

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-First Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 8, 2018

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

**Madam Speaker:** Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill 14—The Traffic and Transportation Modernization Act

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Wharton), that Bill 14, The Traffic and Transportation Modernization Act; Loi sur la modernisation des lois relatives à la circulation et au transport, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Schuler:** Madam Speaker, our government committed to reviewing Manitoba's agencies, boards and commissions to reduce duplication and red tape. Bill 14 supports this commitment by dissolving the Highway Traffic Board and the Motor Transport Board. I am pleased to present Bill 14, The Traffic and Transportation Modernization Act, to the Legislature today.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Sustainable Development and Status of Women, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

#### International Women's Day

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women):** I rise today to acknowledge International Women's Day.

International Women's Day, proclaimed by the United Nations on March 8th, 1977, has a long history that goes back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At that time, women in North

America and Europe were protesting for better working conditions, demanding the right for vote—to vote and calling for peace.

Over the years, we have witnessed an unprecedented expansion of women's rights here in Manitoba and across the globe. More girls are reaping the benefits of higher education; more women have entered the labour market, and more women are in positions of leadership than ever before.

We are at a critical time for women's equality. This is a time for optimism and hope, but it is also a time to press forward.

We are now experiencing a global movement on gender equality, from dialogue and action occurring around and addressing sexual harassment, to encouraging more women to run for office. The government of Manitoba is proud to collaborate with such initiatives, such as Equal Voice and Engineers Geoscientists, to advance women in sciences, in trades and in politics.

While there has been much advancement and progress for women in Manitoba, until all of us have made it, none of us have made it. Until all women can enjoy public spaces, private spaces and workplaces free from sexual harassment and sexual violence, until we are a society where teenage girls are not preyed upon and exploited by adult men, until women are properly represented on boards and councils and in legislatures, then we must continue pressing for progress.

Today's event reminds us that we all benefit when women and girls have the opportunities and the resources they need to succeed and reach their full potential. Therefore, today, on International Women's Day I celebrate the women whose shoulders I stand on, and I take heart in knowing that the young women and men of today will carry us forward on the path to equality.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and happy International Women's Day to you.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** On this international woman's day, I lift up the women the world over who have courageously drawn a line in the sand under the hashtag #MeToo by publicly

naming men in positions of power who've abused them. Women together have found the strength in one another to come forward with their stories of sexual harassment, rape, intimidation, ridicule, stalking, bullying and exclusion.

We are in the midst of a revolution in respect of women's rights, and revolution never comes without uncomfortable truths, and so I honour the women who've come forward in the last year and in the last weeks, courageously sharing their experiences of sexual harassment by MLAs either retired or still sitting in this Chamber.

As a former staffer in this building, I know too well the sense of powerlessness and anxiety when subjected to sexual harassment and belittling by a former MLA. It would be naive to think harassing behaviours currently do not exist in this building. They do—either by way of attempting to intimidate a female MLA by staring them down at a standing committee meeting, or by yelling at another female MLA during another committee meeting, or remarking in front of several MLAs at a legislative conference of a female MLA, and I quote: I hope she gets everything out. This, while she was in the washroom.

It is not for me to name the MLAs I've just noted, who currently sit in this House. They know who they are, and I invite them to apologize.

#MeToo doesn't only exist within the mainstream political sphere. Many indigenous women have reached out to me in respect of sexual harassment within the indigenous political sphere, terrified to come forward with their own experiences against current or former chiefs, councillors, grand chiefs or spiritual leaders. This is a conversation we've yet to have publicly, but is so critical in the struggle for indigenous women's rights.

It is women's leadership that birthed the #MeToo movement and it is women who will lead us out of the mess born from within patriarchy and its misogyny.

And so, on this International Women's Day, I stand with women who have come forward, those still undecided, those who choose to share their experiences only partially, those who choose at this moment to wait and those who choose never to share their experiences with anyone.

Miigwech.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to speak in response to the minister's statement.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member have leave to respond to the minister's statement? *[Agreed]*

**Ms. Lamoureux:** First and foremost, happy International Women's Day, everyone.

It was 43 years ago that International Women's Day was first recognized and it will continue to be recognized because the fight for equality is not yet won. Women all over the world are still facing overwhelming disparity in access to safety, jobs, leadership, living wages and health care, and there is absolutely no excuse for this.

Madam Speaker, the #MeToo movement is bringing these enormous issues to the forefront, and we need to work together to ensure that no one feels unsafe or uncomfortable, because, evidently, workplace misconduct is still happening.

It should be mentioned, too, that these issues are not solely found in the halls of the Legislature but across all levels of government, and I want to thank my colleagues here in this House and at both municipal and federal levels for their bravery in sharing their stories. We need to realize the magnitude of our actions and the importance of having women involved in politics.

I'd like to end with a quote from Meghan Markle, and says—she says: Girls with dreams become women with vision. May we empower each other to carry out with vision because it isn't enough to simply talk about equality. One must work at it.

Let us work at it together starting now.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Agriculture on a ministerial statement, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

### **Ag Safety Week**

**Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture):** Starting Sunday, March the 11th, Canada will be celebrating agriculture safety week. The Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, otherwise known as CASA, the Manitoba Farm Safety Program, the

Canadian Federation of Agriculture, SAFE Work Manitoba and presenting sponsor Farm Credit Canada are encouraging all Canadians to be part of AgSafe Family during Ag Safety Week.

