



**Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature**

**of the**

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey  
Speaker*



**Vol. LXXX No. 61A – 10 a.m., Tuesday, May 26, 2026**

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 26, 2026

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

**The 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, 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.

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Good morning, Honourable Speaker. Can you call, from 10 to 10:20 a.m., third reading of Bill 301, The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act; and from 10:20 a.m. to 11 a.m.—sorry, report stage amendments and third reading of Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act.

**The Speaker:** So it has been announced that we will now proceed to concurrence and third reading, from 10 a.m. 'til 10:20, of Bill 301, The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act; and then, at 10:20, we'll go to Bill 300, report stage amendments and concurrence and third reading for the remainder.

**CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS—  
PRIVATE BILLS**

**Bill 301—The Westminster United Church  
Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act**

**The Speaker:** So we will now go to Bill 301, concurrence and third reading.

**MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo):** I move, seconded by the MLA from Transcona, that Bill 301, The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for the third time and passed.

*Motion presented.*

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Transcona (MLA Corbett)—or, Tuxedo.

**MLA Compton:** I'm very excited to rise and put a few more words on the record for this third reading of this bill from the great people from Westminster United Church.

This bill makes practical updates to the governance of Westminster United Church Foundation. This is to ensure continuity and clarity in its leadership structure. It strengthens accountability by clearly outlining trustee succession and ensuring decisions can continue without disruption. The legislation also ensures that, if the foundation is ever dissolved, its assets will continue to serve the public good by being directed to registered charities.

This bill respects the long-standing history and legacy of Westminster United Church, while ensuring its foundation is equipped to operate under modern governance standards. It supports the ongoing work of a community institution that has served Manitobans for generations through outreach, cultural programming and support for families.

Strong community organizations like churches play an essential role in building connected, resilient communities, and this legislation helps ensure that they can continue that work. This is about stewardship, making sure that resources are managed responsibly and continue to benefit Manitobans now and in the future. Our government is committed to working in partnership with community organizations

and ensuring that they have the tools and structures needed to succeed.

And just to refresh folks' memories, the changes that are officially being proposed are: the Westminster United Church Foundation 'incorporact'-incorporation act is amended if the immediate past chair position is vacant, the vice-chair of general board of Westminster United Church is to serve on the board of trustees; in addition, the foundation's assets are to be distributed to registered charities as determined by the board of trustees if the foundation is dissolved; whereas the Westminster United Church Foundation was incorporated by An Act to incorporate Westminster United Church Foundation in 1968; and whereas the corporation was continued by The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Act, updated in 1990; and whereas the corporation has presented a petition requesting the following amendments to the act, and it is appropriate to grant that petition.

So, Honourable Speaker, this legislation is about recognizing the long and important history of Westminster United Church in our province and ensuring that their legacy continues. Since opening its doors in 1912, Westminster has been a cornerstone of the Wolseley community, serving generations of Manitobans, not only as a place of worship, but as a gathering space for connection, culture and community life.

Its historic building, constructed from Manitoba Tyndall stone and designed in the late Gothic revival style, stands as a reminder of the role of community institutions—or a reminder of the role that community institutions have played in shaping Winnipeg's identity. But Westminster's legacy is not only found in its architecture, it is found in its people and its service. From hosting community events and musical performances to supporting families through initiatives like the Westminster Children's Care Centre, the church has consistently stepped up to meet the needs of the community around it.

This bill ensures that the Westminster United Church Foundation can continue that work well into the future with clear governance, strong accountability and a structure that reflects modern standards. It reflects a balanced approach respecting a proud history and long-standing tradition, while making practical updates that strengthen transparency and oversight. It is about continuity, making sure that the foundation's resources remain dedicated to charitable purposes and continue supporting Manitobans for

generations to come. This legislation also highlights the importance of strong partnerships between government and community organizations, ensuring they have the tools and support they need to thrive.

\* (10:10)

Honourable Speaker, this bill shows the importance of supporting community institutions so that they can grow, adapt and remain strong pillars in our communities. And after our unanimous passing of the second reading and a great standing committee that also had unanimous passing, I anticipate the member from Spruce Woods had very clearly expressed their full support. And I really hope that this Chamber can show how all sides can work together to support the good work of organizations like the Westminster United Church Foundation. They've been working for years for this update, so let's work together and pass it and support them in the good work that they do.

Thank you.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I will say thank you to the member from Tuxedo for bringing this important legislation forward.

I'm happy to stand here in this Chamber and put a few words on the record in relation to Bill 301, The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act. We all know that churches play an important part in many of our communities across our province and are an integral part to bringing faith forward and those that practice such, and bringing people together in times of celebration, in times of sorrow, loss—just a very strong important pillar in many communities.

And we can see that Bill 301 brings several amendments forward to the existing legislation of the Westminster church foundation. In it, it's the intent of modernizing government—or governance provisions and clarifying the procedures related to the foundation's operation and potential disillusion, or—yes. The proposed amendments are relatively narrow in scope, but they do address and bring forward practical governance that matters and are very important for organizations responsible for managing charitable assets and overseeing long-standing community foundations.

We see the first amendment dealing with succession and representation on the foundation's board of trustees, and we all know that it is important. Succession planning for any board or any organization is important and a key factor in planning

forward for any organization. Under the current structure, the immediate past chair serves on the board. Bill 301 would provide that in circumstances where the position of the immediate past chair is vacant, the vice-chair of the general board of Westminster United Church may instead serve on the foundation's board of trustees.

The amendment appears intended to provide continuity in governance and ensure that vacancies don't create challenges and barriers for the operation and organization of organizational practices of the board. A key component to boards that we all know is continuity. It's an important factor for any organization, particularly those that are entrusted with managing charitable donations and long-term financial stewardship.

Having flexibility within government structures can assist organizations in maintaining effective oversight and decision making during times of transition. Transition is another key factor that plays an important part in the success of any organization that is working towards making changes and being successful in doing so. Having proper people and stakeholders at the helm when making changes is a very important factor as well.

It goes on to make a second amendment related to the dissolution provisions of the foundation. Within Bill 301, it proposes that if the foundation were dissolved, any remaining assets after the payment of debts and liabilities would be distributed to registered charities as determined by the board of trustees. And, again, this amendment is important and one that provides additional clarity regarding the treatment of these charitable assets and establishes framework to ensure the remaining resources continue to be directed toward charitable purposes. Provisions related to dissolution are important components of any legislation because they outline accountability and help ensure transparency regarding the handling of such assets.

People always want to know where assets are going and this, again, will allow for that transparency. The Westminster United Church Foundation is connected to the United Church in Winnipeg, which is also part of the church of Canada—United Church of Canada. The church itself has a long history within the community and is recognized for its historical and architectural significance.

Located in the Wolseley neighbourhood, the building was constructed between 1910 and 1912 and has served generations of Manitobans for over a century.

Like many charitable and faith-based organizations across our province, foundations associated with churches often play a role in supporting community initiatives, charitable activities, cultural events and local outreach efforts. These organizations frequently rely on volunteers, donors and community leadership to sustain their work over a period of time.

Bill 301 reflects a broader trend that is seen among many long-standing organizations and incorporated entities that periodically review and update their governing legislation to reflect current operational realities and governance practices. Over time, many organizations evolve, leadership structures change, and there's legislation that may require updating to address practical administrative issues that were not originally anticipated when it was first drafted. The amendments are administrative and the governance, focused in nature, provides, again, transparency and the accountability that the general public seeks.

We must also keep in mind and consider the changes that provide the clarity, improve the governance continuity and support the accountability. These, again, are important principles for any incorporation and charitable foundation that is looking to seek transition.

In this Chamber, we are occasionally asked to consider amendments to private or organization-specific legislation, in order to ensure that governing statutes remain functional and aligned with present-day practices. In many cases, these amendments are technical or administrative, like I've already highlighted, but they can still play an important part in supporting the effective operation of organizations within our communities.

The changes proposed in Bill 301 were brought forward, again, from the member from Tuxedo, on behalf of the foundation, and it appears to reflect the organization's desire to modernize certain governance provisions and clarify future procedures related to charitable asset management. More broadly, church groups, charitable and volunteer organizations continue to play an important role in communities throughout Manitoba. Whether through outreach initiatives, social supports, fundraising activities or community programming, many organizations contribute significant volunteer and resources toward supporting Manitobans.

This bill proposes those targeted amendments related to board succession and dissolution procedures

and I look forward to having this legislation come forward, and thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** No more speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 301, The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act.

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

### REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS— PRIVATE BILLS

#### Bill 300—The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act

**The Speaker:** As previously announced, then, we will now move on to report stage amendments, to Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act.

\* (10:20)

The first one is standing in the name of the honourable member for Riding Mountain, who will move report stage amendment No. 1.

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** I move, seconded by the MLA for Brandon West,

*THAT Bill 300 be amended in Clause 3 in the proposed subsection 22(2)*

*(a) by striking out "on website" in the section heading; and*

*(b) by adding "and in a newspaper with general circulation in the City of Winnipeg" after "website".*

#### **Motion presented.**

**Mr. Nesbitt:** I want to speak today to our Progressive Conservative amendment to Bill 30 and speak to the importance of public notices in newspapers. Even in the digital age, newspapers continue to play a vital role in informing the public, and public notices remain one of their most valuable services.

