthermore, Dynacare has instructed that all STATs patients, patients with suspicious internal infections, be directed to its King Edward location. This creates unnecessary obstacles for the patients who are required to travel to that lab, rather than simply completing the test in their doctor's office. The new directive by Dynacare presents a direct risk to patients' health in the interest of higher profits. This has further resulted in patients opting to visit emergency rooms rather than travelling twice, which increases cost to the health-care system.

Medical clinics and physicians' offices service thousands of patients in their communities and have structured their offices to provide a one-stop service, acting as a health-care front line that takes off some of the load from emergency rooms. The creation of this monopoly has been problematic to many medical clinics and physicians, hampering their ability to provide high-quality and complete service to their patients due to closures of so many laboratories.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to request Dynacare to reopen the closed laboratories or allow Diagnostic Services of Manitoba to freely open labs in clinics which formerly housed labs that have been shut down by Dynacare.

To urge the provincial government to ensure high-quality lab services for patients and a level playing field and competition in the provision of laboratory services to medical offices.

To urge the provincial government to address this matter immediately in the interest of better patient-focused care and improved support for health professionals.

Signed by Madeline Coopsammy, Florence Regalia [*phonetic*] and Elaine Zacharias and many more.

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Prior to announcing this afternoon's business, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Thursday, January 17th, 2019, at 1 p.m. to consider the Report and Recommendations of the Judicial Compensation Committee, dated May 23rd, 2018, and which was recently tabled on October 11th, 2018.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Thursday, January 17th, 2019, at 1 p.m. to consider the Report and Recommendations of the Judicial Compensation Committee, dated May 23rd, 2018, which was recently tabled on October 11th, 2018.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call, for this afternoon, the government motion dealing with the appointment of the Deputy Chairperson of the Committees of the Whole House, and following that, Bill 28, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider the government motion regarding the Deputy Chairperson of the Committees of the Whole House, followed by second reading of Bill 28 this afternoon.

GOVERNMENT MOTION

Madam Speaker: Moving, then, to the government motion.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen), that Andrew Micklefield, member for the electoral division of Rossmere, be Deputy Chairperson of the Committees of the Whole House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: This is a rather routine, although not frequent, matter in terms of appointing individuals to positions within the House. Of course, members opposite know well the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield). They know him as a distinguished parliamentarian, as a fair-minded individual, and I know that they will be very eager to support the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) as he takes on these new and important duties for all members of the Assembly, Madam Speaker.

* (14:40)

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Well, I'm pleased to put a couple of words on the record in respect of the government House motion in respect of the member for Rossmere to become the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole—Committees of the Whole—House—which is very good.

And I do want say, you know, the member for Rossmere and myself have had some pretty good conversations in the past, and I think that we've had some opportunities where we've been able to work together in a respectful manner. And I just want to say I lift that and I acknowledge that today, and so I do wish, if this motion goes through, I do wish you nothing but the best from my sincere—from you to me.

I'm really excited, during my time, Madam Speaker, to actually talk about committees. I think that committees are so important in this House and the Committee of the Whole—committees—that's a tricky one to say—Committees of the Whole House are obviously quite important and an 'intrical' part of the work that we do here as MLAs, as legislatures, and certainly a lot responsibility that the member for Rossmere is seeking right now.

So I think it is important that we, you know, touch base on committees, on the structure of committees, composition of committees, the purpose of committees. So I'm glad to see that I've got about 28 minutes to be able to do that, so I appreciate that time.

So, you know, if we look—committee membership and leadership and staff, Madam Speaker, to ensure the success of their work, committees count on the participation of their key players—in other words, their members.

Guidance of the work is mainly in the hands of its leadership, which in this case would be the member for Rossmere; that is, the Chair and the

Deputy Chair and the vice-chairs, if any, to assist committees in organizing and completing studies and projects.

Staff, also from the library, are made available to committees to be able to execute the really important work of this House. So I'm sure that the member of Rossmere will tap into those resources that are available to him as he executes—hopefully, as he executes his duties.

Certainly, Madam Speaker, you more than anyone are aware that the number of members vary depending on the type of committee. There are two basic types of members: regular members; and in the case of standing and standing joint committees, associate members—I think, I've never heard that, but.

So, if we look at what those are and what those two categories do—miigwech—the status of member of a committee is according to members of the House of Commons who belong officially to that committee. This status allows them to participate fully in their committee's proceedings. Members may move motions, vote and be counted for purposes of quorum. They may also submit notices of motion if their committee requires such notice.

Standing committees in the House of Commons also have associate members. Associate members may be named to subcommittees and may act as substitutes for regular committee members who are unable to attend a committee meeting. And, while associate members are serving on subcommittees or as substitutes for regular members, they also enjoy all the rights of regular members, Madam Speaker. They are counted for purposes of quorum; they may fully participate in debate and they may move motions and vote; the use of associate members on subcommittees help to reduce the workload of regular members.

Standing orders provide that any member, whether affiliated with a political party or sitting as an independent, may participate in public proceedings of any committee of which he or she or they is not a member, unless the House or the committee in question orders otherwise.

The standing order specifically exclude a non-member from voting when moving motions or being counted for the purposes of a quorum—excuse me, Madam Speaker.

Committees often adopt sessional orders that govern the granting of the right to speak in cases where witnesses are to be questioned. Consequently,

it is rare that a non-member is able to participate in such proceedings. Non-members are occasionally given the right to speak, however, following a decision by a majority of the members present or by unanimous consent.

Normally it excludes those who have parliamentary functions, like the Speaker, like yourself, Madam Speaker, or other Chair, ministers, including the prime—the Premier and the leaders of recognized parties. And they're normally appointed to standing committees that have a mandate in their area of responsibility.

Oh, sorry, Madam Speaker. I just realized I'm missing some of my notes here—sorry. I'm going to have to backtrack just a little bit. I apologize.

So, actually, sorry, I'm going to start again here. I was missing one of my notes here, one of my pages.

So establishing committee membership—*[interjection]* Yes, I've got it, sorry. Committees cannot take up the responsibilities assigned to them until their members have been named. It is members are—that are appointed and associate members of its committees, as well as members who will represent it on joint committees. The Speaker has a rule that this is a fundamental right of the House.

In the vast majority of cases, the House sets the number or maximum number of members for each committee. The numbers—the number of members to be selected from each of the recognized parties is subject to the negotiation among House leaders at the beginning of each session. The resulting informal agreement is what standing committees will adhere to.

The House has adopted committee membership mechanisms that enable it to rely largely on recognized political parties to prepare the lists of members. As a result, an independent member rarely sits on a committee unless a recognized political party allots him or her or they one of its seats.

Members may belong to more than one committee as either regular members. While no rule prevents any member from being named to a committee, current practice normally excludes those who have other functions, as I said previous, other Chairs, ministers, Premier.

And so—

Madam Speaker: I think I'll take—I'll take a moment—order, please. I'll take a moment here just to

remind members that the topic that is under discussion right now is Committees of the Whole House. So that is the Committee of the Whole and the Committee of Supply and it does not refer to standing committees of the House, so I will just ask members to keep their focus on that particular issue—appreciate that.

Ms. Fontaine: Okay. Miigwech, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that, keeping me a little bit more focused. I appreciate your recommendation or your advice or your expertise.

So I will talk about Committees of the Whole House. A Committee of the Whole House is the entire membership of the House of Commons sitting as a committee. Each time the House resolves its into—itsself into a Committee of the Whole to deliberate on a matter, a new committee is created. Once that committee has completed its business, it ceases to exist. Over the span of a session, many committees of the whole can be created on an ad hoc basis.

*(14:50)

A meeting of the Committee of the Whole is held in the Chamber itself and presided over by the Deputy Speaker as Chairman of Committees of the Whole or by deputy or assistant. Whoever is presiding sits at the table in the Clerk's chair.

While the function of the Committee of the Whole is deliberation, and unlike standing committees which have the authority to initiate studies concerning the House, a Committee of the Whole may only consider questions or bills which the House decides should be dealt with at that forum. At one time, the House sat frequently as a Committee of the Whole to examine Estimates, appropriation bills and all taxation bills in the committee stage.

In addition, many bills have received a second reading, were referred just to Committee of the Whole for consideration or review. And today, although standing orders will provide the Committee of the Whole to examine appropriation bills, and from time to time special order—by special order, unanimous consent, other bills which are referred to a Committee of the Whole for consideration, the House spends little time sitting as a Committee of the Whole. Indeed, the expeditious passage of legislation is now predominantly the reason for the House resolving into the Committee of the Whole.

Since the membership of the Committee of the Whole is identical to that of the House, one might

expect the rules in both forums to be the same. While there are similarities, the rules in a Committee of the Whole are less formal than those which apply when the House is in session and the Speaker is the Chair. For example, members may speak more than once on any item. And so this chapter will examine the role of Committees of the Whole and discuss the rules and procedures pertaining to proceedings in a Committee of the Whole.

So, if we go back a little bit, Madam Speaker, in history, just to look at—in Canada, the colonial legislatures generally modelled their procedures on those of the British House. The assemblies of Upper Canada and Lower Canada adopted in 1792 the British practice of resolving into a Committee of the Whole to consider legislation or procedural or constitutional matters. Nonetheless, the Upper Canada Assembly made wider use of its selective committee system than Great Britain at the time, and many bills were referred to selection-select committees after second reading.