Manitoba Agriculture recognizes the importance of working together to improve safety and commends the efforts of these organizations and others who continue to raise awareness of safety on our farms. Farming is a unique occupation and therefore presents some unique health and safety challenges.

\* (13:40)

For more than a decade CASA has been raising awareness about the importance of safety on Canadian farms through the Canadian agriculture safety week campaign, which includes the recent participation of Manitoba's Farm Safety Program.

This initiative serves as an opportunity to reflect on the importance of farm safety and provide producers with the resources needed to make their farms safer.

This year, the theme for Canadian Agricultural Safety Week is Supporting Seniors as a part of a three-year campaign, Be an AgSafe Family. The aim is to empower producer families with the information they need to help kids, adults and seniors remain safe on the farm while preserving the way of life that is beloved and celebrated.

Today, we wear our burlap ribbons, which is a common product found on farms in addition to being the fabric of commerce in seed, feed and grain.

I encourage all members to wear their ribbons throughout the following week which will proudly affirm their commitment to keeping all Manitoba farmers, their farm families and farm workers safe.

Today, I am joined in the gallery by Renée Simcoe, Keith Castonguay from the Manitoba Farm Safety Program, in addition to Marcel Hacault from the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association and Dwight Doell from SAFE Work Manitoba. I ask the House join me in congratulating their hard work and dedication in addition to wishing everyone a happy Canadian Agriculture Safety Week.

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** Madam Speaker, Manitoba is a province that thrives

not only economically on agriculture, it is also a social and cultural institution in our province.

Generations of Manitobans have passed down family farms, committing their lives to providing quality food to Manitobans, across Canada and around the world. Agricultural Safety Week encourages farmers to identify potential hazards and safety concerns to ensure a safe and secure workplace for farmers and farmworkers.

Farmers and Manitobans deserve strong prevention measures that ensure safety for themselves, their employees, families and their animals. As a Legislature we should be taking steps to improve safety on Manitoba farms.

But actions speak louder than words, Madam Speaker. Just last year the Pallister government revoked the Manitoba Farm Building Code. The previous code required new buildings to install fire safety technology, a means to prevent devastating farm fires. It appears, Madam Speaker, that this government is more concerned with perceived red tape than with real farm safety.

We, on this side of the House, will continue to hold this government to account and will continue to promote safety on our farms. Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member have leave to respond to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, as technology and machinery progress, so do the dangers that our farmers face. Farming, sadly, is at the top of the list of the most dangerous career choices in Manitoba, with more deaths over the last decade than any other industry. This does not need to be the case. Indeed, this should be the focus during Ag Safety Week of changing and improving this.

The last government didn't sufficiently address the problem. The question now is: Will the present government?

Farms employ a large number of older and youth employees, both groups being statistically higher risk for workplace injury. Today's farms are getting larger, usually bigger and more powerful equipment and with more employees than ever before. They also have limited time and resources, further limiting their capacity to invest in necessary safety measures.

Farmers face many competing regulatory requirements, complicating the process of creating a safe work environment. The safety regulations present difficulties as well as many are not designed for application in the farm setting or are relevant to all sizes of farms.

The health and safety risks in farming are diverse and numerous; 82 per cent of injuries on farms result from equipment, overexertion and falls, slips and trips. These are injuries that can and should be prevented or limited with reasonable measures in place.

Despite the challenges, interest in safety is high among today's farmers, particularly among the younger generation. We must continue to raise awareness of safety issues in our farming community and encourage partnership with the farming community with respect for the independence that our farmers value.

Manitoba farmers require support to improve their capacity to implement safety measures and provide healthy and safe work environments, preserving the farm legacy for future generations. We're ready to work with the government to push for such support here in Manitoba.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Infrastructure, and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

#### **Traffic and Transportation Modernization Act**

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure):** Bill 14, The Traffic and Transportation Modernization Act, will bring the management of Manitoba roadways and transportation systems up to date for 2018 and far into the future.

Front-line provincial civil servants recommended changes in this area for streamlining and red tape reduction. These proposed amendments are based on recommendations from municipalities, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, provincial civil servants and businesses.

These updates to Manitoba's legislation will reflect the significant changes that have occurred in transportation and infrastructure systems over the last 30 years. Some examples of what we are doing

with this legislation include removing references to antiquated equipment such as frost shields, which can now only be found in the Manitoba Museum. As well, we will remove the need for manual turn signals on vehicles. We will also economically deregulate the charter bus market to allow for free competition, which will align our industry with the New West Partnership.

The Minister of Infrastructure will be able to declare provincial highway designation instead of spending Cabinet's valuable time on administrative issues.

We will dissolve the Highway Traffic Board, which will accomplish the following: municipalities will finally be able to set speed limits on municipal roads; the Department of Infrastructure will handle speed limits on all provincial roads; the rest of the Highway Traffic Board responsibilities will transfer to the Department of Infrastructure; Manitoba Infrastructure will set up an internal review process with an opportunity for final appeal to the minister.

Madam Speaker, the dissolution of the two boards results in the removal of over 2,500 regulatory requirements, which is a 50 per cent reduction. That's just with those two boards alone.

The new legislation focuses on economic changes and will not impact safety regulations.