A public notice is an official announcement made by non-profits, governments, companies or individuals to inform citizens about issues that may affect them. These notices may include financial audit reports, legal announcements, property sales, court hearings, government tenders, name changes and public hearings. Publishing such information in newspapers ensures that it reaches a broad audience in a reliable and transparent manner.

One of the main reasons public notices are important is that they promote transparency and accountability. When governments and organizations publish notices openly, citizens become aware of decisions, policies and actions that could impact their lives. This helps prevent secrecy and corruption while encouraging public participation.

Public notices also protect citizens' rights. For example, if there is a legal dispute over land or property, a notice in a newspaper gives people the opportunity to respond or raise objections. Without such announcements, many individuals could lose their rights simply because they were not informed.

Another important benefit is accessibility. Newspapers are widely available and trusted by citizens of our communities, including people who may not have regular Internet access. Four out of five people in Canada—86 per cent, Honourable Speaker—read newspaper content each week and trust the content they read, regardless of format. Digital access has driven readership and provided new ways to access news and advertising. Public notices in newspapers therefore help bridge the information gap and ensure equal access to important updates.

Public notices in newspapers are more than just small advertisements. They are essential tools for communication, transparency and justice. They keep citizens informed, protect legal rights and strengthen democracy by ensuring that important information reaches the public.

Honourable Speaker, as a 40-year publisher of community newspapers in Manitoba, I'm very passionate about public notice and I truly believe that the proposal in Bill 300 to remove the requirement to publish the audited statements in a newspaper with general circulation in the city of Winnipeg is wrong. Therefore, I—this is the reason for this amendment today.

I would also expect that the—as the chair of the recent all-party committee on journalism, the sponsor of Bill 300, the MLA for St. Boniface, and his entire PC caucus will support this amendment that The Winnipeg Foundation must publish their audited statement in a newspaper with general circulation in the city of Winnipeg and also are able to publish it on a website.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is the amendment brought forward by the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) to move the report stage amendment clause No. 1.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**The Speaker:** The—all those in favour of the amendment, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** On division.

**The Speaker:** The motion is accordingly defeated, on division.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** We will now move on to the report stage amendment No. 2, brought forward by the honourable member for St. Boniface.

**MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface):** I move, seconded by the MLA for Burrows,

*THAT Bill 300 be amended in Clause 3 by replacing the proposed subsection 22(2) with the following:*

#### **Publishing audit information**

**22(2)** As soon as reasonably practicable after the audit is completed, the board must publish a summary of the financial statements and the auditor's opinion in respect of the financial statements on the Foundation's website or in a newspaper with general circulation in the City of Winnipeg, or both.

#### ***Motion presented.***

**MLA Loiselle:** It's a pleasure to speak on this amendment this morning.

First of all, I would like to share that—and be crystal clear on this—that this amendment was brought forth in consultation with The Winnipeg Foundation. The Winnipeg Foundation is Canada's first foundation, oldest foundation, dates back to 1921, has a long and rich history of supporting our communities.

I also want to be crystal clear that, on the NDP side, we support local journalism. We love local media. We love local papers. In the complex world of media as we know it, The Winnipeg Foundation wants to be more transparent, wants to be able to share its financials with more Manitobans, more Winnipeggers.

And it's our hope that The Winnipeg Foundation, moving forward, with the flexibility offered in this amendment, will do the right thing, will publish in more, perhaps, than one paper. My hope is that they publish not only in English papers but perhaps as well in French papers. And this amendment supports that flexibility.

So I'm hoping that all members today will vote for this amendment.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** First of all, I just want to say, hope is not a strategy. I think that the honourable member for St. Boniface understands that the amendment he's putting forward really wasn't necessary. Bill 300, as it was proposed, would—didn't restrict the foundation from advertising in newspapers. What it did, though, was remove the requirement.

And this amendment put forward by the member for St. Boniface is not necessary at all. Again, he is giving them the option of putting it on their website or spending some dollars and putting it in a newspaper as public notice. And so, again, he maintains he supports journalism here in Manitoba. I think, by supporting this amendment, it shows he doesn't.

I just want to put a few words on the record to recognize the extraordinary work of The Winnipeg Foundation and the important partnerships established under our former Progressive Conservative government. Our previous PC government demonstrated foresight, stewardship and a long-term vision for Manitoba by partnering with The Winnipeg Foundation to establish and administer several major trust initiatives that continue benefiting Manitobans today. These include the \$102-million Conservation Trust, the \$52-million GROW Trust, the Wetlands GROW Trust and the Manitoba Heritage Trust.

\* (10:30)

These partnerships have created lasting investments in environmental conservation, watershed protection, habitat restoration, heritage preservation and community development across Manitoba. Through these trusts, organizations throughout the province have been able to undertake meaningful

projects that improve water quality, conserve wild-life habitat, strengthen climate resilience, support museums and archives and preserve Manitoba's rich history for future generations.

The Conservation Trust, in particular, has supported projects that reduce flooding and drought impacts, improve soil health and enhance ecological sustainability across Manitoba's landscapes. Meanwhile, the Manitoba Heritage Trust has provided long-term sustainable support for museums, archives and heritage organizations in communities large and small throughout our province.

Honourable Speaker, since its founding in 1921, The Winnipeg Foundation has become a model of philanthropy and community leadership in Canada. It has distributed more than half a billion dollars in grants and continues to improve lives across Winnipeg and Manitoba every year.

For this reason, Honourable Speaker, I cannot support this amendment. I truly believe that the audited statement showing the public where the money is spent by the foundation, where the money's come in from, should be available to all Manitobans by public notice. So, therefore I will not be supporting this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** No further speakers?

So then the question before the House is the motion brought forward by the honourable member for St. Boniface, report stage amendment No. 2.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Speaker:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** On division.

**The Speaker:** The motion is accordingly passed, on division.

## CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PRIVATE BILLS (Continued)

### Bill 300—The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act

**The Speaker:** We will now move on to concurrence and third reading of Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act.

**MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface):** Je, avec l'appui de la députée de Transcona (DAL Corbett), propose [*I, seconded by the member for Transcona (MLA Corbett), move*] that Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation dénommée « The Winnipeg Foundation », reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, and sub-secondly amended, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

**The Speaker:** So it's been moved by the honourable member for St. Boniface, seconded by the honourable member for Transcona, that Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, and subsequently amended, be concurred in and be now read a third time and passed.

**MLA Loiselle:** First, I'd like to say that Bill 300 was brought forth in consultation with The Winnipeg Foundation. The Winnipeg Foundation has a long history of doing great work, not only in Winnipeg, but in surrounding areas. It dates back to 1921. The act has been amended many times since 1921.

And what The Winnipeg Foundation wants with this act is basically two things: first of all, to become as apolitical as possible by removing the mayor of the City of Winnipeg from their board. In doing so, it would allow for their board to become more transparent, more inclusive and achieve some of their goals in regards to involving more Winnipeggers from different cultural communities on their board. And, of course, the second part to this bill is allowing The Winnipeg Foundation greater flexibility when reporting their financials, both in a major Winnipeg paper and/or online.

It's my hope, and I do believe that hope, Honourable Speaker, when people are given the opportunity to do the right thing, when foundations are given the opportunity to do the right thing, in fact, do the right thing. It's up to us, sometimes, as politicians, to keep people, foundations, organizations, corporations accountable, but it is my hope that

The Winnipeg Foundation, in fact, does the right thing and publishes their financials not only in English papers in Winnipeg but also possibly in French papers as well, such as *La Liberté*.

So, Honourable Speaker, in closing, I hope that everyone is supportive of the great work that The Winnipeg Foundation does and is supportive of Bill 300.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** First, I, again, want to acknowledge the tremendous contribution that The Winnipeg Foundation has made to Winnipeg and Manitoba for more than a century. The foundation has supported countless charitable organizations, community projects, heritage initiatives, environmental programs and social services that improve the lives of Manitobans every day. Its reputation for stewardship and community leadership is well established and widely respected.

My concern today with Bill 300 is not with the foundation itself but with the principle of maintaining strong and accessible public transparency measures in legislation. Currently, section 22 of the act requires the foundation to publish a summary of its audited financial statements and the auditor's report in a newspaper with general circulation in the city of Winnipeg. Bill 300 proposes to remove that requirement and instead require the information to be published either in a newspaper or on the foundation's website.

Certainly, we recognize that communication methods have evolved and that digital publication is now an important and practical tool for public access. Posting audit information online may reduce costs and improve convenience for many people.

However, there's also great value in maintaining broader public notice requirements that ensure financial information is actively brought to the public rather than relying solely on individuals to seek it out online. Newspaper publication has traditionally served as one way of ensuring openness, visibility and accessibility to a wide audience, including Manitobans who may not regularly access information digitally, including seniors and lower income households who still rely on newspapers and traditional public notices to stay informed.