Beginning in 1817, in Lower Canada, four committees whose membership was composed of all members were appointed at the commencement of each session and were directed by the Assembly to sit on certain days in each week. They were called, Madam Speaker, grand committees—for grievances, courts of justice, agriculture and commerce. And after 1840, after the union of Upper and Lower Canada, most of the parliamentary-parliamentary rules that had been in place in Lower Canada were adopted and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada continued to do significant part of its business in the Committee of the Whole.

At Confederation, Madam Speaker, in 1867, the House of Commons adopted the rules of the former Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, including the procedures and practices pertaining to Committees of the Whole. Thus, all matters affecting trade, taxation and the public revenue had to be first considered in the Committee of the Whole House before any resolution or bill could be passed in the House of Commons. Addresses to the Crown were also frequently founded in—on resolutions first considered in a Committee of the Whole.

So, from 1867 to 1968, quite a long time, there were three types of committees composed of membership of the Whole House: the Committee of Supply, the Committee of Ways and Means and Committees of the Whole House. The Committee of Supply would debate each request for Supply—so

Interim Supply, Main Estimates, Madam Speaker, and Supplementary Estimates. And they would do that item by item.

When that committee recommended to the House that the Supply requested be granted and the House had concurred, the members went into the Committee of Ways and Means. The Committee of Ways and Means would subsequently consider resolutions to authorize the expenditures of the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Once the resolutions were reported from the Committee of Ways and Means and concurred in by the House, an appropriation bill based on the resolutions would then be introduced into the House. The Committee of Ways and Means would also give preliminary authorization to taxation proposals outlined in the Minister of Finance's budget.

A Committee of the Whole would routinely debate resolutions preceding bills involving the expenditure of public monies. It would only debate on the advisability of the measure proposed, since the details of the bill would not yet be known. And, Madam Speaker, debate could be quite lengthy—I suggest similar to today, to the afternoon here.

After the resolution was approved, the House would proceed with the introduction of the first reading of the bill. A Committee of the Whole would also consider in detail most bills after second reading and other matters such as reports from committees appointed to review House rules and procedures and resolutions concerning international treaties and conventions, Madam Speaker.

Few government bills, typically non-contentious ones, Madam Speaker, were sent to standing or special committees for consideration. At that time, the work of standing and special committees was investigative, not legislative. Standing committees were not given the power to adopt clauses of the bill. After a standing committee or special committee had made its report, the proposed text of the bill had to be reconsidered again clause by clause in Committee of the Whole. It was the Committee of the Whole's report that the House concurred in at report stage.

Only minor changes to the Committee of the Whole proceedings were made during the first 100 years of Confederation, which I would agree is pretty—quite fascinating when you go back in history and understand the Committees of the Whole House. And—

An Honourable Member: Riveting.

Ms. Fontaine: It is riveting, like the member from Steinbach is saying. I'm absolutely enthralled in what we're discussing here.

In 1910, Madam Speaker, the House adopted rules codifying the requirement for relevance during debate in a Committee of the Whole and empowered the Chairman of Committees of the Whole House to direct a member who persisted in irrelevance or repetition to discontinue his or her or their speech, the rule being copied verbatim from the house—the British House of Commons rules.

* (15:00)

In 1955, the House adopted a committee report recommending restrictions on the length of debate in a Committee of the Whole and on the motion for the House to resolve into Committee of Supply.

And then, Madam Speaker, in October 1964, rules were adopted pertaining to the limitation of debate on a resolution proceeding bills involving the expenditure of public monies and to the rearrangement of the order of consideration—of a consideration of a bill in Committee of a Whole.

Then in 1968, a Special Committee appointed to revise the rules of the House criticized, among other things, Madam Speaker, the study of legislation in a Committee of the Whole. It argued that such studies were too cumbersome and too—and inefficient to handle the increased volume and complexity of legislation and public spending. The Special Committee recommended the elimination of the preliminary resolution stage in a Committees of the Whole for taxation bills, and the reference of all bills except those based in supply and ways and means motions to standing committees where the clause-by-clause could be meticulously examined.

It also recommended that bills referred to standing committees not be reconsidered in a Committee of the Whole, that bills considered in a Committee of the Whole not be debatable at 'resport' stage and that all speeches in that forum only be limited to 20 minutes. The House subsequently adopted new standing orders which implemented these recommendations, and so, in 1975 provisional amendments were made to the standing orders concerning supply proceedings whereby selected items in the Estimates could be withdrawn from standing committees and examined in a Committee of the Whole.

This provisional standard order—standing order, pardon me, Madam Speaker—was considered for the following session through agreement, but was not renewed thereafter. So changes to the Committee of the Whole procedures occurred again in 1985 when the House amended its standing orders provisionally to reflect a recommendation made by the standing committee on the reform of the House of Commons.

So the committee recommended that bills based on ways and means motions be referred to legislative committees established specifically to examine bills in detail, rather than a Committee of the Whole. Only bills based on a supply motion to concur in Estimates or Interim Supply would be referred to a Committee of the Whole. This change was adopted permanently in 1987, Madam Speaker. Today, any public bill except the one based on a supply motion is referred either to a standing, special or legislative committee.

And I—no doubt, Madam Speaker, I know that the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) is probably well—knows all of this, as he's going to be moving into this role. [*interjection*] Yes, it's important stuff that we share today and that we learn today in the House.

So, to continue, Madam Speaker, because I think it's important that we know everything and that the member for Rossmere has a good clear picture of the Committee of the Whole. So as you know, Committees of the Whole House are not chaired by the Speaker—yourself. Instead, it is chaired by a chairman of the Committees of the Whole—Chairperson, miigwech to the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) for correcting me. That was absolutely right, Chairperson, miigwech. I appreciate that. And in his or her or their absent, the Chair is taken by the Deputy Chairperson of the committees of the whole, which in this case, would be the member for Rossmere.

Alternatively, the Speaker—Madam Speaker, you may call on any member to chair the proceedings of—in a Committee of the Whole.

So, Madam Speaker, at the beginning of each Parliament—or session, the House selects from its members a Chairperson of committees of the whole who also acts as Deputy Speaker in the absent of the—absence of the Speaker.

The selection of the Chairperson of the—Chairpersons of the committees of the whole proceeds as follows: a member—usually the Prime Minister in this case—moves that a particular member

of the House be selected chairperson of the committees of the whole, the member proposed usually coming from the government side of the House, which, indeed, is the case today with the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield).

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The motion is moved following the Speaker's report to the House on the speech of the throne, which is different from what we're doing here today, obviously, and is often agreed to without discussion or dissent. But what we're proving in the House today is that there's lots of room for discussion in the House today for the motion in respect of the member for Rossmere to become the Deputy Chairperson.

So, to go on, a Deputy Chairperson may also be selected at this—in the same manner as the Chairperson, except that their terms of office are effective only for that session in which they are chosen. Standing orders empower the Chairperson of committees of the whole to maintain order and decorum in the committee—just as the Speaker does in the House—and to decide questions of order.

However, the Chairperson does not possess the authority to name a member and order him or her or they to withdraw from the Chamber for the remainder of the day. That power can only be exercised by the Speaker upon receiving a report from the Chairperson of the committees of the whole. Both the Deputy Chairperson and the assistant Deputy Chairperson of the committees of whole have the same powers as the Chairperson.

Members may appeal—sorry. Members may appeal a ruling of the Chairperson of the committees of the whole to the Speaker. Rulings of the Speaker ceased to be subject to an appeal of the House in 1965. After the Chairperson made a ruling, a member may rise on a point of order and appeal the ruling of the Speaker, as we have sometimes seen it done in the House here.

Such an appeal is not subject to debate. The Chairperson immediately leaves the chair at the table. The Chairperson stands in front of the Speaker's chair and reports the incident and the ruling which has been appealed to the Speaker. The Speaker may hear from other members on the matter before the ruling, as with all Speakers' rulings. After it has been delivered by the Speaker, there is no appeal, and no discussion is allowed.

Only on rare occasions has a Chairperson's ruling be—been overturned. Since the committee has not risen or reported progress as soon as the appeal proceedings have been completed, the Speaker leaves the chair; the mace is removed from the table, and the committee of the whole resumes its deliberations.

* (15:10)

So, Deputy Speaker, I'm glad that I was able to put a little bit of history on the committees of the whole house. I know that everybody was riveted by what I shared. I think it's important history for us to know. I know that I've actually learned quite a bit. And, as I said, I do like the—or the member for Rossmere. We've had some good conversations. He's even shared, you know, pictures of his family, and I appreciate that. I appreciate when you have an opportunity to get to know members a little bit more personally, and so I do wish the member that, if the motion passes, all the best.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

The honourable member for River Heights—*[interjection]*—or do? *[interjection]* Oh, the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Thank you very much, and this is, indeed, a very exciting afternoon, and I am much appreciative of the work that was done by our amazing House leader in laying out just a little bit of the history. And I do hope to touch on some of that, as well.

I heard her go back I think 18—in the 1800s, somewhere in the 19th century, at one point. I've got in my notes here 1376 as my earliest date. But we'll get to that in a little bit. So we do have a little bit of time this afternoon.

Now, I'm going to take a bit of a slightly different tact than my exalted House leader here—and maybe that's why she's the House leader and, you know, I'm at the—sometimes—I'm the deputy House leader—with a lot of help from my friends, as they say—because she does have that historical perspective. She does have that gravitas, that ability to speak to the history of this place and the ability to speak to the rules of this place in a way that commands our attention and commands respect. So she did an amazing job, I think, in laying that out.

I want to take a bit of a different tact because this is a very important role within the functioning of

this Legislature, and because of that I think it is something that we need to take very seriously.