I would like to thank our many partners who are engaged in the consultations, including some who join us here today in the gallery: Martin Harder, Henry Borger, Ralph Groening with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, Denys Volkov with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, Terry Shaw with the Manitoba Trucking Association, Dan Mazier with Keystone Agricultural Producers, Kerry Minsky with heavy equipment and aggregate trucking association of Manitoba and Jonathan Alward with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, as well as Colleen Sklar, partnership of Manitoba capital region.

This new regulatory framework will come into effect in stages over the next year as stakeholder consultations continue. We look forward to working with them after the legislation passes to update the regulations, policies and forms impacted by Bill 14.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I'd like to acknowledge the dedicated individuals and organizations who work hard in our province to keep our

roads safe. From cars and cyclists in our cities to large trucks on the highways, it's the policies and research of traffic engineers and traffic management organizations that ensure our roads are moving safely and efficiently.

As our province continues to grow, it becomes increasingly more important to invest in infrastructure projects that keep communities safe and accessible. Investments in road renewal, new bridges and traffic light repairs are needed to ensure that every family is safe on the road.

\* (13:50)

The key to tackling these projects is a provincial government that continually invests in municipal infrastructure through the Building Manitoba Fund. Unfortunately, this provincial government has failed to commit to maintaining the fund and increasing the investments needed.

Manitoba families see the results of these investments every day while they drive their kids to school or partners to work. They understand that a healthy city is one with strong infrastructure funding, safe roads and efficient traffic strategies. Sadly, too many families have lost loved ones to road accidents. These tragedies are reminder that—of our busiest times on the road, often during rush hour, in the—of the value of those people who ensure our communities are flowing safely and efficiently.

Thank you to those who find the best possible solutions for our communities so that every trip is a happy one. And I'd also like to recognize the partners in the gallery.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member have leave to speak to the minister's statement? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, we will debate the bill in due course, but I want to talk and lay out a few things that we would see as important to modernizing our traffic and transportation system: attaining high-quality roads with the support and partnership of industry and labour; building the traffic and transportation system so it's ready for self-driving and autonomous cars; building a rapid transit system in Winnipeg as a cornerstone for the future; making sure we have active transportation—cycling, 'walking' and, indeed, wheelchairs; new innovative approaches to building and maintaining roads to

achieving higher quality and greater durability; approaches to ensure high-quality roads to all Manitoba communities, including First Nation and Metis communities; improved traffic safety; and industry safety.

These are measures which we think are critical and we hope that this bill will actually help to achieve these because that is the final goal which we should be aiming for.

Thank you.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Lymphedema Association of Manitoba

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Madam Speaker, in 2014 I had the honour and the privilege of introducing a private member's bill, Bill 209, which officially made March 6th Lymphedema Awareness Day in Manitoba. This day is extremely important because it allows us a yearly opportunity to draw public attention to lymphedema as well as celebrate the forward movement made by Lymphedema Association of Manitoba and, of course, to honour all Manitobans who suffer from the illness.

In 2010 the necessity for stronger awareness of lymphedema was recognized and the groundwork began to create the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba, known as LAM. Between 2010-2014 more than 30 municipalities across Manitoba had committed to proclaiming March 6th as Lymphedema Awareness Day. A board was appointed in 2012, and since then LAM continues to make significant progress towards the development of treatments and providing access to quality resources for lymphedema patients.

Madam Speaker, it was also in 2012 when my constituent, Kim Avanthay, then president of LAM, contacted me with the proclamation request to recognize March 6th as Lymphedema Awareness Day. Kim's inspiration to form the patient-focused organization comes from her son Austin and their family's own experience in dealing with the condition.

Lymphedema is one of the most feared side effects of cancer treatment, yet there is still many people that don't know anything about the disease. Lymphedema Awareness Day is a day for the entire lymphedema community to take action.

Madam Speaker, in addition, tomorrow and Saturday the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba

is holding their symposium at the Deer Lodge Centre. We as Manitobans can do our part by supporting these types of events and all those who are affected by lymphedema.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment at this time to recognize all the past and present board members of the Lymphedema Association, some of who are in the gallery with us today: Susan Stratford, board president; Claire Ann Deighton-Lamy, board member; Dave Van Hellemond—

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to allow the member to continue to finish his statement? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, a rookie mistake.

Dave Van Hellemond, board member; Cherida Olson, board member; Sherry Normandeau, working group member; Wendy Leroux, working group member; Lilianne Foster, working group member.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I encourage everyone to take the opportunity to make their way down to the Deer Lodge Learning Centre over the next couple days.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet?

**Mr. Ewasko:** Madam Speaker, I just ask leave that there are a couple other names of board members who are unable to join us today and I'd like to have their names entered in Hansard as well as the others that are in attendance.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the member have leave to add those names into Hansard? *[Agreed]*

*Lymphedema Association of Manitoba board members: Claire Ann Deighton-Lamy, Cara Hutchison, Cherida Olson, Rupal Purohit, Susan Stratford, Susan Tole, David Van Hellemond*

### **Ikwe Safe Ride: Women Helping Women**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Madam Speaker, on this International Women's Day, I honour the amazing and determined women who have reshaped our city by establishing the Ikwe Safe Ride: Women Helping Women service.