This is not about resisting modernization; it is about recognizing that accessibility means ensuring information reaches all members of the public, not only those who actively seek it out online.

That is why, this morning, I proposed a reasonable amendment that would have preserved the newspaper publication requirement alongside online publication, combining modernization with accountability and accessibility. Unfortunately, the government voted against that amendment.

Honourable Speaker, what makes this decision even more difficult to understand is the government's own rhetoric about supporting local journalism in Manitoba. Not long ago, members of this Legislature participated in hearings of the all-party committee on local journalism, where Manitobans and local media organizations raised serious concerns about the decline of community newspapers and the growing dominance of American tech giants like Google and Facebook over advertising revenues.

I, along with another member of our PC team, participated in these consultations and advocated strongly for Manitoba media outlets and community newspapers. But after those consultations were complete, we were entirely shut out of the drafting of the final report. We were not consulted, our recommendations were not included and our input was ignored. In fact, after seeing the final report that the government drafted behind closed doors without our involvement, we asked for our names to be removed from the document altogether.

Honourable Speaker, that says everything Manitobans need to know about this government's idea of consultation. The government called it an all-party process, but, apparently, only one party was actually allowed to shape the conclusions.

That is not collaboration. That is not transparency. And it is certainly not respect for the people who took the time—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

I'd ask the member to keep his comments relevant to what we're discussing here this morning.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** And yet, despite all this government's talk about supporting local journalism and buying local, this Bill 300 removes one more requirement for public information to appear in Manitoba newspapers.

At the same time, this government has refused to disclose how much taxpayer advertising money is being spent with Facebook and Google rather than Manitoba media outlets. Manitobans are hearing one message from this government about supporting local journalism while their actions with Bill 300 this morning tell another story entirely. If local newspapers

matter, and they do, then public notice requirements still matter as well.

\* (10:40)

Community newspapers remain an important source of trusted information all across our province. They help ensure transparency is visible, accessible and placed directly in front of the public. Again, I disagree with the member from St. Boniface; hope is not a strategy. That's why we produce legislation in this House, Honourable Speaker. For these reasons above, I believe that maintaining the newspaper requirement remains an—publication requirement remains an important and worthwhile public accountability measure.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** No further members wishing to—the honourable member for Midland.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I do 'appreciate' the opportunity this morning to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act. And I am pleased to stand today and speak to this bill. And mostly I want to talk about the important role that The Winnipeg Foundation has played and continues to play in supporting communities across our province, and not just the city of Winnipeg, but rural communities as well.

And, you know, on this side of the House—and we speak about it quite regularly, if not daily—we do support wise fiscal management, responsible stewardship, thoughtful planning and a clear vision for the future of our province. And in many respects, this is exactly what The Winnipeg Foundation represents. It is about careful stewardship of resources and long-term planning and reinvesting those resources back into the community so that the benefits are felt by Manitobans for generations to come.

So I do want to acknowledge the team at The Winnipeg Foundation and also the board of directors that put in countless and countless efforts, whether that's through grant programming, outreach capabilities and other resources and support that they do within Winnipeg and the surrounding communities. And I know that their efforts do not go unnoticed and appreciate everything that those at The Winnipeg Foundation do for our community and our province as a whole.

And The Winnipeg Foundation is an institution with a long and important history in Manitoba. It is Canada's very first community foundation. It was

established in 1921, and for more than a century has brought together donations, built endowments and help support charitable initiatives that strengthen the community. And now we've seen many more community foundations that have come to be across the province and across the country as well.

Certainly, in my riding of Midland, we have three different community foundations: the Miami community foundation, the Morris community foundation and the Carman and area community foundation. And so I know first-hand the important work that our community foundations do in supporting local projects. And those local projects can be as small as some green spaces or beautification of a park, to as large as a major capital investment.

So what community foundations do through their grants is—it really broadens out and gives various groups and organizations and projects the ability to receive some funding, no matter how small or how large. And that's one of the great things that community foundations really do, is supporting those needs of the community.

In 2023 alone, The Winnipeg Foundation received more than \$46.6 million in grants and distributed \$85.6 million to the community, demonstrating both the generosity of donors and the significant impact the organization continues to have. And I do want to acknowledge that community foundations like The Winnipeg Foundation and other community foundations across the province would not be possible without the incredible donors. In looking at The Winnipeg Foundation, for example, generational trusts that have been held by The Winnipeg Foundation that continue to grow over time and support important organizations and organizations that desperately need funding and resources. And that's one of the great things that our foundations do. And while those donations grow in time throughout those trusts, they do exist sometimes by generations.

As mentioned, The Winnipeg Foundation was first opened in 1921, and—you know, over 100 years ago. And so I think it's important to recognize that it is a significant staple within our community and our province, and the organizations and the projects that it has supported over that significant period of time should not be—go—should not go unnoticed. And a big part of that is—and thanks to the donors that we have here in Manitoba.

And the previous PC government, we recognize the value and establish strong partnerships with The Winnipeg Foundation through several trusts

designed to support and conserve Manitoba's heritage and natural resources. And those decisions reflected an understanding that lasting institutions do matter and that well-managed endowments can provide stable and long-term support for priorities that are important to Manitobans.

In 2018, the PC government also partnered again with The Winnipeg Foundation to administer the Manitoba Heritage Trust Program, which provides support for museums, archives and heritage organizations across Manitoba. And what that program did is it created long-term, sustainable sources of revenue for organizations that preserve our history, protect important records and keep Manitoba's heritage alive for future generations.

Also in 2018, the former PC government established a \$102-million conservation trust that was held by The Winnipeg Foundation as part of Manitoba's Climate and Green Plan. And that trust was created to fund activities to promote—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

If I could get the honourable member to bring her comments back to the thing that we're here this morning to discuss, that would be greatly appreciated.

**Mrs. Stone:** I was going through a bit of the history as to why The Winnipeg Foundation is so important, which lends us here to the bill that we are speaking about today.

In 2019, the PCs established a second trust for conservation purposes, the \$52-million GROW Trust, GRowing Outcomes in Watersheds, which was there to support the Province's water-based—watershed-based conservation initiative.

So what these initiatives do is they reflect the very purpose of The Winnipeg Foundation. It's an institution built by the community and for the community, and demonstrates that when—that what can be achieved when long-term investments are made with the public good in mind. And this is why it was so important that the amendment that our PC team and my colleague, the MLA for Riding Mountain, brought forward today is the importance of keeping the public good in mind. And what his amendment did is it strengthened transparency and the ability for Manitobans to access critical information.

What this bill is doing is it's seeking to make changes to The Winnipeg Foundation Act by removing the requirement that the mayor of the City of Winnipeg must sit on the board of directors

and modernizes audit disclosure by requiring audit information about the foundation's financial statements to be published on the foundation's website after the audit is conducted—or completed.

And so what the amendment that my colleague brought forward is to ensure that the newspaper publication requirement continues to exist. As he had mentioned—and the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle), hope is not a strategy. And by ensuring that that requirement continues to exist, it is ensuring that it has broader reach to the Manitoba public. And what this bill is doing is it's removing that requirement. It's removing that requirement to support local newspapers and local journalism.

And as my colleague, the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), had mentioned, this NDP government isn't supporting local journalism with initiatives like this. By removing the exact requirement to support small and local newspapers, they're basing a lot on hope, but hope is not a strategy and hope is not true support. Ensuring that local newspapers and this requirement continues to exist within this bill—or within The Winnipeg Foundation Act—would ensure that local newspapers are supported. And wise financial fiscal management isn't just about balancing numbers on a page, it's about ensuring institutions are structured in a way that supports sound decision making, independent oversight and responsible use of funds over time.

\*(10:50)

Updating the rules to reflect current expectations around transparency and government—and governance—will help institutions remain strong, credible and resilient. And that is exactly why my colleague brought this amendment forward. Not only does it support small local newspapers, and ensuring that that requirement continues to exist to support local journalism initiatives, but also ensuring that public transparency is at the forefront when it comes to auditing and financial statements.

So, with that said, Honourable Speaker, I just want to thank you for the opportunity to rise today to speak on Bill 300. Want to recognize the—again, the importance of community foundations, both The Winnipeg Foundation as well as community foundations across the province.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** Well, thank you—[*interjection*] More. Well, thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I would like to bring some

words forward on Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act. And, as we've heard over numerous discussions in this House, this is a very important foundation within Manitoba, the first established foundation and the longest running foundation in our province that distributes a great amount of funds throughout Winnipeg and makes sure that a number of the areas are covered by this fund.

Looking at the amendment that was brought forward that brings us here on Bill 300, we note that it removes a requirement for the mayor to be on the board of The Winnipeg Foundation and publishing the audit information on the foundation's website rather than within newspapers.

So, on the first point, having the mayor off of the board, I believe, is a good step for any foundation to make sure that it's non-political. Having political individuals on a board causes some strain for individuals, and this allows it to be a completely non-partisan board. It allows for free discussion and free talk. And, for that reason, I support having the mayor removed from the foundation board. And I know that was in collaboration with the office of the mayor here in the City of Winnipeg. And the discussion happened at their board level. That's why this bill was brought forward with those amendments.