Now, I notice that the Deputy Speaker was a little bit confused as to who to call on when members were standing up. And I think that was because he was looking over at the government side, looking for friends of the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) to stand up to put at least 30 minutes of words on the record in support of this motion. He was waiting for the caucus to stand up to say we support this member. We believe in this member. But I—we didn't see it. Now, I don't know what that means and I don't want to make any assumptions about what that means.

Now, we do have a process here where there is a vote. And, you know, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) was quite confident that this motion would at some point in the—you know, in the future—pass. I'm not quite as convinced as the member for St. Johns. I think if we had a secret ballot process in this Legislature, there might be a 'differetinc' outcome than we all expect. But, again, I'm not making any kind of assumptions about the relationship that the member for Rossmere has with his colleagues.

What I can speak to today is some concerns that I have, concerns that I think are valid and concerns that I want to make sure get on the record about this member's role that he hopes to take on in this Legislature because, as I said, it is a very important role.

Now, I—as I said, my first date that I had written down was 1376. Now, I don't need to start there. I think the member for St. Johns has given us a fairly good history lesson. But the reason I mention that particular date is because, from what I understand, that is the date that the first Speaker in the first Legislature in kind of the modern, you know, role that we would understand the Speaker to inhabit, would have been appointed.

And again, this is just to illustrate just how long-standing the tradition is of impartial arbiters of the legislative process that we have in our Westminster system. It is absolutely crucial that we have these impartial arbiters.

Now, I've had an opportunity to have experienced in this House three different Speakers. When I was first elected, the great George Hickes was the Speaker of this Legislature, and I only got to experience George in his role—Speaker Hickes, I

should say—in his role for a very short time. But I do believe that the—you know, in my short time that I've been elected, he really did set the standard in terms of, you know, how a Speaker can control the House, can make sure that he appears at all times impartial and how he has control over the House. And I think that that standard is something that every Speaker that has followed has struggled or has tried to attain. I shouldn't say struggle, because I do think that every Speaker has performed that duty admirably.

And that's what I wanted to convey here this afternoon, and that is is that while I got to—I've had experience now three speakers, again, Speaker Hickes, who, you know, it's great to hear when we—when there's a ruling from the Speaker and we hear his rulings referenced, it shows, you know, obviously, that that precedent that he set is something that we still follow yet today, followed by, of course, Speaker Reid, who also performed his duty well.

Now, and you know, again, we could talk about the nature and the tone that the Legislature took when Speaker Reid was in the chair versus Speaker Hickes, but certainly he was somebody that I think all members here would agree was somebody that was impartial. And, in fact, when, you know, when we did the election I remember this very clearly. We do elect the Speaker of this Chamber. It is done by secret ballot. Again, I'm—I would be happy to move a motion here this afternoon suggesting that we do a secret ballot on this particular role, and we can see what would happen, might be different candidates that come forward, but at that time I do remember that it was a non-partisan decision. It was a non-partisan selection, and that is true.

Every member of the Chamber was given an opportunity to make that—to have their own voice and every single member, I think, executed that role and we didn't know who the Speaker was going to be. It was actually a real surprise to find out how that would turn out.

But, you know—and that was exciting. That was part of the process; that was part of everybody having a stake in who that member would be. And, of course, as I said, Speaker Reid, who's also a friend of mine and somebody that I look up to, who I know has been a—was a great MLA and was a great Speaker, performed his duty, I think, in a way that I think made all of us believe that he was trying to be as impartial as he could.

The current Speaker—now, I will be very, very careful about talking about the current Speaker. So I will simply leave it at saying that I do believe that there would be nobody, no member of this House that would question the sincerity that the Speaker brings to her work. Now, you know, on a day-to-day basis there are rulings that, of course, you know we have the opportunity, as members of the opposition, or sometimes in government, even, to stand up and question the ruling, to challenge the ruling, is what the wording actually is, challenge the ruling of the Speaker and have a vote on that ruling. But that does not change the fact that I think every member believes that the Speaker is doing her very best to keep us in order and to perform her duties as she should, as an impartial agent in this Legislature.

So I've had that experience. I've seen those speakers and I've seen how they have executed their duties but, as I said, you know, we see these roles as being absolutely vital to how this place operates, and I've had only a very small taste of the importance of being a Chairperson in this Legislature. I did serve, when I was first elected, I guess maybe a year after I was elected, I was appointed as the—I was voted, actually—it was another election, another secret ballot, I think, if I remember it correctly, to be the caucus chair. And for anybody who's served in that role in this Chamber would know that the caucus chair role is sometimes a difficult one, but is one that is also important, to make sure that, you know, everybody's following, you know, the rules, is listening to one another. And it takes some judgment and some—sometimes quick thinking. Sometimes it takes some, you know, impartiality in terms of taking a position when it comes to what's being discussed around the caucus table.

So I served in that role and I think it did give me certain skills that I hope have served me, and not only in this place, but when I go out in the community, you know, I've been, from time to time, been asked to either serve in a—on a board or in a committee or actually chair those meetings, and that helps me in performing those duties I think well.

And I've taken those lessons that I've learned and I've now applied them in my current role as the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, again an important role that I think speaks to, you know, the specific role that we're talking about here this afternoon.

*(15:20)

I see our committee clerk has joined us here in the Legislature. I think I'm allowed to mention your absence or lack of absence. So it's good to see the committee clerk here, and they work so very hard, along with the members of that committee, to ensure that we fulfill the role in this Legislature, an important function that every member, I think, of this Legislature would agree is absolutely vital.

I also have had the opportunity—as the Deputy Chair who's presiding this afternoon would know—to do what he has done, and that is to chair committees here in this Legislature. And those are, you know, committees where public—the public is invited in to share their experience, share their stories, share their expertise, and those can sometimes be very difficult committees.

Those can be difficult processes. Not difficult in the sense of, you know, the importance of them or in our, you know, our duty to be there, to be present and to be listening, but difficult in that people bring, you know, sometimes raw emotions, sometimes, you know, very heartfelt presentations. And, you know—and I don't think we can underestimate how difficult it can be sometimes as a committee member to have, you know, one presenter after another, after another—in sequence—come up, give 10 minutes of their heartfelt experience—sometimes very eloquent, sometimes not, but always, you know—I think, Mr. Speaker—from the heart. And something that, you know, is there to present their point of view to the committee members.

And so as a committee Chair, in that circumstance, it is so very important to show that no matter what party you're from, you are there to listen; no matter what your opinion is of the bill that you're discussing, you are there to listen; you are there to be present; you're there to hear their concerns and to respond to them. So I've had those experiences. That's been my experience in—as a chair, but I haven't had the experience—I have to say—of fulfilling this particular role.

Now, I am a bit concerned. I'm just going to—just sort back up here.

I wish there was a question-and-answer period, and maybe we could move that motion as well. We could secret ballot question-and-answer period because I am a little bit concerned about the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk) and his role going forward, because I—we were in the Committee of the Whole yesterday, and I saw the

member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk) sitting in that chair and doing a very fine job of performing that task.

And all of a sudden we're—I hope we're not voting him out of a job. I see him still in the Deputy Chair—in the Deputy Speaker's chair, so I hope he's not going anywhere, he's not moving on to take on other roles in the Legislature, because he does a fine job. He does a great job being that impartial judge. And I've heard him, you know, and—you know, I don't want to put words in his mouth, but I have heard him reprimand members of his own party when they have been out of order, right?

I mean, this is the example; this could—you couldn't ask for a better example of somebody who is truly impartial. When he is able to take his members to task, when he's able to make members pay attention to the speaker, pay attention to the person who is in debate in the Legislature, he's done that many times. And sometimes he gets a little frustrated, I can see that, but I know that he performs that duty well.

In all of these ways, the Speaker—or in the case of a Committee of the Whole, the Chairperson, is absolutely vital. They are the guardian of the rights and privileges of the members in this Legislature. They have what's been called a—quote, great responsibility. And again, that goes back generations, goes back hundreds of years in this Legislature beyond.

They are the absolute last word, and this is why it is so absolutely crucial that we pick the right people, as a Legislature, to fulfill those roles because there are no appeals to their rulings. We—as I said, we have the opportunity to call for a vote to challenge the Chairperson's ruling, but we do not have an ability to change that ruling once it has been voted on.

So it's absolutely crucial that we get the right person, and this is where it brings me to the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield). And you know, this is where—again I think I—maybe I differ a little bit from my colleague, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine).

You know, I had an opportunity to work with the member for Rossmere before he was elected. When I was elected, we did have an opportunity. Our paths crossed just a few times before he was elected. He worked in the—he served in the role as—with a school in—that wasn't in my constituency, but, certainly,

there were lots of members of my constituency that were at his school.

And, I mean, besides that, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker—it's always an honour for us to go out and visit schools, to talk to them about—whether it's to students and to teachers about our role as an MLA, but more importantly, to work with them when projects come up, when different initiatives within the community are on the table. This was actually a great opportunity for me to meet with the member for Rossmere and members of his team to talk about the importance of projects going forward in our community, so I was happy to know the member for Rossmere.

And now, not say that I'm not happy to know the member for Rossmere now, but it—you know, things sort of started to change. Now, the member for Rossmere got elected, obviously got elected to a party that is on the opposite side of the House from me, but, you know, that doesn't in any way preclude us from being friends, or cordial at the very least, and, you know, I think members on all sides will agree that that's the nature of this place. Sometimes we spar here in the Legislature over issues that we feel passionately about, but when it comes to our meetings in the hallway or in the community, we are, you know, for the most part, very cordial, and that continues with the member for Rossmere.