In response to women and girls sharing experiences of sexist, misogynistic and racist

behaviour while riding public transit or utilizing taxi services, Ikwe Safe Ride began a Facebook group as a platform to connect women in need of a safe ride with female volunteer drivers. Ikwe Safe Ride provides transportation similar to taxi services in a way where women feel safe even if they have no ability to pay.

Despite the fact that they receive no funding and operate off small donations received by community members, Ikwe Safe Ride has since delivered over 43,000 safe rides in the last two years with 16,500 female members and 50 volunteer drivers who provide services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This indispensable service is also used by thousands of women who visit the city from northern communities and now have a guaranteed safe mode of transportation while they are visiting and away from home.

Ikwe provides transportation services ranging from emergency to routine trips to the grocery store. Drivers often build relationships with riders and even offer a safe way for families to get to festivals, beaches or parks in the summer.

Rides are also popular with women who are simply looking for a safe way to get home after a night out. This allows women to leave their cars at home with the assurance there is a safe and caring service available at the end of the night.

Despite significant challenges due to a lack of funding and the demand for more drivers, the women of Ikwe have made Winnipeg a safer place for thousands of Winnipeg—I say—for Winnipeg—the women of Winnipeg. I apologize.

I say miigwech to the members of Ikwe Safe Ride for the love and care that you've provided Manitoba women for the last two years, and I ask this House if they would rise and recognize the women from Ikwe.

### **Albertine Lagassé**

**Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Good afternoon to my fellow members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, and thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today.

I am rising today to honour the remarkable 100th birthday of a Dawson Trail constituent, Albertine Lagassé, my grandmother.



Albertine Grégoire was born on June 15th, 1918. Albertine married Armand Lagassé in 1944. They lived in Barrie, Ontario for a time, after which they settled in St. Adolphe.

Armand Lagassé served in the Second World War, and Albertine wrote a letter to him every day until his return. Together, they raised nine children in St. Adolphe.

Albertine was considered a domestic engineer. She would get up at 5 o'clock in the morning to milk the cows and then come in and get the lunches made for the kids to get off to school.

Albertine suffered many challenges over the years, caused by five major floods. They also lost their house to fire in 1967. The volunteer help they received at that time from friends and family proved how much they were loved and respected in the village of St. Adolphe. They also—they were also saddened by the death of their son, Ron, in a car accident in 1969.

Albertine was very involved in her community as a member of La Ligue des Femmes Catholiques and Le Club Amical.

Albertine never had a driver's licence, never drank or smoked and is also in very good physical health. These are the reasons why we believe she will reach her 100th birthday very soon.

\* (14:00)

Today, she is loved and cherished by 21 grandchildren, 41 great-grandchildren, some of who—whom who are present here today in the gallery to help celebrate this incredible milestone.

Madam Speaker, I thank the House for their time and ask that we stand to honour Albertine Lagassé and the family members who are here to join us in the gallery today.

#### **MKO Reform Summit—William Osborne**

**Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook):** I heard a great elder speak at the MKO reform summit, William Osborne from Pimicikamak First Nation. Here are some of his words.

I would've loved to hear from the government and the staff, not for this place only, but to our people and our children, because it's exactly what you're saying in your presentation that I am here to tell you that reading and listening to all the inputs of all the inquiries—the truth and reconciliation recommendations, United Nations Declaration on the

Rights of Indigenous Peoples and children—I am here to say that this is what you had in the first place. This is what we took away from you. This is what we literally destroyed in you and about you.

I am here to tell you on behalf of my government that this is not going to happen anymore, that I'm here to tell you that we will put a stop to this and we will make it right, unconditionally. We will do what is in the best interests of your people, of your children and the unborn.

We have the funds that you need because that's the funds that we have taken in trafficking you and your children in this place called Canada. We have the funds to give you that we have taken from your waters, the very land of your people, the beautiful forests we've cut down, from using space. We have the funds to give you so that you can do the things that you want to do for yourselves and your people in accordance with the UN declaration and according to the international treaties and laws.

My government is prepared to do that today, so that from here on in, to show the true spirit of healing and reconciliation, it shall begin between you and me.

Miigwech.

#### **World Kidney Day**

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Madam Speaker, today is World Kidney Day, a global campaign aimed at increasing awareness of the importance of our kidneys to our overall health. On this occasion, World Kidney Day and International Women's Day are commemorated on the same day, offering us the opportunity to reflect on the importance of women's health and specifically their kidney health. Chronic kidney disease, or CKD, affects one in 10 people worldwide. In Manitoba, there are one in 9 people who are impacted by CKD. Women may be more susceptible to CKD.

Madam Speaker, I've been given the honour of chairing the task force on organ and tissue donation. We have met twice, as recently as Tuesday afternoon, and heard many detailed and touching presentations. We continue to receive information by text, email and phone. Thank you to the presenters and to those who have sent us information. Thank you to the members of the task force who have learned a great deal about a critical challenge for Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we've had some success in Manitoba with respect to kidney transplants. In 2016, there were 57 kidney transplants. In 2017, we had a record 77 Manitobans who received a kidney transplant, 33 of those were from living kidney donors. One of those donors was one of our sons, Andrew.

Thank you to the donors and the donor families. It can be a difficult decision for both living donors and the families of deceased donors. Transplant Manitoba and the Gift of Life team has been working very hard to ensure Manitoba families are offered the opportunity for organ and tissue donation when the time is right.

Madam Speaker, we heard on the task force that we have come a long way, but there are many challenges and much further to go. One donor can save eight lives.