But I have to take exception with the audited financial statements not being published in newspapers. Newspapers are foundational to Manitoba, just as The Winnipeg Foundation itself is. Many people get their information from newspapers and they get factual reporting from newspapers. And removing that responsibility, removing that requirement, actually removes a step that that is very important to Manitobans, particularly senior Manitobans that are often our philanthropic individuals throughout our province. They often rely on newspaper and the print media to get their information because they are not often tech savvy like many other individuals are in the younger generation.

And I know myself, sometimes, looking at some of the websites and some of the areas, it gets difficult to navigate if you're not familiar with this. And people that have never had any experience, people perhaps in their 70s or 80s that didn't grow up in the computer era, will have a difficult time navigating this and seeing the information that is extremely important to them when it comes to the foundation's work.

And that's why, on this side, I was happy to be the seconder on the motion put forward by the MLA for Riding Mountain regarding the amendment to this act.

And I strongly agree that there needs to be more information put into print media when it comes to this audited statement.

As I stated earlier, people rely on media, and I look at some of the local media that we have here in Winnipeg, but it branches out to other areas across the province where print media is the direct route to many people's information source. And making sure that we have that information readily available for not only in Winnipeg but perhaps the broader communities—and, oftentimes, articles and notices are picked up by papers in the rural area—perhaps Brandon, perhaps some of the areas across Manitoba—and they can keep up to date with what is happening. And I'm sure all Manitobans would want to keep up to date on The Winnipeg Foundation and particularly this amended act to make sure that they are well aware of the changes that were brought forward.

We continue on this side to support local media, and we will continue to support that because, again, many times, it's small businesses that are started in communities and that gain the trust of that community.

I'd like to take a minute to thank the donors that take the time, the energy and, of course, their dollars to bring forward to foundations—particularly, as we're talking today, The Winnipeg Foundation. Growing this foundation is not by accident. It is purposeful by people taking a conscious effort to take their hard-earned dollars and put it towards this foundation so that there can be additional work done within the province of Manitoba, particularly in the city of Winnipeg.

So looking at a little bit of the history, I believe what I've heard—what I've researched is in 1921, this foundation was established by William Forbes Alloway with a gift starting of \$100,000 to this foundation. And then it followed by its first grant being put forward of \$6,000, shared by the Margaret Scott nursing home, Knowles Home for Boys, Victorian Order of Nurses, Children's Hospital and the Children's Aid Society. So I bring that forward because history is important to remember a lot of these areas, Honourable Speaker, and the history of this foundation is rooted deep within Winnipeg and within Manitoba.

We look at the millions of dollars that is brought into this foundation, but the millions of dollars that go back out to the recipients of the foundation that make Winnipeg and that make Manitoba a much better place to live, to work, to play and to do business in. And I'm happy to see that this foundation continues

to thrive, and with amendments removing moving the mayor and making it a non-truly non-partisan board, I'm happy to support this bill, and I'm happy to have put a few words on the record on behalf of our PC Party.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** No further speakers?

Then the question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act.

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

**Mr. Nesbitt:** On division.

**The Speaker:** The motion is accordingly passed, on division.

\* (11:00)

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 12—Rights of an Independent Member of the Legislative Assembly

**The Speaker:** So the hour now being 11 a.m., we'll go to private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is resolution No. 12, Rights of an Independent Member of the Legislative Assembly.

#### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** And just before we get to that, there is a group of students in the gallery. I'd like to draw the members' attention, we have 20 students from École Templeton with Shelby Leroux, and they're in the—from the honourable member of McPhillips's constituency.

We welcome you all here today.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** We will now go to resolution No. 12, Rights of an Independent Member of the Legislative Assembly, brought forward by the honourable member for Dawson Trail.

**MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** I move,

*WHEREAS Independent Members of the Legislative Assembly play an essential role in representing constituents who are not aligned with a recognized political party; and*

*WHEREAS all Members of the Legislative Assembly are elected to serve their constituents equally, regardless of party affiliation; and*

*WHEREAS concerns have arisen regarding unequal access to privileges, resources, and procedural opportunities among Independent Members; and*

*WHEREAS there is evidence that certain privileges have been afforded to at least one Independent Member that has not been consistently extended to all Independent Members; and*

*WHEREAS fairness, transparency, and equality are fundamental principles of a democratic parliamentary system.*

THEREFORE IT-BE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Standing Committee on Rules of the House of the Legislative Assembly to ensure that all independent members are granted equal privileges, access to resources and procedural opportunities, consistent with those afforded to any other independent member, by reviewing current practices and recommending any necessary changes to ensure fairness, transparency and consistency in treatment of independent members.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to consider the resolution as printed as opposed to how it was read? *[Agreed]*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Standing Committee on the Rules of the House of the Legislative Assembly to ensure that all Independent Members are granted equal privileges, access to resources, and procedural opportunities, consistent with those afforded to any other Independent Member, by reviewing current practices and recommending any necessary changes to ensure fairness, transparency, and consistency in the treatment of Independent Members.*

**The Speaker:** So therefore be it resolved—it's been moved by the honourable member for Dawson Trail, that

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Standing Committee on the—Rules of the House of the Legislative Assembly to ensure that all 'independent' members are granted equal privileges, access to resources and procedural opportunities, consistent with those afforded to any other independent member, by reviewing current practices and recommending any necessary changes to ensure fairness, transparency and consistency in the treatment of 'independ' members.

**MLA Lagassé:** I rise today to speak to this resolution regarding the rights, privileges and procedural fairness afforded to independent members

of this Legislative Assembly. At its core, this resolution is not about personalities, partisanship or political advantage. It's about fairness. It's about democracy. And, most importantly, it's about ensuring that every Manitoban who casts a ballot has their voice represented equally in this Chamber.

Every member elected to this House arrives here because citizens in their constituencies place trust in them. Whether a member sits as a part of a recognized political party, a smaller caucus or as an independent, that democratic mandate comes directly from the people. The voters of Dawson Trail are no less important than the voters of any other constituency in Manitoba. Their concerns matter equally, their voices deserve to be heard equally and the member they elected should have the ability to advocate for them fairly within this institution.

At this point, it's important to remember the history of this Legislature. When Manitoba entered Confederation in 1870 and the first Legislative Assembly convened, this institution was not built upon rigid party structures. In fact, the original Manitoba Legislature functioned largely as a non-partisan body. Members were elected primarily to represent their local communities and regions rather than to serve under strict party discipline. Debates focused on practical needs of the Manitobans, the growth of the province, agriculture, infrastructure, settlement and building of democratic institutions. Members worked across ideology and regional lines because their primary obligation was to their constituents and to Manitoba itself.

This history matters today. It reminds us that this Chamber was not created for political parties alone. It was created for elected representatives of the people. Political parties are an important part of the parliamentary democracy, but they are not the source of democratic legitimacy—the people are. Some constituents may feel that political parties no longer represent their priorities. Others may want local representatives who can speak freely without caucus constraints. Others may simply vote for the individual they trust most to advocate on their behalf. Regardless of the reason, those voters are entitled to equal representation.

This resolution recognizes a growing concern that independents do not always receive equal treatment within this Assembly. Concerns that have been raised regarding unequal access to procedural opportunities, resources, participation rights and privileges that may be extended inconsistently.

Consistency matters in parliamentary democracy. Rules cannot depend on personalities. Privileges cannot depend on political convenience. Procedural fairness cannot depend on who is in favour at any given moment. If one independent member is afforded a certain rights and opportunities, then all independent members should be treated equally under the same standards. That principle is neither radical nor partisan, it is simply fair.

This resolution does not ask for special treatment. It does not seek to elevate independent members above any other member in this House. It simply asks that all independent members be treated consistently and according to transparent rules. And this is why this resolution appropriately calls on the standing committee of the House to review the current practices and recommendations and make any necessary changes.

Committees exist precisely for this purpose: to examine procedures carefully, respectfully and thoughtfully. This is where members can consider how parliamentary privilege, speaking opportunities, staffing resources, committee participation and procedural access should apply fairly and consistently to all members. Parliamentary institutions function best when members trust that the rules are applied impartially. When rules appear inconsistent, confidence in democratic institutions weakens. When some elected members are perceived as having few opportunities to advocate for their constituents, public trust suffers.

The people of Manitoba expect fairness from this institution. They expect maturity from this institution. And they expect that every member elected to this Chamber will have the ability to speak for the people who sent them here. As the member for Dawson Trail, I understand that responsibility deeply. The communities of Dawson Trail deserve strong advocacy on the issues that matter to them: agriculture, infrastructure, public safety, health-care access, economic opportunities, municipal partnership and rural growth. Constituents expect their MLA to raise concerns in this House, to ask questions, to participate fully in debate and hold government accountable when necessary. That ability should not be diminished because a member chooses or is required by circumstance to sit independently.

In many ways, independent members can contribute uniquely to the parliamentary democracy. Independent members are often able to approach issues outside of strict partisan frameworks.