Now, when he was elected, he came in, I think his first task, his first role in this Legislature was as House leader for the government. Now, those were heady days, Mr. Speaker. I remember, you know, coming in as a newly appointed critic for Health, no less, a brand new group of people—and not brand new, there were some folks that had been re-elected. But, you know, for the most part this Legislature was almost all new. New people, new experience that was coming in and we were all, kind of, learning as we went, and that went for the government as well as the opposition. But to have the member for Rossmere who had never held elected office, had never sat in this Legislature, maybe caught question period a couple times on TV, maybe sat in the gallery—I'm sure he went home and he read the parliamentary procedures book cover to cover, frontwards, backwards, over and over again. But to ask him to do that task without having any kind of experience, I will just say, it was quite a load of work that was given to this member. And it was—really, it was a difficult proposition, I'm sure, for him to navigate the rules, to understand the relationships and all of that. We still—I think every member of this House would

say there are still rules and procedures that they are looking to learn.

So he did that work, and I—again, I'm not going to comment on the—on how he performed that task. You know, given the circumstances, I think he did well. But—and he also fulfilled his role as a brand new MLA in this House, as the member representing the constituency of Rossmere. And in that role, he, you know, began the work of a backbench MLA, and that is, you know, kind of the, the yeoman's work of, you know, reading off the premier's script and following the speaking notes in front of you and making sure that you don't say anything that gets you in trouble—or more importantly, gets the premier in trouble. That was the work that the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) was performing, and he was doing that in, I think, a genuine manner.

Where things kind of went off the rails, Mr. Speaker, and this is the point of my speech here this afternoon, is that shortly after being elected this Premier (Mr. Pallister) shocked every single Manitoban—whether they voted for him or not—shocked them by saying that emergency rooms throughout the province would be shuttered. And this—specifically, of course, I'm referencing the hospital in my constituency, the Concordia Hospital emergency room. That was an absolute shock. Every single person that I've talked to, I say, well, did you know it was coming? They say, no. So this was, you know, solely dreamed up in the office of the Premier. And it was a shock to every single member of this Legislature, and I do believe it was a shock to this member for Rossmere.

* (15:30)

And when presented with that shock—now, I don't know what happened behind the scenes. This is—you know, there is a reason that there is confidentiality within caucus. I don't know how that conversation went down. I know how I reacted when presented with that. I know how member of—members of my family reacted. I know how members of my community reacted. And it was, you know, shock and anger. And the first thing that we wanted to do was speak up against this.

Now, the member for Rossmere had that opportunity. He had that opportunity to show true non-partisanship, to show that it didn't matter what his Premier said, it didn't matter what his caucus had decided, but to be that voice—to be that voice in his community, to actually stand up for the constituents

of Rossmere and to stand up and say that he was not going to go along with this plan, that he would stand against the closure of his community's emergency room—he had that opportunity. He did not take that.

And I think that was the ultimate test of this member's impartiality and his ability to be non-partisan. Because if he had taken that step, if he had shown that partisan, you know, politics, that party politics in this place wasn't as important as his community, he would know—he knows—he knocks on doors, I know he does. He goes out and he knocks on doors and he says, well, so any—*[interjection]*—there we go, door knocking's happening—he says, are there any issues that are of concern to you? And absolutely everybody says, yes, the Concordia Hospital. What's happening? Why is it closing? What is going on? And he knows that. But does he bring that concern here? No.

And, in fact, just the other day—now, this has happened many times, but just the other day when I thought maybe we were making a bit of a breakthrough, when members of the community had gone out, they had written hundreds of letters to this member, to many members in the northeast quadrant of the city, to the Health Minister, to the Premier, when they had risen up together with one voice saying that they would stand against this decision, I thought we were making progress. The member for Rossmere was given an opportunity in question period to ask a question to stand up for his community. And everybody, you know, sat here with bated breath, waiting for that member to say, you know what, this has gone too far, I need to stand with my community, I need to stand against this cut to health care in our community. But did he do that? No. He stood up, he picked up that note written in the Premier's office—maybe written by the Premier himself, and he read it verbatim, word for word, in this Chamber, standing up, standing with the government on a closure that his community clearly, clearly stands against.

It just shows that his impartiality can be questioned. And I do believe that there are members in this House that would question that impartiality. And, when it's so very important, as I said, to the functioning of this Legislature to have a member that sits in—either in that chair as Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole or that chair as the Speaker in this Legislature, that they take that responsibility seriously, that they show themselves to be above this partisan politics.

I don't think that the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) has met that test. I'm concerned that when push comes to shove—which it often does in this Legislature because we cannot forget that when the Speaker makes a ruling in this place, when the Chairperson makes a ruling in this place, you know, we hope that they're being impartial. We hope that they're doing their best to stand up to the forces in this place. But it's not easy. It's not easy. It's not easy to ignore when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) looks over at you and gives you a certain look or when a member from the—from one side or another says something that questions your judgment in this place.

I've seen it before. I've seen Speakers be intimidated by members in this Chamber. And that's not what we want. We want a member who can stand independently, can stand as—on their own. We need a Chairperson who can do the same in the Committee of the Whole. This is an absolutely crucial role for this Legislature. You know, I think that we need to weigh this option very carefully.

I will give an opportunity at the end of my 30 minutes for members of the government to stand up. Now, they don't have to go back to 1376; they can start, you know, maybe within the last 100 years, maybe even in the last 30 years, even in the last five years, because you'll find there have been a number of great Chairs and the speakers in this Legislature that have performed those duties without any question and have been examples of how to perform those duties.

I hope that every member of this Chamber will take that opportunity, will take that opportunity to stand up, to put 30 minutes of words on the record, at the least—at the least—because we can always ask for leave, and I'm sure some members would be eager to fill more than half an hour over there. *[interjection]* I—yes, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has pulled—has been able to pull that off a time or two. I think he could fill an afternoon with the importance of this role.

Now, whether he wanted to pass judgment on his colleague, that might probably not be something that he would want to do publicly, but I could imagine that he could fill an afternoon with the importance of this role and how important it is to have the kind of calibre of candidate for this role that we all expect and that we all deserve as legislators.

Now I will, as I said, I will give some time to others in this Chamber to give some—put some words on the record.

But, first, as the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) reminded me—I don't want to leave anything out. I've got pages and pages and pages of notes—not written by the Premier, I can assure you that—but I do have notes that speak to the importance of this role.

I do think that the member for Rossmere, I don't want to question his duty or his role in his representation of his community. That's for him to have a discussion with his constituents about and, of course, that will play itself out over the next couple of years. What I think is important—so that is a separate issue and an issue, again, that I think all of us need to pay special or close attention to.

What I think is most important for the business of this afternoon is to speak to the importance of the role for which this member has put himself forward.

So I just wanted to read just a little bit more into the record as my colleague did—from St. Johns. She did a great job, but I just wanted to emphasize just a couple of other pieces.

So, again, the impartiality of the Chair here, and I'm quoting, Mr. Speaker: When in the Chair the Speaker embodies the power and authority of the office, strengthened by rule and precedents. He or she must at all times show and be seen to show the impartiality required to sustain the trust and goodwill of the House.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of presentation—so it speaks to not only being impartial, but being—but appearing to be impartial, and that's where I think we need to pay special attention this afternoon, to that, not only the impartiality, but being seen to be impartial, and that is important—sorry—it's required to sustain the trust and goodwill of the House.

The actions of the Speaker may not be criticized in debate or by means except by way of substantive motion. Such motions have been moved against the Speaker or other presiding officers on extremely rare occasions.

Madam Speaker—or Mr. Speaker, my apologies—in the same vein, the role of the Chairs is also key, and that is also a quote directly from the House of Commons Procedure and Practice. The Chair—I quote here: The Chair is a key figure on any committee. Chairs are so important that when a committee does not have one it is not considered properly constituted. It can undertake no work or other activities, cannot exercise any of its powers.

I think every member of this House wants to ensure that whoever occupies that chair, whoever becomes the Chair of the Committee of the House—and again, I'd be happy to move that motion. If we want, we can open this up to secret ballot. We can make sure that every person who is interested in this position has a chance to put their name forward. But—we'd—be happy to do that here this afternoon. I would be curious to see how many votes the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) has.

* (15:40)

I think we're going to have an opportunity at some point, after every member of this House has had at least 30 minutes to talk about this issue, we may have an opportunity to put on the record exactly where we stand and where we vote on this appointment.

I think members of this House will not be surprised by our position, and that is that we need somebody who needs to be completely impartial, needs to be somebody that is willing to stand up to this Premier (Mr. Pallister)—stand up to the government if need be—in order to make sure that other interests are carried out.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that we have the right candidate here, but I do look forward to hearing other words on the record by all members of this House, and I look forward to the rest of the afternoon.

Thank you—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

An Honourable Member: You win.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I will be brief, and then you'll have lots of time.

I rise to indicate that from a Manitoba Liberal perspective, that we support this motion and we look forward to working with the MLA for Rossmere and—when he is chosen.

Thank you.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Well that'll be a hard act to follow, that extensive presentation on parliamentary history and the merits of the individual who has been put forward for this important position. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will endeavour to do my best.