I encourage all Manitobans to discuss organ and tissue donation with their families and loved ones and please go to the website and [signupforlife.ca](http://signupforlife.ca).

#### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** At this time we have some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you.

We have seated in the public gallery from Wolseley School, 43 grade 4 to 6 students under the direction of Vanessa Wiehler and Riley Streifler, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer).

On behalf of all of us here, we welcome you all to our Manitoba Legislature.

And seated in the loge to my left we have the former MLA for Burrows, Doug Martindale. We'd like to welcome him here today as well.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### Cut to Special Drug Program Impact on Manitobans

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, today is International Women's Day. It's an important day to thank women for the enormous contributions they have made to our world and I'm proud to count among my colleagues women who've been trailblazers in politics as well as women who have changed our country with their activism.

In my own family I'm lucky to be married to a beautiful, talented woman who works every day to make people in our communities healthier. All the

good sense I have I learned from my mother and I could probably stand to learn more of her humility, and then there's my sisters in my family; let's just say they got the brains in our family.

So to them, to you and to all women, I want to say thank you and happy International Women's Day.

The Premier has decided to cut the special drugs program here in our province. This is a misguided decision which will only cause people harm and impact their pocketbooks. So I'd ask him to reconsider his decision and restore the special drugs program in our province.

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, as my colleague has just done, Madam Speaker, I'd be remiss in not commenting on the celebration we share today, International Women's Day. I would say every day at our home is International Women's Day, quite frankly. We have a home which is dominated by women's issues and by strong women. And they guide me, and I thank them for guiding me on these and many other issues as well.

I know many of our members here have that kind of guidance in their families, and it's a guidance we should treasure and I certainly do.

In respect of the emotional issue of providing health care, it is exactly that, Madam Speaker. It's the No. 1 priority of Manitobans and it will remain the No. 1 priority of this government to make sure that we offer sustainable health care not just for today, but truly for the future as well.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** No one voted in the last election to pay thousands of dollars more each year for life-saving medication. This is just another broken promise on the part of this Premier and his government.

There's over 1,100 Manitobans who are currently covered under the special drugs program, Manitobans like Tara-Lynn Reeves who is here with us today. Now, Tara-Lynn suffers from cystic fibrosis. Without any warning this government gave her two months to find thousands of dollars to cover the cost of her drugs. Now the Premier's cuts will have a real impact on Manitobans and will force some to choose between rent, food or the drugs that they need to stay alive.

We already know that there are thousands of Canadians who go without medication each year

because of the high cost of drugs. We have an opportunity right now to embrace universal pharmacare in this country. However, this government is taking us in the wrong direction.

Will the Premier reconsider his misguided decision to end the special drugs program?

**Mr. Pallister:** A couple of myths that need to be dispelled in the member's preamble, Madam Speaker.

First of all, in respect of broken promises the member has great expertise in that, as do his colleagues. I won't belabour the point except to say that the belittling of the incomes of Manitobans is something which should never be taken lightly, especially after promises are made to people that their taxes will not rise. Less money in the households of Manitobans makes it harder for Manitobans to get the things they need and to thrive on a financial level.

I would also say, in terms of the myth of his reference to cuts, we need to dispel that yet again. Our budget this year is fully over \$500 million more for health care than it ever was under the NDP administration, and we're proud of that.

Madam Speaker, we're committed to maintaining the most generous Pharmacare program in the country of Canada. That's what we'll do.

\*(14:10)

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

**Mr. Kinew:** It's pretty clear that's not what he's doing.

In fact, for some of the people who are currently covered under the special drugs program they will be paying eleven, maybe twelve thousand dollars a year in unexpected medical expenses—\$12,000 a year just for the drugs that they need to stay alive.

So the quality of life is going to be worse and the pocketbooks are going to be hurt because of this Premier's decision making.

Now, the people are speaking out. People like Devin Rei who is with us today. He also suffers from cystic fibrosis which we know is a debilitating and chronic condition. He will now have to pay nearly \$11,000 a year because of this Premier's cuts. He's tried to reach out to his MLA, the member for St. James (Mr. Johnston). He's heard no response.

He's tried to reach out to the Minister of Health; no response.

So will the Premier agree to meet with Devin and the other folks here with us today who are being impacted by the special drug program and tell them to their face why they will no longer be covered for life-saving medication?

**Mr. Pallister:** Madam Speaker, I will assure the people the member has referenced and all Manitobans that we will diligently make sure we have a generous Pharmacare program that ranks among the best in the country and we will continue to assure Manitobans of that security.

There is no security, Madam Speaker, in an administration that squanders a billion dollars a year, and that is exactly what the previous NDP administration did, to the point that this year for the first time in Manitoba history we have a billion dollars that we have to commit to servicing past overspending—a billion dollars we can't put towards health care today because past administrations, the NDP administration in particular, chose to say yes to everything today at the expense of tomorrow.

The people in our gallery, the people around our province deserve health care that they know will be there for them tomorrow, not just today and, Madam Speaker, we are committed to making sure that our health-care system is sustainable for us and for our children and grandchildren as well.

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

#### **Transit Services Municipal Funding Agreement**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** It would have been very easy for the Premier just to say yes, I'll meet with Devin, yes I'll meet with the others and talk to them about the issue that they feel so passionately about. So I'd invite him to take his next opportunity to speak to use it and say yes, I will sit down and speak with some of the people who are going to be impacted by these cuts.