They may build consensus across political lines, they may focus intensely on local priorities and they may provide perspectives that otherwise risk being overlooked in a highly partisan environment. That diversity of representation can strengthen, not weaken, our democratic institutions.

Democracy is healthiest when different voices are heard respectfully. A legislature should not fear independent thought. A legislature should encourage participation. A legislature should ensure that all elected representatives have a meaningful opportunity to contribute.

This resolution ultimately asks us to affirm a simple democratic principle: that every Manitoban deserves equal representation in this Chamber, regardless of how their elected representative is politically aligned. That principle should unite all members of this House, because none of us were sent here merely to defend political structures. We were sent here to serve all Manitobans, we were sent here to represent communities and we were sent here to uphold democratic fairness. The strength of parliamentary democracy is measured not by how it treats the powerful, but how it treats those with fewer institutional advantages.

Fair rules protect everyone. Transparent procedures protect everyone. Consistent treatment protects the credibility of the House itself. I believe Manitobans expect this Assembly to rise above partisan calculation when it comes to questions of democratic fairness.

\* (11:10)

This resolution provides an opportunity to do exactly that. It asks for a review, it asks for transparency, it asks for consistency. And, above all, it asks us to remember that every seat in this Chamber represents thousands of Manitobans whose voices deserve equal respect.

For those reasons, I encourage all members of this Assembly to support this resolution and support fair, transparent and consistent approach to the treatment of independent members in the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

### Questions

**The Speaker:** A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation

between the parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I am hoping the member can talk a little bit more about what led him to propose this resolution today?

**MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Thank you for that question.

This actually came from a few things that occurred when I became an independent member. I discovered that my ability to ask questions and/or my ability to actually speak to a lot of things was not the same as other independent members, based on precedent. I'm not saying that those members should lose any of their privileges. I'm simply stating that we should all be treated equally.

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** The Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) said the only—that he only respects questions from recognized parties.

Does this attitude undermine the ability to represent the people of Dawson Trail?

**MLA Lagassé:** Thank you for that question.

And I do know what you're referring to, what had happened in committee, and it's unfortunate that that was the ideology that was put out there. But this isn't necessarily an attack on the—which side did what.

What this is about is that statements like that necessarily shouldn't belong in the Assembly because each independent MLA has been elected by their constituents to be in this Chamber and to represent, like I said in my speech, thousands of voices.

**MLA Cable:** The member for Dawson Trail has done important work standing up for his constituents, particularly after it was revealed that the PCs had tried to illegally approve the Sio Silica project.

Can the member share with the House how sitting as an independent has been different from sitting as a member of the PC caucus?

**MLA Lagassé:** Okay, thank you, again, for the question.

I'm just going to jump back. I'm not going to make this about parties right now. I don't want to make this about parties. I want to make this about Manitobans and giving them all an equal voice.

I can say, though, to part of that question that I have been able to freely ask questions, whereas before you—in that type of party system, you do have to run things through a caucus and members of the caucus may not necessarily agree with what you're saying or that it may be shameful to them so you're kind of silenced.

Now, being independent, I don't have to be silenced. I can ask the questions that my constituents want to know about.

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** How do other provincial legislatures or the House of Commons handle independent members?

**MLA Lagassé:** So, based on my understanding and the research that we've done, I would only point to the Northwest Territories right now, how they all sit as independents and they have to collaboratively work together to get things done for Manitoba—well, sorry, not their Manitoba but in this case it would be Manitoba.

I would suggest that that would be a better system, actually, over here, but that's not what the core of this resolution is about. But it's just giving that fairness across the board, here in particular.

**MLA Cable:** Honourable Speaker, every week, independent members have the opportunity to participate in question period.

Can the member talk about the importance of independent members having the opportunity to ask questions during question period?

**MLA Lagassé:** Thank you, again, for that question.

And, actually, that was one of my core concerns, is when you get to your question you're either put at question 10 or you're put at question 11. I can't speak for my colleague next to me, but I can say you're at the whim of the parties and how they feel that day, whether they're going to talk you out or whether they're going to let you speak.

I don't believe that is fair, as one independent member in this Chamber actually has a slot where they would be able to get up and speak every day.

**The Speaker:** No further questions?

The honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable).

**MLA Cable:** Honourable Speaker, does the member have other suggestions of how we can continue to

ensure Manitobans' voices are effectively represented here in the people's building?

**MLA Lagassé:** So, as I spoke a little bit in my speech here, I think we really just need to examine what's currently in place. And we need to look—have this go before the standing committee so that they can determine whether these rules are being fairly represented by each individual member or whether there needs to be a change as a whole so that future independent members will have equal rights without it being kind of muddy.

**MLA Cable:** Honourable Speaker, I appreciate that this resolution is specifically about independent members, but I would venture that it's time for members to—all members to consider whether the decorum and the way that we engage in this House is best suited for all members. And I say that as a female-identifying person who often feels as though the traditions in this House—the member mentioned in the Northwest Territories where they have a consensus model—that the traditions in this House often don't leave many of us feeling as though it's—that we have the opportunity to effectively convey our views or the views of our constituents.

Does the member have suggestions as to how we can—

**The Speaker:** The member's time is expired.

**MLA Lagassé:** So I do share that consensus about this place, can be quite toxic. I have talked about that in the past. I have—actually, part of the reasoning where I am now today is that kind of visceral back-and-forth that doesn't actually help anyone. It actually—and I'm going to argue it does affect our mental health.

Speaking based on my past and what I've dealt with in this Chamber, I find that we could work more collaboratively. We're all people here, and we should all be respecting one another as people.

**The Speaker:** No further questions?

### Debate

**The Speaker:** Then the floor is open for debate.

No one wishing to debate?

The honourable Minister of Families. *[interjection]*

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families):** Excellent. Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to get up this morning and put a couple of words on the record in respect of this resolution this morning.

I want to just first acknowledge the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) for bringing forward this resolution. *[interjection]* And, you know, the member for—I don't even know where he's from, but who's heckling right now, who acts like a child in this Chamber day in and day out—that's why the member for Dawson Trail did something in this Legislature that hasn't been done since around 1979, 1980. In the last many, many, many years, there have been so many folks that have been elected to this Chamber, and the member for Dawson Trail is the first person since 1979, 1980, give or take, to actually voluntarily leave a caucus.

And every day on this side of the Chamber we can see why the member for Dawson Trail made that very difficult situation to voluntarily leave the Manitoba PCs. We see it. We see the way that the men on that side behave day in and day out and—supported by, let me just say, the women who carry the water for patriarchy on their side and support the men on that side of the Chamber as the men on that side of the Chamber routinely, you know, do the things that they do.

\* (11:20)

So we can see why the member for Dawson Trail voluntarily left the Manitoba PC caucus. That's a huge decision, and I'm sure a decision that the member for Dawson Trail didn't take lightly and probably had many, many conversations with his family and his friends and those folks that are in his circle. I'm sure that those were many, many conversations with constituents in Dawson Trail, you know, whether or not they would support that decision. And obviously the folks that he talked with supported that decision for him to voluntarily leave the Manitoba PC caucus and sit as an independent.

And, you know, what we've seen from the Manitoba PCs, so his former colleagues, is an attempt to silence or minimize the opportunities that the member for Dawson Trail has in this Legislature to get up to speak during QP. We saw the members opposite, during QP, clap for an extended time after everybody's really ridiculous and nondescript questions that they posed to us here on this side because they were trying to delay and take time so that we wouldn't get to question 10.

And so for folks, Manitobans, that will go back and read this in Hansard or that are watching now, the member for Dawson Trail has a question 10 on Mondays. And his former colleagues, you know, did everything that they could so that he wouldn't

get to question 10. And then it really does beg the question, why? Right? Why would folks that he just worked with for—both the member for Dawson Trail and I got elected in 2016. So he worked with these people opposite for almost 10 years. And they did everything that they could to make sure that he couldn't get a question, while also making sure that they do everything they can to make sure that the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) gets questions in his question 11.

So he—you know, they didn't want to do anything for their former colleague but wanted to make sure that the former—or the member for Fort Garry, who, again, was elected under our NDP banner—and, to be to be more specific, the member for Fort Garry got elected under the banner and face and expertise and work of our Premier (Mr. Kinew)—again, the most popular Premier in Manitoba, of which that he is so obsessed with, that he's so obsessed with. So the members opposite are willing to give time to the member for Fort Garry, but not to their former colleague that they worked for—worked with for 10 years.

And so it really begs the question, why? And, you know, it's important to recognize that we've had, actually, several of their folks indicate that they're leaving and they're not running again. And for the public's information, that's the MLA for Steinbach; that's the MLA for Red River North, who, as we know, was found to have broken the law and the caretaker convention—first time in Manitoba history. So this is their legacy. The MLA for Turtle Mountain has indicated that he's not running again; the MLA for Selkirk, who, incidentally, we only see on virtual now; the MLA for Springfield-Ritchot, who, let's be honest, has been here way, way too long, so I think everybody is glad that the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) has left; and then, of course, the MLA for Dawson Trail, who, again, for the first time in many, many, many, many, many years, since 1979, 1980, decided to sit as an independent.