I am not as quick to offer carte-blanche support for the government's motion, and not just because I am generally a little suspicious of this government's motions. But I think a review of the role of the position involved, Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole, is in order so that we can understand as elected officials, the nature of this position, its historical context, and then talk about the—what the job actually means, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I was very honoured—as I say at the outset, I was very honoured when we were in office to spend many years fulfilling this exact same role, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sitting in the same chair as you do now, the Speaker's chair here in this historic and gorgeous Legislative Chamber at the Manitoba Legislature. A little later on in my presentation, I will share a few of the observations that I would make looking back on my time playing this important part in the operation of government.

But first I think it's important to—as I said at the outset—understand a bit more about the historical context of the Committee of the Whole, where it comes from and how it fits into the fabric of our work down here at the Manitoba Legislature.

And I'll be quoting from a document here which is talking about the role that the Committee of the Whole plays, and I'll start with a brief excerpt. It says, quote: A committee of the whole is the entire membership of the House sitting as a committee. Each time the House resolves itself into a committee of the whole to deliberate on a specific matter, a new committee is literally created. Once that committee is completed its business, it ceases to exist and over the span of a single session, many committees of the whole can be created on an ad hoc basis.

And I start with that because it's important to realize that a Committee of the Whole is functionally a different creature than standing committees. And this point was brought home to me quite recently, as there were dozens and dozens of my constituents who were very concerned and, some cases, outraged—justifiably so—about this government's handling of climate change and the Bill 16 legislation that just came forward. And they were contacting my office asking, you know, how do I present to the standing committee, and who are the members of this standing committee? And I had to explain to them that, provincially, the roles of a standing committee are different here than they are federally, just as the use of the Committee of the Whole has its differences as well. For instance, if this

motion passes, the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) will become the more or less permanent Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole, whereas with standing committees, as we all know, the Chair of those committees can change much more frequently as, indeed, can the membership of the committees themselves and the Cabinet ministers who happen to be sitting around the table will be different from one day to the next, depending on which department is being considered, which piece of legislation is before the House.

So that is a fundamentally different process than how committees are often viewed by the public when they hear about the work happening in Ottawa at the federal level where you would have a permanent committee Chair, you would have members of committees that are also permanent, appointed by their party. Here, membership of committees at the provincial level is much more fluid and that suits our purpose. It's not that this approach is better or worse than the federal one; it is distinct, it is its own creature and it's important to note that early on.

Also important to note and, again, I want to quote from the document here, quote: The rules in a Committee of the Whole are less formal than those which apply when the House is in session and the Speaker is in the chair. And, for example, members may speak more than once on any item. End quote.

And that's an important distinction as well. There are a limited number of opportunities in a normal course of debate where an MLA can express their points of view. For instance, today, if, when I finish my presentation, my contribution, to this debate today, if someone subsequently gets up and raises some interesting points or puts some information on the record that I think needs to be countered, then I don't have the ability to do that; I can just speak to this motion once. In a Committee of the Whole, however, there's a much more informal opportunity for dialogue and individual MLAs can speak to motions multiple times, and, indeed, several members of the Legislative Chamber who have spoken at length over and over and over again at various points of time in the Committee of the Whole.

So we have an important role that we've established so far in this. We've established that it is a bit—it is more informal, and that means, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is an opportunity for a less partisan type of dialogue to take place and for a more productive conversation and discussion of the

important issues of the day that can happen at the Committee of the Whole.

Also, just to give some background on this, this is not a reason to rival, to Canadian parliamentary practice. I'll quote again from the document: In Canada, the colonial legislatures generally modelled their procedures on those of the British House. The assemblies of Upper Canada and Lower Canada adopted, in 1792, the British practice of resolving into a Committee of the Whole to consider legislation or procedural and constitutional matters. Nonetheless, the Upper Canada Assembly made wider use of its select committee system than Great Britain at the time and many bills were referred to select committees after second reading, and beginning in 1817, in Lower Canada, four committees, whose membership was composed of all members, were appointed at the commencement of each session and were directed by the Assembly to sit on certain days of the week.

And in 1840, after the union of Upper and Lower Canada, most of the parliamentary rules that had been in place in Lower Canada were adopted. And the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada continued to do a significant part of its business in Committees of the Whole. End quote.

* (15:50)

So, just to pause there briefly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this establishes that the Committee of the Whole is a practice that has been in place and, indeed, has played a prominent role in the functioning of democratic practice and parliamentary practice in Canada for a very long time. Indeed, the practice predates the official formation of our country.

And I'll resume quoting the document here, which picks up at Confederation. It says, and I quote, at Confederation in 1867, the House of Commons adopted the rules of the former legislative assembly of the Province of Canada, including the procedures and practices pertaining to committees of the whole. Thus, all matters affecting trade, taxation or the public revenue had to be first considered in a Committee of the Whole House before any resolution or bill could be passed by the House of Commons. Addresses to the Crown were also frequently founded on resolutions first considered in a Committee of the Whole. So this—end quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And this, again, just speaks to the long history of the Committee of the Whole in our practice, and some additional, important aspects of this is that—whereas the Speaker would normally be presiding over matters when we debate them here in the Chamber or, in some instances, the Deputy Speaker would take their place in doing so, the Committee of the Whole is specifically not chaired by the Speaker.

And, in Manitoba, of course, the Speaker is elected by the MLAs. Each of us has a secret ballot, as my colleague from Concordia just highlighted. That practice has not been extended to the selection of Deputy Chairs or the Committee of the Whole, and there are, indeed, additional MLAs who are then appointed, basically, by the governing party of the day into these roles with the governing party of the day using their majority in the House to be able to do so.

The—you know, usually what happens, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is after an election, MLAs interested in serving as Speaker will put their name forward. Or, in the case of a Speaker stepping down mid-term, the process can initiate then as well. And all MLAs have an opportunity to vote. And then once that has been decided, that MLA, of course, ceases to be a partisan participant in debate. They become objective; they are there to enforce the rules of the House. And a number of people are then subsequently appointed to adopt exactly the same behaviour, exactly the same manner and to have the same priorities of objectively refereeing, if you will, the debate that occurs.

Obviously, the Deputy Speaker is one of those, and the assistant Deputy Chairs of the Committee of the Whole also fall into that category. There's no vote for those individuals; it is done by appointment. And I suspect, though I don't know for certain, the reason why we now have this motion from the government today when, ordinarily, this would have all been taken care of after the election is due to the change in the Cabinet makeup of the government, with some—a new person being appointed who perhaps held this position previously. And so there's a vacancy, and now we need to fill that. And the basic authority of the Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole is to oversee and to chair meetings of the committee when it is deliberating matters sent for its consideration.

And, at this point, I want to just highlight and thank, once again, the enormously important role that members of the Clerk's office play in supporting

all MLAs in their roles as—when we are chairing committees.

Were it not for the clerks, I'm sure things would go sideways in here far more often, far more quickly and far more spectacularly than is otherwise the case. They are trained professionals. This is not an easy—I don't know if there is an easy version of democracy. The parliamentary one is most definitely not straightforward.

This is an area of expertise that takes a lot of patience, a lot of dedication, a lot of personal restraint when dealing with crazy ideas from various elected officials from time to time. I'm sure I have fallen into that category on occasion in my 15 years here.

But the clerks sit with the Chairs of the committee every time the Committee of the Whole meets, just as the clerks were there last week helping the Chairs of the standing committees deal with deliberations and the public's presentations during the government's portrayal of bills, just as the clerks are there to help you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to help the Speaker of the House rule on different matters that may appear.

So the clerks are a wonderful, wonderful resource. It's regrettable they don't get more recognition more often. I certainly very much appreciated and relied frequently on their advice to make sure that when I was serving in this role as Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole, that I did so in accordance with the rules, and that I did my level best to create as safe a space as I could for non-partisan considerations. *[interjection]*

Some of the—yes, some of the—my honourable colleague from—for Minto has just asked a very good question. You know, some of the bills that have come forward in these sessions, some of the items that had been considered, they can be incredibly contentious.

We can end up with hundreds and hundreds of citizens from Manitoba coming down here, to their absolute right—exercise their absolute right to speak for up to 10 minutes to the members of the committee, to share their views and hope that the governing party of the day follows the advice that the citizens have to offer, and or that the opposition parties are a respectful and supportive voice for the concerns of people that people are bringing down here.

It's not very often that you'll have hundreds and hundreds of people come to the Legislature because they like an idea. It's usually the ones, like Bill 16 on climate change, which will cause a lot of concern when this government has, you know, previously wiped out the lifelong investments that many families have made into the taxi industry through its legislation. You better believe there were hundreds of people—came down here to present.

When the government decided that they no longer wanted to have the legal requirement hanging over their heads that they inform citizens of what they were up to through community-published notices in community newspapers, well the community newspapers showed up in full force to educate this government, or attempt to educate this government, which is not known for listening—on the important role that they play in providing useful and much-needed information to the public.

When this government decided that local democracy in primarily rural Manitoba, as it pertains to expanded agricultural operations and the proposals that will come forward to a municipal council, this government's legislation wiped out the ability of citizens to seek an appeal.

But, if a proponent of expanding an agricultural operation didn't get their way at the local level, well, under this government's legislation, the proponent could appeal to another body under the Pallister government. Many, many people felt that that was patently undemocratic and patently unfair, and lo and behold, they come down to the Legislature to express their points of view.

* (16:00)

I think the first time I presented at a committee would have been more than a few years ago, and that was when this—the previous Conservative government, under Premier Filmon, was stealing the public telephone system from Manitobans. And I was one of hundreds of presenters talking about just how bad an idea that is.