Speaking of other people who the Premier appears not willing to meet with, the mayor of Winnipeg is speaking out about the cuts that are being handed down to the City, and we know that it impacts many other municipalities across the province, but now the consequences of these cuts that are being downloaded are starting to become apparent.

People in Winnipeg now have to pay \$100 a month for their bus pass because this government ended the funding arrangement to offer 50 per cent of the coverage for transit services in this city. Nobody voted for that. This government's bringing in a new budget next week, so why won't they fix their mistake?

Will the Premier commit in his budget on Monday to restoring the 50-50 transit funding arrangement?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** What we'll commit to do, Madam Speaker, is what we are doing. We're maintaining a strong relationship with all municipalities, including the City of Winnipeg. We are maintaining funding support for those programs which they offer and we are taking the strings away which the previous NDP government put in the way of their ability to actually manage the program funding they received.

We are doing these things because we understand that we must be Canada's most improved province and in order to do that we need Winnipeg to be Canada's most improved city. We'll continue to partner with the mayor and his council in every respect to make sure that the goals they have are goals which align with the provincial goals of a-sustaining and improving services to Manitobans giving them greater security, greater stability and greater opportunity as well.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** It doesn't appear that the Premier knows what it's like for the average Manitoban. He doesn't appear to realize that the average Manitoban doesn't get to take eight weeks of vacation each and every year. It doesn't appear that he understands the impact that \$100 a month—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —in transit fares is going to have on seniors who live in our constituencies, on young people who are trying to get to work so that they can provide for themselves and get a leg up in our society.

Now, the massive rise in transit fares in Winnipeg is due to the drop in funding that this provincial government cut—had last year. Now, this is almost the exact same amount, this \$8.3-million drop in funding, that the Premier has spent on his

high-priced consultants. So in that dichotomy there, we see the Premier's true priorities.

Will he reverse course, put the money where it belongs and restore the 50-50 funding agreement for transit in the upcoming budget?

**Mr. Pallister:** In a contest of demonstrating empathy, Madam Speaker, the member is not only without ammunition, but his record is one of fortune. He, himself, has admitted the good fortune he's enjoyed in his life. I, myself, have not been so blessed.

And so, Madam Speaker, I tell the member this: that if he wants to go to the area of personal attack, I won't return the charge back to him. But I tell him I understand what it's like to run out of money before the month ends. I understand because that's where I come from. I'm not a child of tenured university professors. I'm a boy from a farm who made my way in life through hard work and honesty and integrity in my behaviour, and I do not like these attacks.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** It appears that I touched a nerve with the Premier. I don't know if it was mentioning—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —the impact that his cuts are having on people here in the province. I don't know if maybe it was mentioning the word vacation or pointing out that he's acknowledged he takes eight weeks of vacation a year. But, again, the Premier appears to have lost his compassion for the reality that the people of our province—the reality that they're facing as a result of the cuts—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —that he's making.

Now, again, the City of Winnipeg is just starting to feel the pain, but there are other cautionary agreements with the cities of Brandon, Selkirk, Steinbach, the Town of Beausejour, the RM of Brokenhead, even Flin Flon. All of these systems are under threat because of this Premier's cut.

Will he, in this upcoming budget, step back from this mistaken course that he's put this province on and, instead, restore the 50-50 funding agreement for transit?

**Mr. Pallister:** I work very hard at my relationships with my wife and children and had three weeks of vacation with them last year and I will not apologize to that member or anyone else for having had a solid marriage for 34 years of my life.

Secondly, in respect of empathy, I'm the child of two parents who were disabled, Madam Speaker: debilitating arthritis for my mother, polio for my father. I don't need lessons in empathy from the member opposite. Good fortune isn't something that dogged my family, but we rose above the challenges that we were presented with.

The City of Winnipeg does not have such challenges as I've experienced and many Manitobans have experienced in their life. They have the most generous funding arrangement of any city in the country. We plan to keep it that way.

### **Education System Funding Special Requirement Limit**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Teachers and educators want to provide good quality education for our children, but the funding cuts from this Minister of Education are forcing terrible choices on school divisions. The facts are very clear, Madam Speaker. Enrolment is up, but funding is the smallest it's been in a generation.

The only way to square this circle is to raise taxes or to lay off staff.

Why is the government forcing cuts for teachers and children?

**Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training):** I appreciate the question from the member. We have put forward a challenge to our school boards across the province to try and hold their increases to under 2 per cent in their special levy. In the meantime we are providing, as a government, nearly \$50 million more than the previous government ever did—a record amount of \$1.323 billion.

I know it's a challenge for school divisions. It's never an easy life when you choose to be elected and to represent and make some tough choices in life, but we expect them to live up to that challenge.

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

\* (14:20)

**Ms. Fontaine:** The minister has promised to prevent school divisions from raising their special

requirement more than 2 per cent, but he hasn't been clear about what he will do if school divisions actually defy his order.

The Pallister government's underfunding of education is forcing unfair choices on divisions: raise rates or cut staff.

Will the minister force Winnipeg School Division to cut staff if they try to raise the special requirement more than 2 per cent?