And when the member for Dawson Trail did get to say his question, I found it very curious, his question, because, of course, the member—it's his time to ask the government questions but he chose to ask the opposition questions. And I want to read into the record because I'm—I find it very, very curious. And he says, and I quote: I had a question that I was going to direct towards the government today, but since the opposition has decided they want to fool around a bit today, my question is going to go to them.

I'm curious how the Leader of the Opposition feels about the mass exodus of female staff since he's become the leader of the party. That is—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

If I could just get the honourable minister to bring her comments back to the resolution before us.

**MLA Fontaine:** Honourable Speaker, this goes to the importance of the resolution before us because members opposite, the Manitoba PC caucus, were doing everything in their power to thwart the responsibilities and the privileges that the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) has in this Chamber. As I indicated previously, they were doing everything that they could to thwart those privileges.

And, lo and behold, what do we find out from the member for Dawson Trail is that there is a mass exodus of women staff since the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) became the Leader of the Opposition. I think that that's a great question. I think that's a great question, probably or—no, I would say the best question that has come from anywhere on that side of the House.

So it does beg the question, you know, and I'm curious as to why the media hasn't picked up on this, why not one single member of the PC caucus has commented on this mass exodus of female staff from their PC caucus and from the Leader of the Opposition's office.

Why have none of the women in the Manitoba PC caucus spoken about this mass exodus of women leaving the Manitoba caucus? And so I'll say it again, the women in the Manitoba PC caucus carry the water for patriarchy. And we haven't—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

If I could get the honourable minister to bring her comments back to the resolution which is dealing with independent members.

**MLA Fontaine:** And so it begs the question why the women haven't made any commentary on the member for Dawson Trail's question that he asked and he posed to the opposition. And I want to thank him for that, because I do think that that's very important to raise things in the context of our privileges as members of this House and he chose to do that, and I think that that was a really courageous and important thing that he did on his part.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member's time has expired.

The honourable—so, according to our agreed upon rotation, the next person to stand up and speak should be from the PCs. If no-one from the PCs wishes to stand up and speak, then we would go back to the NDP.

No one from the—oh, the honourable member for St. Boniface.

**French spoken**

**MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface):** C'est un honneur d'avoir la chance de discuter cette résolution — qui arrive, d'ailleurs, je pense, à un moment opportun — du député de Dawson Trail (DAL Lagassé). J'aimerais commencer par dire que le député de Dawson Trail a fait preuve d'énorme courage dans les derniers mois, et j'aimerais le féliciter, d'ailleurs, pour avoir fait preuve de courage en quittant le caucus du Parti conservateur du Manitoba, et maintenant de présenter une résolution qui parle essentiellement des droits des députés indépendants dans cette Chambre.

\* (11:30)

En tant que Métis de la rivière Rouge, je sais que le député de Dawson Trail est aussi un Métis de la rivière Rouge. Et c'est d'ailleurs depuis 1979-1980 qu'un député n'a pas quitté son caucus comme l'a fait le député de Dawson Trail. C'est pas quelque chose qu'on voit tous les jours. Mais il a fait preuve de courage, il a fait preuve de détermination, et j'aimerais personnellement dire que je suis impressionné, par non seulement ce qu'il a dû passer à travers, mais ce qu'il a fait pour être capable de présenter de façon claire et précise ses droits, ses pensées, sa façon de voir les choses. Et il ne se voyait simplement plus faire partie d'un caucus du Parti conservateur du Manitoba qui ne représente — on va le dire — vraiment plus non seulement les valeurs conservateurs, mais les valeurs des Manitobains et des Manitobaines.

Donc le député de Dawson Trail a fait une décision courageuse, importante, et il a quitté son caucus. Et la résolution devant nous parle de sa détermination en tant que député indépendant dans cette Chambre, et les droits et privilèges, d'ailleurs, qu'un député indépendant devrait avoir dans cette Chambre, et la façon qu'un député indépendant devrait être respecté dans cette Chambre.

Trop souvent, j'ai vu le respect envers les femmes de notre caucus être mis de côté par les membres du Parti conservateur. J'ai vu à plus d'une occasion un énorme manque de respect des Conservateurs envers non seulement les femmes, comme je viens de le dire,

mais aussi envers la – comment je pourrais m'exprimer – la diversité qui existe dans notre caucus. Donc chaque député, y compris le député indépendant comme le député de Dawson Trail (DAL Lagassé), détient un mandat démocratique confié par des milliers de citoyens, et notre gouvernement croit que chaque Manitobain mérite que sa voix soit entendue.

Nous travaillons pour vous, les gens du Manitoba. Tout ce que nous faisons est guidé par le service à la population manitobaine. En fin de compte, cette conversation porte sur la meilleure façon de représenter tous les Manitobains, peu importe qui ils sont ou d'où ils viennent. Notre gouvernement défend activement les valeurs démocratiques et l'inclusion du public par l'entremise de lois historiques comme le Projet de loi 4 protégeant les libertés fondamentales relatives à la clause dérogatoire, le Projet de loi 6 reconnaissant les langues des signes américaine et autochtone, ainsi que la loi établissant la semaine de sensibilisation à l'accessibilité et le Mois du patrimoine autochtone.

Alors, ce sont des exemples de démocratie, et je crois que le député de Dawson Trail, à travers cette résolution, se bat d'ailleurs pour ces droits démocratiques. Alors que notre gouvernement traite les règles de la démocratie avec respect, l'ancienne administration progressiste-conservatrice a laissé derrière elle un bilan marqué par des violations systémiques, l'Honorable Président.

Nous ne pouvons pas oublier que des ministres du Parti progressiste-conservateur ont été frappés d'amendes financières historiques et sans précédent après que le commissaire à l'éthique les ont surpris en train de violer de façon flagrante la convention de transition, et je pense que c'est pertinent, l'Honorable Président – *[interjection]*

### **Translation**

*It is an honour to have the opportunity to discuss this resolution—which, I believe, comes at a very opportune time—from the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé). I would like to begin by saying that the member for Dawson Trail has shown tremendous courage in recent months, and I would like to congratulate him, in fact, for having the courage to leave the Manitoba Conservative Party caucus and now for introducing a resolution that essentially addresses the rights of independent members in this House.*

\* (11:30)

*As a Red River Métis, I know that the member for Dawson Trail is also a Red River Métis. And in fact,*

*this is the first time since 1979-1980 that a member has left his caucus as the member for Dawson Trail has done. That's not something you see every day. But he has shown courage, he has shown determination, and I would personally like to say that I am impressed, not only by what he must have gone through, but by what he has done to be able to clearly and precisely present his rights, his thoughts and his perspective. And he simply could no longer see himself as part of a Manitoba Conservative Party caucus that—let's be clear—no longer truly represents not only conservative values, but the values of Manitobans.*

*So, the member for Dawson Trail made a courageous, important decision, and he left his caucus. And the resolution before us speaks to his determination as an independent member in this House, and the rights and privileges, for that matter, that an independent member should have in this House, and the way an independent member should be respected in this House.*

*All too often, I have seen respect for the women in our caucus set aside by members of the Conservative Party. I have witnessed on more than one occasion a massive lack of respect from the Conservatives not only toward women, as I just mentioned, but also toward—how should I put it—the diversity that exists within our caucus. So every member of this House, including independent members like the member for Dawson Trail, holds a democratic mandate entrusted by thousands of citizens, and our government believes that every Manitoban deserves to have their voice heard.*

*We work for you, the people of Manitoba. Everything we do is guided by service to the people of Manitoba. Ultimately, this conversation is about the best way to represent all Manitobans, no matter who they are or where they come from. Our government actively defends democratic values and public inclusion through historic legislation such as Bill 4 protecting fundamental freedoms in relation to the notwithstanding clause, Bill 6 recognizing American Sign Language and Indigenous Sign Language, as well as the legislation establishing Accessibility Awareness Week and Indigenous Heritage Month.*

*These are examples of democracy, and I believe that the member for Dawson Trail, through this resolution, is fighting for these democratic rights. While our government upholds the rules of democracy with respect, the former Progressive Conservative administration left behind a record marked by systemic violations, Honourable Speaker.*

*We cannot forget that Progressive Conservative ministers were hit with historic and unprecedented fines after the Ethics Commissioner caught them blatantly violating the Caretaker Convention, and I think this is relevant, Honourable Speaker—[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

I would remind members to keep their comments relevant to the resolution we're here this morning to discuss.

So, the honourable member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle).

### **French spoken**

**MLA Loiselle:** D'ailleurs je vais continuer avec la pertinence de mes propos, qu'elle soit en français ou non. Je pense que c'est à mes collègues de l'autre parti de bien comprendre de mes propos, en faisant le cas que le député de Dawson Trail (DAL Lagassé) se bat à travers cette résolution pour des droits démocratiques et d'être respecté en tant que député indépendant.