And throughout all of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker—throughout all of this—it is the job of the Chairperson to maintain decorum, to make sure that everybody, whether you are a presenter, whether you are a minister, whether you are a premier, whether you are an official opposition critic—to make sure everyone is behaving in accordance to the rules of the House.

And this is where the question of the member for Rossmere's (Mr. Micklefield) suitability for the

role needs to be considered, because there will be instances, if he is successfully appointed to this role—I guarantee you there will be instances where his political partisan colleague, be it the—a Cabinet minister or a premier, is sitting right next to him, and that minister or that premier might be getting absolutely hammered by questions from presenters at the—at a committee, or, during the Estimates process, you have questions coming from opposition members.

This can happen depending on the skills, the abilities, the political moment involved. It can happen in any government department. It can happen in any circumstance, and it is going to be the MLA for Rossmere's job to make sure that he does absolutely nothing to unfairly tilt the process of that committee and its functioning and the operation and due diligence to the rules to help his colleague, which—you know, you could understand that this is someone, politically, that he's aligned with and that the Premier (Mr. Pallister), of course, has the ability to appoint various members or unappoint various members of his caucus to different roles.

But, when the MLA for Rossmere is serving as Chair of a committee, he must—absolutely must—uphold the rules of parliamentary tradition and make sure that, regardless of how uncomfortable the questions are, regardless of whether the minister or the Premier leans over and says, you know, can you take care of this for me, or can you make this go away, he has to say no. These are the rules of the House. This is what we have to abide by.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only reason, at the end of the day, why the previous Filmon Conservative government was able to privatize Manitoba telephone system is because the Speaker at the time broke that rule. She deliberately refused to recognize that a member of the then-opposition NDP was standing and awaiting their turn to contribute to the debate, and that is the only way that the Filmon government was able to move the legislation required to disband MTS through this House.

And that is consistently upheld as one of the worst violations of parliamentary tradition and practice in Manitoba's history. I learned about this in various circles, at conferences, and, indeed, it may have even come up in a question someone asked while I was being trained in the proper way to conduct oneself as a Chairperson for the role that is in question here.

And it is that objectivity that is just so absolutely essential. And there really is an opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the person appointed in this role to play a very important role in fostering a less partisan, more productive dialogue about the issues of the day.

And it's a shame that the general public hardly ever sees any of that type of behaviour. I mean, the only time the public will see us in action, most often, is not when we're co-operating and—or having a civilized conversation about how we're going to proceed with the business of the House; it'll be during question period. In fact, we don't usually even televise anything outside of question period. And, of course, in question period, it's the opposition of the day's job to critique the government, and it's the government of the day's job to—well, in this government's case, to ignore completely any of the issues that are being raised.

But an effective Chair can make sure that members of different parties are able to have a constructive conversation. And that was something that I always attempted to do when I was in this role, and the—as I mentioned earlier, the less formal format for the Committee of the Whole, in the way that it operates, I think lends itself to that. It would be helpful for us as members of the opposition, if there was anyone from government who was willing to stand up and put a few words on the record about the merits of the member for—

An Honourable Member: Rossmere.

Mr. Altemeyer: —Rossmere, thank you, the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield). As I mentioned earlier, there is no secret ballot here. It might be interesting, as my hard-working colleague from Concordia has suggested, if this were a secret ballot, same as the one which elected our Speaker. Would it be the MLA for Rossmere who would come out on top? We haven't heard anything from even the member for Rossmere, that I know of, on this front. None of his colleagues have jumped up to put any encouraging words on the record. And it would be, I think, useful, a useful contribution to the debate, to see if there's anyone in the government caucus who's prepared to say anything supportive of their colleague and the MLA for Rossmere, in his taking on this role.

The other aspect of chairing the—or serving as the Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole, functionally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what that amounts to primarily, or at least how it was when

our government was in office, was the duty to chair Estimates discussions when those happen each year as part of the budget process. And this is not something to be taken lightly. The Estimates process, of course, is but one of several stages a government must go through in order to pass its budget each year, and at the Estimates stage, each government department, one by one, will appear in the Committee of the Whole, and those meetings will be chaired by, usually, one of the Deputy Chairs of the Committee of the Whole.

So, when we have the Education Department come forward in the Estimates process, we are talking about a budget which is well over \$1 billion a year. That's just for K-to-12 education; for post-secondary education, it would be even more. With the government having merged those two, we're now looking at a multi-billion-dollar document and discussion. Health care, of course, would be many more billions of dollars above and beyond that. And the opposition of the day—and this is the key point, Mr. Deputy Speaker—the opposition of the day has every right to ask any question they like about any of the line items in that document. That is how an opposition holds a government accountable, learns more about what the government is doing, and I can't tell you the number of times that the ministers involved would quite clearly have been learning more about their department as well. They have their deputy ministers with them, their senior staff.

You know, as opposition critic, I've seen it on more than a few occasions where quite clearly the first or the second minister for Sustainable Development, under this government, has had no idea about the topic that I'm asking about, and they have had to consult with their senior staff to find out what the answer should be. Conversely, when I was chairing these meetings, when our political party was fortunate enough to be governing, there were lots of times where it was quite clear the opposition critic from the Conservatives had been sent to the committee room that afternoon with instructions to, you know, ask questions all day, and they had run out of material. They just had not prepared and did not make the most out of the opportunity that was available to them. And that's regrettable, but that's also democracy.

* (16:10)

Just because you show up doesn't mean you get your way. You have to win an argument and there's no requirement for a critic to have prepared properly

for an afternoon of discussion in Estimates. But each of these stages are very, very important to the functioning of our government, the functioning of our parliamentary approach. I am certainly open to suggestions on how these approaches can be improved.

I—quite clearly, in the brief history of the few things that I noted earlier in my speech, this process has evolved and it should continue to evolve so that it becomes even more effective, more democratic, more meaningful than it is right now. But the government has brought forward the name of someone to chair a very important part of our functioning down here. We've heard nothing from the government on why they've selected him or what particular guarantees we have that he will be objective, that he will ensure that all political party representation has the chance to ask their questions in a—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Well, thank you, Mr. Deputy Premier—Deputy Speaker.

Very pleased to speak to this resolution. I see a lot of perplexed and confused faces opposite. The member for St. James (Mr. Johnston) is, I'm sure, wondering what he's doing here listening to speeches on—especially when they got elected, they came in here and thought that their 40 seats that they won translated into the percentage of seats in the entire House gave them that same percentage of mailing budget, front-row seats, questions, speeches. Now, after two years, I think a lot of them are wondering, like, we worked hard to get elected, and this is what happened to us. We—in two years we don't get a chance to make a speech on anything?

So—but the question really is why the government has a resolution to—

An Honourable Member: A motion.

Mr. Maloway: —a motion to name the MLA for Rossmere as the vice-chair of the committee as a whole. And that's what the debate is about today and it's a very, very important debate. And I know there's many people on this side of the House who are looking forward to their 30-minute speeches on this matter. And—[interjection]

Well, they—there's always a possibility that someone will want to speak after me. But if I'm not

the—if I'm the only speaker left on this particular debate, I think you can prepare for 30 minutes.

Now, I do note that the motion here is to name the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) as the vice-chair of the Committee for the Whole. And he is a new member who's rising fast in that group. I mean, he—after six months, he was—he became the House leader over there. And just as quickly, he started to slide down again. But now I note he's rising again. And, if I had to give him some advice, it would that he may be not—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —here beyond two more years, given that the biggest issue in his constituency in northeast Winnipeg is the closure of the ER—Concordia ER—which he has said absolutely nothing about.

And I know in the mailboxes, you know, even today in my office a leaflet showed up. And I'm sure there will be some in his constituency, too, that fold open into a nice big sign: keep Concordia ER open. And there'll be popping up all through the—through northeast Winnipeg over the next little while.

The reality is that he is losing track of why he got elected in the first place. He did not get elected—I'm sure his constituents didn't think that—when they walked out to vote for him two years ago, that they were electing the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole. They were electing an MLA who was going to look up—look out for their interests in his constituency and for the best interests of those constituents. And—including things like hospital service in the Concordia ER.

And the question is, then, why is he so quiet? Why is the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski), the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) so quiet on this issue? And perhaps they think that it will be career-ending on their part to fight with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) on this very important issue in their constituency.

The member, I'm sure—I'm certain must have approached the Premier privately at some point in time and that might explain why he started to slide rather quickly. House leader one day, Cabinet minister one day, and all of a sudden, boom—out—just like that.

And the members—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —the members across the way are certainly feeling the heat on this issue—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maloway: —they are—their own members—you know, there are many, many people in northeast Winnipeg who have signs on their lawn, who are filling out our surveys, and they're saying, I voted Conservative. One of them told me he voted Conservative for 40 years and never again. As a matter of fact, this—one of them is related to the former Health minister, actually, very nice—very nice man.

But, to get back to the other fellow, he is a truck driver and he told me that he'd been voting Conservative for the last 40 years and he demanded his own sign, like he doesn't understand the concept that you make one and reproduce it, and the cost of a thousand of them is going to be relatively low, rather than just making one.

And he wanted me to make a special sign for him: I will never vote Conservative again. And he's right across from the golf course, in case the members want to find out where he is and try to talk him down, but he is not happy and he has been not happy now for a couple of years. And there are many, many more people like him.

So I'm trying to give the member some advice. You know, you can run with the herd if you want and you might be temporarily happy, but at the end of the day you're not going to be long-term happy because you're not going to have satisfied the needs of your constituents.