**Mr. Wishart:** I thank the member for the question.

Certainly, we are very prepared to work with school divisions. We work with them every day to try and make sure that we get the best quality education that we can for Manitoba students. But it should be remembered that funding in Manitoba is already at the second highest level of any province in Canada.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** Our students and teachers understand that the minister is forcing difficult choices on our school divisions, and as the Winnipeg School Division explained this morning, they need supports to continue maintenance and upgrades to their older schools.

The minister is tying their hands, forcing them to either defer the upgrades—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** —or to make cuts.

Will the minister reverse course and fund our schools so that all students can get the education they rightly deserve?

**Mr. Wishart:** I thank the member especially for that question, because when we came to the government we inherited an—a maintenance 'definice'—deficit in Manitoba education system of over \$400 million.

We have endeavoured very hard to make up that shortfall by focusing on making sure that we had repairs for those that—issues that related to safety and security both for those teachers involved in the system and for the students especially in the system.

Madam Speaker, I'm sure that the member should reflect on what she passed to this government.

**Expiration of Federal Housing Agreements  
Rent Increase Concerns for Low-Income  
Manitobans**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** Several federal housing agreements will be expiring throughout the year, meaning hundreds of Manitobans could face huge increases in rent. Over 1,000 units will be affected across Manitoba from Winnipeg to Melita, Carmen to Grandview. This could impact thousands of Manitobans.

According to the freedom of information request, up to 20 per cent of the affected units will be low-income tenants this year, but two years from now nearly all of the affected units will be low income. We cannot allow these families to be abandoned. It's up to this Manitoba government to step up and make sure seniors and 'oner'—other vulnerable Manitobans are not forced out of their homes by these rent increases.

Will this minister take action?

**Hon. Cathy Cox (Acting Minister of Families):** I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question.

Quite often, you know, we take housing for granted, but our government realizes the importance of having safe, affordable housing for all Manitobans. And that's why I'm very proud of the event that took place, probably just a few weeks ago, over at Siloam Mission, where our government actually funded additional beds specifically for women so that we can ensure that women have the ability to be housed in safe—in a safe location during those very cold winter months and during the entire season, Madam Speaker. We're very proud of that.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a supplementary question.

**Mrs. Smith:** Many of the units affected by the expired federal agreement are low-income seniors living in Lions Place housing. They're facing a 22 per cent increase in their rent; more than 2,000 additional dollars a year that they don't have. These are low-income seniors who live on fixed incomes. A drastic increase in their rent could mean—could be impossible for them and they'll be forced to make cutbacks or decisions like cutting their medication, their food bills, or life—basic life necessities. They need immediate action from this provincial government. They don't need more forms or referrals.

Will the minister step up and help these seniors?

**Mrs. Cox:** Thanks again to the member opposite for the question.

Members opposite had 17 years under the NDP government to do something and ensure that there was safe, affordable housing for Manitobans. They left \$500 million in deferred maintenance for housing in Manitoba for those individuals with low incomes.

We'll get it right, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a final supplementary.

**Mrs. Smith:** I keep hearing this narrative: where they got it wrong, we'll get it right. I still have not seen it. There's—a national housing strategy announced by the federal government needs provincial support. They won't—there won't be enough to meet demand without the provincial government's commitment to contribute.

We heard yesterday, in a report, they're asking for funds to be matched. My hopes are not high as I watch this minister hike rents for Manitoba Housing residents and cut the Rent Assist benefits.

Will the minister commit to contributing provincial dollars to the federal housing plan so that Manitobans can get the quality, safe housing that they so deserve and not have their rents shot up?

**Mrs. Cox:** I would like to thank the member opposite for that question. I'd like to also share with her the fact that we are developing an affordable housing strategy and that our government did undertake consultations, and we actually have published a what-we-heard document forming the provincial housing strategies.

So we're working on this, Madam Speaker. It's not like the government opposite who just sat on their hands for 17 years and didn't concern themselves about funding or housing for those individuals that really need it most. So, we're going to get it right.

**Manitoba's Film Industry  
Request to Retain Tax Credit**

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan):** Madam Speaker, the Finance Minister may have overlooked Manitoba's potential as an arts and cultural capital of Canada. Despite getting an extra \$2 billion in equalization payments from the federal government, the minister has hinted that he plans to cut a modest tax credit to Manitoba's growing film industry. We've seen this

government cut transit, infrastructure and capital plans. Now they want to attack a treasured arts and cultural sector that supports a vibrant and important sector of our economy.

Will the minister commit to keeping the film tax credit in the budget next week?

**Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** And I would like to remind the member opposite that it was our government who first introduced that video and film tax credit. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Cox:** But today I am actually very pleased to talk about the women who are involved in the film industry here in Manitoba as it is International Women's Day. I would like to talk about their successes and achievements that they've made here in Manitoba.

Forty per cent of business owners that own businesses in the film industry are women, Madam Speaker. They have dominated this industry for many years, an industry that's usually dominated by males predominately. So we're very, very proud of them—

**Madam Speaker:** The minister's time has expired.

The honourable member for Logan, on a supplementary question.

**Ms. Marcelino:** The women mentioned by the minister thrived in the film industry business because of the tax credit that was given by the previous government to that industry.

Madam Speaker, the government's— *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Marcelino:** —KPMG report recommended cutting the Province's film tax credit, citing Nova Scotia as a test case. Advised by KPMG, Nova Scotia made a similar cut back in 2015. The industry faced serious losses as Nova Scotia's young, educated and highly mobile film industry workers left the province, taking a portion of Nova Scotia's GDP with them.