Chaque jour, d'ailleurs, nous travaillons pour veiller à ce que tous les Manitobains soient entendus dans cette Chambre, et le député de Dawson Trail, en tant que membre indépendant, a le droit à porter ses paroles et à partager ses idées dans cette Chambre comme n'importe quel député. Nous devons nous assurer que nos processus, d'ailleurs, et nos règles sont conçus de manière à refléter la volonté de la population manitobaine.

Donc, l'Honorable Président, il est une vérité fondamentale de cette Chambre que chaque député siégeant ici, peu importe l'endroit où il est assis dans cette enceinte, porte le mandat de milliers de Manitobains qui s'attendent à ce que leurs voix soient entendues dans la maison du peuple : c'est leur droit en tant que députés, qu'ils fassent partie d'un parti ou qu'ils soient indépendants. Nous reconnaisant que la 'représentation' n'est pas un privilège partisan : c'est un droit démocratique qui appartient à la population du Manitoba, et le député de Dawson Trail, à travers cette résolution, se bat, en fait, pour ces droits.

Lorsque nous parlons de la maison du peuple, nous parlons d'un lieu où l'équité et l'égalité doivent constituer le fondement même de nos procédures, afin de garantir que chaque voix manitobaine soit entendue. Et le député de Dawson Trail a une voix, et cette résolution de faire en soi que cette voix est respectée.

C'est notre gouvernement néo-démocrate qui a constamment défendu ces valeurs démocratiques, et nous sommes très fiers de notre réputation constante à veiller à ce que toutes les circonscriptions, comme la circonscription de Dawson Trail, aient une voix significative dans cette enceinte.

Nous croyons – Nous voyons cet engagement dans la récente présentation du Projet de loi 4, qui protège nos libertés fondamentales en veillant à ce que toute utilisation de la clause dérogatoire soit automatiquement renvoyée à la Cour d'appel.

Donc en revenant à cette résolution, nous le voyons dans nos efforts historiques visant à reconnaître la langue et les respects de chaque député dans cette enceinte. Alors encore une fois, j'aimerais dire au député de Dawson Trail qu'il a fait preuve de courage en se séparant du Parti conservateur du Manitoba et en amenant cette résolution qui se bat pour les droits et le respect des députés indépendants dans cette enceinte – la maison du peuple – où la démocratie doit être respectée à tout prix. C'est notre devoir, c'est ce que nous devons faire, et j'appuie cette résolution.

Merci, l'Honorable Président.

### **Translation**

*I will continue to speak to the point, whether in French or not. I believe it is up to my colleagues on the other side to fully understand my remarks, recognizing that the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) is fighting through this resolution for democratic rights and to be respected as an independent member.*

*Every day, in fact, we work to ensure that all Manitobans are heard in this House, and the member for Dawson Trail, as an independent, has the right to speak and share his ideas in this House just like any other member. We must ensure that our processes, for that matter, and our rules are designed to reflect the will of the people of Manitoba.*

*Therefore, Honourable Speaker, it is a fundamental truth of this House that every member sitting here, no matter where they sit in this Chamber, holds the mandate of thousands of Manitobans who expect their voices to be heard in the people's House: it is their right as members, whether they belong to a party or are independent. We recognize that representation is not a partisan privilege: it is a democratic right belonging to the people of Manitoba, and the member for Dawson Trail, through this resolution, is in fact fighting for those rights.*

*When we speak of the House of the people, we speak of a place where fairness and equality must form the very foundation of our procedures, to ensure that every Manitoban voice is heard. And the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) has a voice, and this resolution ensures that that voice is respected.*

*It is our New Democratic government that has consistently defended these democratic values, and we are very proud of our longstanding reputation for ensuring that all ridings, such as the riding of Dawson Trail, have a meaningful voice in this Chamber.*

*We believe—we see this commitment in the recent introduction of Bill 4, which protects our fundamental freedoms by ensuring that any invocation of the notwithstanding clause is automatically referred to the Court of Appeal.*

*Returning to this resolution, we see it in our historic efforts to recognize the language and respect of every member in this Chamber. So once again, I would like to tell the member for Dawson Trail that he has shown courage by breaking away from the Manitoba Conservative Party and bringing forward this resolution that fights for the rights and respect of independent members in this Chamber—the people's House—where democracy must be upheld at all costs. It is our duty; it is what we must do, and I support this resolution.*

*Thank you, Honourable Speaker.*

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I am very pleased to rise and put a couple of comments on the record with respect to this resolution we're debating today, mostly to point out the absolute farce we're seeing play out in this Chamber, where members opposite are waxing poetic about the democratic rights and privileges and procedural opportunities afforded to independent members, but they don't actually mean independent members, because they're completely ignoring the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), in fact, denying him the ability to get up and speak to this resolution today.

If they believed a word that they were saying in these long poetic speeches, they would allow the member for Fort Garry, who is an independent member in this Chamber, to get up and speak to this resolution. They are not allowing that. This is a caucus, this is an NDP caucus that puts politics above all else. They only care about the rights and privileges and procedural opportunities afforded to independent members that they believe will be

politically advantageous to them. They chose to kick a member out of their caucus, forcing him to become an independent. And I have to point out that when they did that, it was absolutely unconscionable how they did that, first, saying that it was because of his professional obligations, and then later admitting, oh, it's just because we couldn't get along with him.

\* (11:40)

So they forced him onto the independent bench. They now won't allow him to get up and speak to this resolution, which is talking about the rights and privileges afforded to him as an independent member. And here we are in this Chamber, and they won't let him get up and speak today.

I think that's unconscionable, Honourable Speaker. I'm going to sit down now. I hope that the member for Fort Garry is afforded the opportunity to speak.

**MLA Billie Cross (Seine River):** If the member from Roblin understood the rules and understood procedures, she would know that he's speaker No. 24. He absolutely has the right to get up and speak to this.

The fact that they, you know—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Cross:** —that member has made this an issue about our caucus and the member from Fort Garry is completely irrelevant. That's not what we're talking about today. We are talking about the rights of an independent member of the Legislative Assembly. And when we talk about those rights, we must take into consideration the folks that they represent.

It's a fundamental truth in this Chamber that every member sitting in these seats, regardless of where they're positioned on this floor, carries the mandate of thousands of Manitobans who expect their voices to be heard in the people's building. Members of the PC caucus do not do that on a regular basis. They pick and choose the constituents they want to represent. So when they stand up here to speak to this resolution, maybe they need to do some inner reflection about who is being represented and why all members should be represented and all constituents should have—be able to see their members stand up and speak about things that matter to their constituency.

We recognize that representation is not a partisan privilege, it's a democratic right, and it belongs to the people of Manitoba. When we talk about the people's building, we're talking about a place where fairness and equality must be the bedrock of our procedures. We have not seen that

from all members in this Chamber, and we need to ensure that all Manitoba voices are heard.

I think it takes a great deal of courage for a member of a caucus to walk away from their party, his party, because he has a stronger moral compass than any member sitting in that party. He took a stand to do the right thing for himself, his family and his constituents. But you can absolutely tell by the members he left behind how fearful they are of what he might release, what he might tell folks was going on. For a member to not-to have to walk away because he can't work with his caucus is very telling, Honourable Speaker.

You know, it's our NDP government that has consistently stood in defence of these democratic values. We take great pride in our reputation for making sure that all constituencies have a meaningful voice in this building. The member from Fort Garry, he gets his questions, he gets his members' statements, he gets his private members' business. *[interjection]*

Members want to heckle me while I'm standing up? Big surprise, it's the men in that caucus heckling. It's never the women; they're pretty respectful, and honestly, we can have respectful conversations. But it's the men in this caucus that consistently, consistently heckle members in the—in our government. And they don't heckle in a respectful way, Honourable Speaker.

When we talk about the rights of an independent member, you know, our government sees this commitment through. We see it through in our recent introduction of Bill 4, which protects our fundamental freedoms by ensuring that any use of the notwithstanding clause is automatically referred to the Court of Appeal because we believe the ultimate power must lie with the people who are represented by members in this Chamber—*[interjection]*—who bring forward their voices.

It is completely relevant. Folks behind me don't want to hear what I have to say. They want to continue to heckle because they are so worried about what might be said about them. Manitobans know the truth, Honourable Speaker. They know who they are, they know what they believe it—what they believe in and what they spew on a daily basis.

Our government has shown that we recognize the importance of representing everyone. We recognize American Sign Language and Indigenous sang-language through Bill 6, ensuring that the Deaf and hard-of-hearing members of our constituencies

and members in this Chamber are no longer left out of this conversation.

When we talk about independent members and the people they represent, we make sure that we're representing all Manitobans. So our caucus and my—I brought this forward, in fact, to make sure that we're representing every Manitoban and every member in this Chamber. The member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé), the independent member, is a Red River Métis gentlemen. And so I brought forward The Indigenous Heritage Month Act, ensuring that the history and contributions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people are permanently woven into our provincial calendar, but also woven into this Chamber.

That bill has not passed. So when members of the PC caucus stand up and talk about, you know, we are doing all this, we're transparent, we believe in Manitobans, we believe in all Manitobans—that is not what they are showing. We celebrate Manitoba's diversity in so many ways in this Chamber, in so many ways in the months that—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

If I could get the honourable member to bring her comments back to the resolution before us.