You know, you might make it to vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole, but when your party gets blown to bits in the next election, you're going to wonder, you know, what did I do—what did I do in the four years that I was there, you know. House leader one day, next day not. Then vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole, you know, then out the door, right, and that's what happens to all of us. That's what happens to all of us—that's what happens to all of us over time. It just takes longer for some of us.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And I know the members are going to be really excited about, you know, getting a candidate to run in Elmwood next time, and I welcome that challenge. I'm, in fact, getting ready for that, and—but the fact of the matter is—the fact of the matter is

that the committees for the whole House are—is—you know, it's a very important function of the legislative process and, yes, and I do want to read some of the history about the committees of the whole House for the members opposite who may not have been listening to some of the previous speakers. I note they're paying attention now.

So the Committee of the Whole is the entire membership of the House of Commons sitting as a committee. Each time the House resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole to deliberate on a specific matter, a new committee is created. Once that committee has completed the business, it ceases to exist, and over the span of a session, many Committees of the Whole can be created on an ad hoc basis.

A meeting of the Committee of the Whole is held in the Chamber itself and presided over by the Deputy Speaker as the Chairman of the Committee for the Whole, or by the Deputy Chairman or an assistant Deputy Chairman of the Committee of the Whole.

Now, the member for The Maples (Mr. Saran) was—did actually hold this position, but he's not able to speak on this motion today, you know, because he is sitting as an independent, so he is not in the speaking order, I guess, to get up, but I'm sure he would be thrilled to spend a—make a 30-minute speech on this matter, and he could probably give some good advice to the members of the House, too, as to how important the position is and what is involved in this particular position.

* (16:20)

Whoever is presiding sits at the table in the Clerk's chair while the Speaker's chair remains vacant. The mace is removed from the top of the table to signal that the House itself is no longer in session, and the mace rests on the lower brackets at the end of the table during the entire time that the House sits as a Committee of the Whole.

Now, mister—Madam Speaker, do you want more? Do you want to wrap it up or not? *[interjection]* Well, you know, I knew I could convince them sooner or later.

So, Madam Speaker, I know that members—you know, my colleagues on this side of the House and that side of the House would like to listen to, you know, more pages of the history of the committees of the whole House, but I would be prepared to defer to another day because tonight is, you know, a big night

for Halloween activities. And, you know, we're—we all have to deal with the—

An Honourable Member: No, we don't.

Mr. Maloway: Yes, we do—dealing with kids and Halloween evening.

So thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Oh.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I thought maybe NDP, they won't give me this chance and keep speaking up, but they ran out of the speakers, so I have to fill up that hole.

And at a Committee of the Whole—vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole, I think I'm really wondering why this motion has come forward. In the past, I think government normally appointed those positions, and they will be accepted, other than Speaker position. And vice—Deputy Speaker will be the Chair and other three people, usually, to be the vice-chair, and they been appointed by the—at that time premier.

And I remember when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) allotted—announced by name, I think nothing happened like that. That was good time then.

And so, speaking about the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), he's been appointed as vice-chair. I think he's a really reasonable guy. I saw him when he was House leader and also the House leader from the Elmwood. And I really appreciate being independent member, he gave me seventh question. And that seventh question was really great.

So I am—I think I am just praising the member for Rossmere and—because he's being appointed as vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole. And I think he will do good job. Therefore, we should not prolong this appointment. Actually, this appointment should not be even on the—should have a comment to the motion that could have been automatically appointed. And if it had been automatically appointed, then we will—would not be discussing this. And fortune—unfortunately, I won't be able to stand up by—even say a few words. But now—

An Honourable Member: Well, take your half hour.

Mr. Saran: —I cannot take even half hour. Problem is that there is some discrimination, like I don't have any speaker to write a speech for me.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would just urge the member that he needs to be relevant in his debate speaking to this particular motion and not speak about other issues related to House business or a rotation in speaking. That is irrelevant to this debate. The debate has to be specifically to this government motion, so I would ask the member to please stick to that topic.

Mr. Saran: Sorry, Madam Speaker. I think I got carried away a bit—other emotional issues.

But, excuse me, I think vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole is really important position. You have to be impartial, although you belong to the one party. But you have to be impartial. And being impartial, you have to check whether people who are asking questions, they are relevant—people who are answering questions, they are relevant. You have to also check on the minister's side, also on the member's side.

So it's a very important role. In this important role, we must have to have some person who is impartial—although politically we may have differences—but, in that chair, you must—have to be impartial and talk—think about, is that question irrelevant or not? Is that answer irrelevant or not? If that's not relevant, then that's not the—that position should not be considered really lightly. It's a very important position. An important position like vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole is for—is very important.

I won't go further than that, because everybody's looking at me, and they want me to sit down so they can go home and distribute their candies.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this very important matter, and I hope to be finished before the trick-or-treating begins in a few hours.

The—Madam Speaker, this is a—the member for Rossmere is someone who I can wholeheartedly support for the very important position as vice-chair for the Committee of the Whole. The member from Rossmere is—he's dedicated to the political process.

And I just want to make sure that we are clear on what we're talking about. I know the leader of the—the House leader of the opposition and other members have articulately put out the history of the Committee of the Whole and the importance of the committee. But I look across the aisle and past the

clerks, beyond to the government benches, and I think there might be some confusion about the Committee of the Whole.

An Honourable Member: They don't have a clue.

Mr. Fletcher: Well, I—my friend, former MP and MLA for Elmwood is—you know, is concerned, if that came over in the recording. But I just want to be very clear: the Committee of the Whole—we're talking about the Committee of the Whole. That is w-h-o-l-e. I fear that there may be some members in this place that would spell it h-o-l-e. And I just want to make sure that we're talking about two very different wholes.

The whole—the Committee of the Whole, in the parliamentary framework, is one that is critical to the functionality of the way the Legislature functions. And I would have been interested to hear the member from Rossmere in his critique of how the Committee of the Whole operates and also how the appointment occurred. It seems that an appointment like this could just happen at committee with unanimous consent.

* (16:30)

So, you know, there's important legislation that needs to be debated, and I'm sure that we could reflect on this or sort it out outside. I do appreciate the House leaders letting me know that this was coming forward. I appreciate that consultation, and I—again, I won't block the appointment. Though, ideally, I would have liked to have heard the member for Rossmere's (Mr. Micklefield) platform when he decided to run for or accept the position of vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole.

And what—maybe in discussing what a platform could've been, it would include that the members of the Chamber would elect the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole in a secret ballot, similar to the way we elect the Speaker.

The fact is that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) decides who will sit on these committees and who will not, on the government side, and what positions it will have. And perhaps the member of Rossmere would, if he had the opportunity to espouse on what his platform would have been if he was allowed to present his views on what enhancements or changes he would make as vice-president of—or vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole and perhaps it would include the election of the vice-chair to ensure that they have—that the vice-chair has the confidence of the House.

Now the member from Rossmere will have my—I'm fully confident that he will be able to execute the duties of vice-chair of Committee of the Whole, but it's always helpful to bring transparency, accountability in a secret ballot. A secret ballot, you know, this is—even when the government has long been a proponent of secret ballots, secret ballot voting when you're selecting the head of a union, for example. That seems we have the precedent of—in Ottawa, it's done by secret ballot for the Speaker, and the committees generally deal with electing the Chair and other positions.

Now the Committee of the Whole is unique, but the session is coming to an end in a few weeks, and to have this brought forward in this way raises issues around the efficiency of how this place works. And that is why it would've been really interesting to see what the member for Rossmere's platform would've been in regard to the process of Committee of the Whole. And if there was unanimous consent, I'd be happy to agree to have the member for Rossmere to speak on this, but I would reflect that during the Committee of the Whole, which is a very important position, and in fact, the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole often ends up being the Chair of the Committee of the Whole in the absence of the Chair.

Now, there was a Halloween-like comment from the opposite—from the government of a—that the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole is simply a heartbeat away from the Chair of the Committee of the Whole. Now, I know that in the spirit of Halloween, the government was being morbid and cynical and maybe trying to allude to the general horrors of human existence. As Thomas Hobbes once said, life is short, brutish and—I know brutal—something along those lines.

The only horror in Manitoba—really, it has nothing to do or compare with the rest of the world. Like, we do live in the best country and I think we would all agree that Manitoba's the best province in the best country in the best time in human history to be alive.

But the Committee of the Whole can lead to procedural horrors—

An Honourable Member: Nasty, brutish and short.

Mr. Fletcher: —and I've been corrected: nasty, brutish and short is Thomas Hobbes' quote. And I actually have an uncle named Thomas Hobbs, and—no relation: Thomas Hobbes is H-o-b-b-e-s, Uncle

Tom is H-o-b-b-s. But there is a truth in that on this Halloween evening.

But, while we're talking about procedure and the importance of the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole and what his platform could have been if he was allowed to present to the Chamber, perhaps in a speech, or I would have loved to have seen some brochures from the member in his campaign to become vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole. Perhaps there would be ads or commercials. The—there would be get out the vote, GOTV, using the lingo—to, you know, ensure that the integrity of the position would be maintained.

Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole does have, in all seriousness, some issues in how it operates, and I would be very interested in how the soon-to-be new Chair of the—vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole would like to deal with how, during the Committee of the Whole, it seems that the attention of the members is not fully present. In fact, there's often a lot of talking, and I bet some—on some of the motions, many of the MLAs may not even be aware of what they're agreeing to or not.

And when, in Committee of the Whole, there are circumstances that, rather than being called by riding, it is simply a number called. Like, you say, one, two, three, four, and if you get the majority, you pass the motion. The problem with that, of course, is there's no way for there to be scrutiny from the public when reading the Hansard afterwards to know if their MLA supported or didn't support a particular motion.