The honourable member for Dawson Trail—*[interjection]* Oh, sorry.

The honourable member for Seine River (MLA Cross).

**MLA Cross:** Honourable Speaker, I apologize. Yes, I believe, when I'm talking about the citizens of this province and how we recognize them, I am sticking true to what we are talking about in this resolution today, because we are talking about the folks in this room that represent every single one of those Manitobans. They have the right to stand up and voice what they are hearing.

Honourable Speaker, our approach is really simple: we respect democracy. We respect the rules of this House. We respect the individual members who do the hard work of representing their communities every single day. This is not an easy job of service. We hear people, we listen to people on some of their toughest days of their lives. We hear about the hardest things that they will ever go through. We share in their tears, but we also share in their joys. Every member in this Chamber deserves the right to get up and tell the entire province what is happening in their community,

how they are helping others, how they are supporting the people that voted for them.

I wonder if the PC caucus has once considered the way they're treating their—the independent member from Dawson Trail, that the voters who voted for him, that actually voted because they are PC caucus supporters, how they might feel now and who they might vote for in the next election. I would suggest that they're probably voting for the person who stood up and did the right thing, the person who knew that to effectively represent his constituents needed to sit as an independent.

We don't view the rules as flexible in the government caucus. You know, they are not just tools for partisan gain. We view them as essential guardrails that keep our province's democracy healthy and transparent. We have a proven track record of upholding those values in this Chamber, which includes holding all members accountable to the highest ethical standards, especially when those standards are ignored. We have not once blocked an independent member from doing the business that they want to do—

**An Honourable Member:** Until today.

**MLA Cross:** —or speaking up. Nobody is blocking the member from Fort Garry. He is speaker No. 24. He will have his opportunity to speak. Who said this resolution is not coming back? Members of the PC caucus have brought resolutions back week after week. So have members from the NDP caucus.

The members of the PC caucus are just dying to have the member from Fort Garry get up and say something that they think is going to be harmful to our caucus. Nobody is standing up to harm anyone. The whole point of this resolution is to ensure that everyone sitting in their seats that represent a constituency in Manitoba gets to have their opportunity to share their voice on behalf of their citizens.

And so, you know, we've seen the alternative in this Chamber, Honourable Speaker, where the PCs historically violate these rules. We're—and they're rightfully have been called out, not only in this Chamber, by the Ethics Commissioner. They—this resulted in fines, losing the public trust.

You know, that contrast is really vital in this conversation that we're having, because it shows that while some rules are on—the way they believe that some rules are obstacles to be bypassed, our government sees them as a commitment to the public that must be honoured. Trust is everything in this job.

If the people that vote for you can't trust you to be the voice that they sent here, then you've lost the plot. You're not doing your job. You are not representing the public in the very best way you are supposed to.

\* (11:50)

And I see that on a daily basis and it's really disappointing. You know, I speak to people all over the Seine River constituency, all over the province. I was a practising teacher before being elected. I'm a teacher; I will always be a teacher. So when students and families talk to me about the things that go on here, I explain to them the procedures and that includes making sure the—

**The Speaker:** The honourable member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Interlake-Gimli.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Is there leave for the independent member of Fort Garry to be recognized next, despite the speaking rotation, to speak to this resolution?

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to recognize the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) to speak next, in spite of the speaking order?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Speaker:** Leave has been denied. [*interjection*]  
Order.

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** Well, things are getting a little bit spicy here this morning. It's getting warmer outside, it's getting warmer inside the Chamber. Maybe if we just took a second here to cool down and take a deep breath. I know members across the way are getting a little bit hot under the collar. They're all eager to get out of here, not really do any work, but I want to start by thanking the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) for bringing up this PMR and I want to thank him for all the work he's done.

The member for Dawson Trail and I actually know each other going back, predating my time since being elected here, and I personally find him to be an outstanding person. We've dealt with some pretty sensitive issues in my previous work and I saw him bring a high degree of sensitivity and care in his role as MLA for that community. And I think you can see some of that carrying on into his work that he does here; I think he brings a high degree of sincerity

and goodwill to this job, which is—I—you know, ideally everybody should do that, but I don't think that's as common in politics as it should be, and may be displayed by some of the rhetoric this morning.

But I will say the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé), I think, enriches and brings a good deal of benefit to this Chamber. So I want to again thank him for bringing this forward. I know also that he's a good champion for mental health and I wonder what he might be thinking right now, hearing members across the way scream and shout down members who are talking on this side of the Chamber this morning. There's about what, seven of us in the Chamber here? And it gets pretty loud, and I get that it is a pretty sensitive subject, and maybe members across the way have some feelings about this and particularly might feel a little bit chafed at the fact that it is a member who willingly walked away from their caucus who is bringing this up today, a member who cited some pretty serious issues that are taking place under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition.

But it is important to note that the member for Dawson Trail willingly walked away, and that was a stunning day, where the member opposite rose on a point of order and announced that he would be sitting as an independent member. And so I think we all need to take stock of that. I think Manitobans should know that, for context for this morning, as to why the members across the way are so angry about the subject at hand today.

But I think it's also important to recognize that, yes, every member in this Chamber was duly elected to represent the constituents and Manitobans that we represent, and every member does have the right to bring their ideas and speak to debates and resolutions and contribute their perspectives to the process of policymaking in this Chamber—in this building, I should say. And so every member has that right, whether they're independent or members of government.

A little bit ironic, though; like, sometimes you look across the way and you have members who sit a little bit further up in the opposition benches and rarely get up to speak or contribute to anything. They'll heckle, though. There'll be a lot of heckling, particularly from the back rows, from people who've been here for 20-plus years, occupying a seat, contributing very little to discussion here. So to see them get animated about what one member is contributing or isn't while not necessarily encouraging

their own members to be fully contributing members of this Chamber, I think, is a little bit ironic.

But, at the end of the day, yes, we owe it to our constituents, we owe it to Manitobans to bring forward good ideas, policy proposals that come from a place of goodwill and sincerity and a lot of thought going into what we're bringing in. And I'm sure the member for Dawson Trail put a lot of sincerity and thought into bringing this resolution forward today. And I don't think there's any denying that. And I think if you've heard any of the comments from folks from this side of the Chamber, I think it is important.

The one thing I will say that surprises me about this Chamber and being elected is just how complex and convoluted the procedures are in this building. Like, we are inheriting a system, this Westminster system and our Canadian version of it, that obviously predates all of us, but traditions and rules and procedures and precedents and so on and so forth that we try to navigate. And sometimes I ask questions, why are things this way and why not this way? And it is a process of navigating the system we have but also recognizing that we're here to make it better for the future. There are things that we do today that we could not do previously.

For example, speaking in different languages—even 10 years ago, 15 years ago, that wouldn't have happened in this Chamber. And that happens because members from different walks of lives bring different perspectives to this Chamber, to build and improve the environment of this Chamber and the way we approach things.

So things do change. They do change over time. I think President Obama once said that, you know, you can't change or you can't shift government on a dime. It's turning the wheel in the direction you want it to go and progressively moving in that direction. And I think that is obviously the reality of government. Government is very big. This thing that we do here is very old and very big, but when we want it to go in the direction that we want—in the right direction—we steer it there. It won't happen immediately, but you get to that place.

So that's why it's important to have conversations like this today too, to have this discussion; it is important, without getting the anger and the heckling and the vitriol that we see get spewed. I think we can have these conversations in good faith, but it starts with this and it starts with members like the member for Dawson Trail bringing up this resolution and starting the discussion about what it looks like to be

an independent member, a member of government benches, a member in the opposition benches.

Maybe it takes some more thinking from all of us, some outside-out-of-the-box thinking about how we want to come to this Chamber and approach it because, yes, things have been done here the way they've been done over the past 100-whatever years. But I think now we have an opportunity to start looking at things a little bit differently.

So, yes, I just want to thank the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) for bringing this forward this morning.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I—earlier in the member for McPhillips's (MLA Devgan) speech, he did make passing reference to the number of people being present or absent, so I would have to caution the member about that.

And the hour now being—*[interjection]* No, the honourable member—are there other speakers?

All right, the honourable member for Fort Garry.

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** You know, the first comment I would be making is that if somebody had to design this Chamber from scratch, nobody in

their right mind would design what we have right here; nobody would. In fact, I've never met an MLA, past or present, that believes that the Leg. is anything but toxic and dysfunctional. And part of the reason for that is its hyper-partisan nature.

You know, one of the things I hate about this place that I used to hear all the time is we can't give the other side a win. I don't know how many times I've heard that here. Absolutely is annoying, to say the least, because it tells you the culture here is not to collaborate, the culture here is to double down on partisan teamship without actually focusing on Manitobans.

I come from municipal politics where there wasn't any parties, and it was a school board of nine people. And there was eight NDP-aligned board members out of nine. Despite that, I—because the NDP and the PCs are big-tent parties, I can guarantee—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The—when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have nine minutes remaining.

The hour now being 12 o'clock, this House is recessed until 1:30.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 26, 2026

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