Perhaps the new vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole will bring forward some democratic reform to the Committee of the Whole which would include more transparent commentary on who's voting for what and when and maybe there could even be some freedom in the voting in Committee of the Whole.

We've seen, time and time again, in this place that every single vote, big or small, is whipped in this place. And I think all the parties may be guilty of that. I'll note that the freedom caucus in this place often votes in different directions on a variety of issues, as they—as it comes up, and that is, I think, a reflection of the belief of freedom of speech and freedom of thought and freedom of expression.

* (16:40)

And when you simply count the votes, there's no accountability. People—it's not clear who's voting for

what, and some of these bills are—*[interjection]* I hope the—there was a member that just coughed. I want to make sure that—the member was very polite, but there is no excuse for that member, but—I'm joking, of course, and I apologize immediately for that, and I'd like to get back to the main issue, which is the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole and what his platform could be for, what reforms he would bring forward to the Committee of the Whole as vice-chair, and perhaps one is to have these types of matters be decided at committee rather than using—in the Committee of the Whole or through unanimous consent rather than use the valuable time of this place. I wonder if there was a contest in the government benches for this position, if there was a secret ballot in the caucus or some sort of consensus.

I suspect that what occurred was what occurred with the carbon tax, which was the members in this place, all the MLAs, even the Cabinet ministers, all were very surprised to hear the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) flip-flop on the carbon tax, which, in the Committee of the Whole—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would ask the member to please remain relevant to the debate that is before us and not veer off into other topics that are irrelevant to this debate.

Mr. Fletcher: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I will endeavour to focus on the Committee of the Whole. I really appreciate the early irrelevant comments about the history of the Committee of the Whole, went back to the 17th century and moving forward to 1840, when the Province of Canada was constituted. I found it very relevant and informative that the members were reflecting on how the Committee of the Whole came to be. Now, I'm going to focus on the here and now and moving forward, but the comments made previously were very relevant to this very important item.

Now, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole and then, by extension, has already been noted, a heartbeat away, the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole could have a significant impact on the ability of this *[inaudible]* to do its work. Madam Speaker, the Chair, for example, makes—or the vice-chair makes—a determination of who is speaking and who is not speaking and identifying members, and it's important that the Chair, or the vice-chair acting as Chair in the Committee of the Whole, is on the ball so that members can be recognized, and I think that has not always been the case. And the problem when that happens is

members of the House don't necessarily get the opportunity to speak, and this is particularly detrimental to independent members, as the member from The Maples, I'm sure, talked about who—I had to say I was in a important meeting, so I missed a lot of what he had to say, but I would imagine it was something along the lines that in Committee of the Whole or other parts of the legislative process, as an independent, that he's democratically discriminated against.

Now, in the Committee of the Whole, the Speaker or the Chair has the ability to identify the individuals to speak. They have the ability to reflect—or make sure that there isn't debate or heckling, as little as possible. And I know this is a—the decorum in this place is an important issue for most members in this place. And the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole—or the Chair, for that matter—have a role to play in how Committee of the Whole operates.

And again, this is not whole w-h-o-l-e—oh, it is w-h-o-l-e; it's not h-o-l-e. And I know that is something that—I see that there's some members that are perhaps checking their spell-check on Google just to make sure that we're talking about the right kind of whole, and I can assure the members that I'm talking about the whole that starts with a W, not the hole that starts with an H.

The—and there's multiple meanings for the word hole in its own context, and you know, there's even songs about a hole, like the green grass grows all around, all around, green grass grows all around the hole in the ground, and that is not the kind of hole that we're talking about.

We're talking about Committee of the Whole, the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole. We're talking about how the process is conducted. We want to, perhaps, see what the member has to say about the democratic process of selecting the Chair, vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole, and maybe we can extend that to how caucuses and this place works in general.

The platform, I would hope, of the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole would include an acknowledgement that decorum in this place and heckling and—is not appropriate, that the role of the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole is very important, especially as was suggested by a government MLA, that the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole is one heartbeat away from being the Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

And, if that were to be the case, Madam Speaker, I wouldn't want us to have to go through this extensive process of selecting another vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole or a Chair of the Committee of the Whole, and I would hope that—or perhaps I suggest to the House leaders that one of the rule changes that they can consider is having the Chair or the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole to be selected in a different way, either more democratically and transparently or even through consent prior to the actual presentation of the member.

An Honourable Member: Well, some notice, too. There's no notice.

Mr. Fletcher: It's been noted by the member from Elmwood, actually, that there was no notice of this change. I actually have to say I was notified by the House leader, so it was on the Order Paper, but I did appreciate the House leader reaching out and, as he did, I'm certainly going to be supportive of this motion to appoint the new vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole, even though it seems reasonable that it could have been done just in a few weeks when the session turns over or through many other procedural methods.

* (16:50)

But, instead, we are here on Halloween, in the evening, talking about the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole and if he is appropriate for the role. And I say he is. He's very appropriate for the role of Committee of the Whole—spelt with a W—and I think we would be remiss to not support this appointment. However, it's how it happened, it's why it happened and, if it could happen in a better way, and if we had a platform or advertising or commercials, you know, pamphlets, or even a coffee and doughnut opportunity to discuss the platform of this member for the position of vice-chair of Committee of the Whole, we would have the opportunity to ask these questions and perhaps gain a unanimous consent long before it came to the House, because that's all it needs is a unanimous consent and the House can do, really, all that it needs to do in almost every situation.

Madam Speaker, the member from Rossmere is a committed and dedicated member of this establishment, and I hope he carries this through to ensure that the decorum in the Committee of the Whole is appropriate, that he allows the MLAs to be available to reflect on the various MLAs and, given the incremental increase in the salary of the

vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole, I hope that—and I think he will take the role with the seriousness it deserves and with the enthusiasm of a vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole.

And let me say it's sad to see the previous Chair—vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole, move on to other things. I hope that person, whoever it was, is able to fully embrace the new vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole and support the new vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole with undying loyalty and perseverance while, at the same time, embracing the reforms that I hope—we all, or many of us hope, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole—spelled with a W, will be able to improve how this place operates, and certainly I would hope that, when reflecting on the various resolutions of the Committee of the Whole, or the various items of supply, that the government will take it seriously and allow for proper debate, not for free votes around the caucus.

And, you know, I welcome the opportunity to ask for unanimous consent to have the member from Rossmere outline his platform and maybe any reforms that he has, or maybe this is an opportunity for the former vice-chair, whoever that is, or was, to reflect on the roles of the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole and what that individual is able to pass on to the new vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole and maybe even how to expedite the process so we are not talking about these types of issues when there are much more important issues coming—the Province needs to deal with, like in Committee of the Whole, Estimates, the amount of the government spending, you know, it could be billions of dollars, or the various flip-flops or the creation of a new creepy Crown corporation, and creepy is the right term on Halloween evening and, given the scope of the new Crown Corporation, Efficiency Manitoba, which—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order. The—I would ask the member once again to keep his comments relevant to this particular issue and not veer off into issues that are totally irrelevant to this particular government motion.

Mr. Fletcher: The history of the role, which the opposition House leader so eloquently began this debate, was very relevant and very important to the understanding of this role and the importance the role has, and certainly I look forward to the reforms or—that the new vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole will bring forward.

The—it's unfortunate we didn't have a opportunity to hear what the member was going to bring forward, as he was obviously a political appointee—I suppose that's true—at least in the small-P way. And in regard to the issue of the member, I wholeheartedly support the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) to be the vice-chair of the Committee of the Whole, and again, the whole we're talking about starts with W. And it is important that we all support the member for Rossmere in his role as vice-chair, and, heaven forbid, he's ever one heartbeat away, go—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Is it the—are there any other speakers on this motion? Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [Agreed]

Mr. Goertzen: Not to waste precious time, but with the three minutes that are left, would you call it 5 o'clock? Is there will of the House to call it 5 o'clock?

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea—no—oh, leave was denied to call it 5 o'clock. There was not unanimous consent.

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen).

Point of Order

Mr. Goertzen: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I think at this late hour, and given the significant debate that we had on appointing the member for Rossmere in the high position that he now holds, it would probably be fitting of the House to offer the member for Rossmere, as he assumes this high and important office, a round of significant applause and

wish him well as he takes on what can at times be a challenging position.

We all have entrusted him—and I've heard the words of wisdom from so many members who spoke so well of the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), and yet it's almost like a child leaving the house. You know, you wonder how they're going to do and you wish them all the best, but at some point you need to simply let go and to cast them into the world, knowing that they'll make their own mistakes and they'll find their own way.

But I simply wanted to rise on a point of order to offer the member our very best as he takes on this difficult position and to let him know we're never far away. And if he every simply wants to come and speak to us and ask us for advice, I'm sure the members opposite would feel the same way, that just because he's taken on a new position doesn't mean there would—that he shouldn't feel he could approach

us. It doesn't mean that we've somehow abandoned him in terms of the support that he might need in this particular position.

We are all, as an Assembly—and I'm sure, Madam Speaker, you would echo this as well—we are all here to support each other. We are all unified as legislators, not always on issues, but on the symbolic nature of the role that we do, and we all stand in unity with the member for Rossmere as he takes on this high and mighty office.

Madam Speaker: Although the sentiments of the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) are very nice, the honourable Government House Leader does not have a point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: And the hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 31, 2018

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