\* (14:30)

Will this government commit to maintaining the film tax—

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

**Mrs. Cox:** Thanks again to the member opposite for that very important question.

You know, business is booming in the film industry here in Manitoba. We have, just as a matter of fact, yesterday, Frantic Films, Jeff Peeler and his very fine film industry group actually won four awards yesterday in Toronto. So proud of that.

And, you know, I've had the opportunity— *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Cox:** —to speak to many, many directors and film producers here in Manitoba recently, and every time I pick up the phone and talk to them they are so excited about what's happening here in Manitoba, whether it's a new series that's coming to Manitoba, whether it's a new film.

We are open for business, Madam Speaker—

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

The honourable member for Logan, on a final supplementary.

#### **Book Publishing Industry Request to Retain Tax Credit**

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan):** Just wondering: will these film industry folks be interested or delighted when they hear their tax credit is cut? But anyway, we'll see.

Madam Speaker, the government's KPMG report recommends cutting the Book Publishing Tax Credit, which means that fewer local authors will be able to share their stories. Chad Friesen, the CEO of Manitoba's largest book-printing company, Friesens Corporations in Altona, says, cutting the tax credit—cutting the credit means local book printers will also have to cut jobs.

Will this government commit to maintaining the Book Publishing Tax Credit in Monday's budget?

**Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** Thanks again to the member opposite.

I am very excited about our budget that we're introducing on March the 12th on Monday. And she references Chad Friesen. I've had the opportunity to speak directly with Mr. Friesen, and we've had really good discussions with regard to the printing and publishing tax credit.

We know the importance of the printing and publishing tax credit here in Manitoba and the

requirement to be competitive with our neighbouring provinces. Well, we will ensure that we do, you know, the best that we can in the March 12th budget.

#### **National Pharmacare Program**

##### **Request to Suspend Special Drug Program Cuts**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** The special drug program that this government cut is forcing Manitobans to choose between their medications and essential needs. Three of these Manitobans are here with us today, and they expressed their concern along with many others that this government should be moving—should be moving, Madam Speaker—to ensure more Manitobans can afford their medications rather than the complete opposite and making prescribed medications totally unaffordable.

The question is: Will this government consider delaying the charges to a special drug program until a national program is operational?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** The member and members of the Liberal caucus have been strangely silent, Madam Speaker. They've been mute. They've been mum. They've been mistaken in their lack of advocating with us on behalf of those who need health-care support in our province in the face of federal Liberal cuts. This is their compatriots in Ottawa who are cutting \$2.2 billion over the next decade. They have said nothing.

Today would be the day for them to come clean and announce, finally, that they oppose these cuts to Manitoba health care. I invite them to do so now.

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

#### **Calls for Unanimous Support**

**Ms. Lamoureux:** I would suggest the Premier refer to Hansard because I've spoken about health care, specifically a national pharmacare plan, quite often here in these chambers.

Madam Speaker, over 10 per cent of Manitobans have to sacrifice essential needs like turning down the temperature in their homes in this cold weather because they cannot afford prescription medication that will improve their health.

With the NDP's recent support for a national program, which, by the way, I'm glad they got on board with, we could send a strong message to Ottawa, a unanimous message, Madam Speaker.

Will this government join our pharmacare movement so that the Legislative Assembly of

Manitoba can say that all political parties here in our province have come together to ensure all Manitobans get the health care they need?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Madam Speaker, we may have something of a breakthrough on this important afternoon where we may actually finally have a unanimous message—a unanimous message to the federal Liberal government that they need to be a real partner when it comes to health care.

I'm sure that the member knows, because she has friends in the Liberal caucus in Ottawa, that, in fact, there's been a reduction of support from the federal government such to the point that they now only provide 19 per cent of the costs of health care in Manitoba, and that continues to go down.

So if she's looking for unanimous support, she's finally found it. We've been strongly there, maybe the NDP are there. If she wants to join us, we'll have unanimous support in the House, Madam Speaker.

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

#### **Affordable Prescription Drugs Request for Manitoba Plan**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows):** Ideally, it would be nice to see a national pharmacare program. However, nothing prevents our province from demonstrating strong leadership on this file by making a commitment similar to what the Province of Ontario has done, and say that we will move forward with a pharmacare program so that all Manitobans will have access to the medications they need, no matter what.

Whatever the outcome may be nationally, what is this government going to do to ensure Manitobans can afford their prescribed medications?

Thank you.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Madam Speaker, I would hope that the member would know that Manitoba has one of the most comprehensive Pharmacare programs in all of Canada.

In fact, when I had the opportunity to speak to the federal Minister of Health at Health minister meetings, they point to Manitoba as one of the demonstrations of a successful Pharmacare program. In fact, I might go so far as to say that the federal Liberals are actually trying to emulate what is



happening in Manitoba. Our program is so comprehensive, it is so good that it is a national standard across our country. We continue to keep that way. In fact, we continue to enhance it, Madam Speaker.

**Civil Service Anti-Harassment Measures  
No Wrong Door Policy Announcement**

**Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital):** Happy International Women's Day to everyone here, across our province, in Canada and around the world. Let us continue to press for change.

Now, as it is International Women's Day, can the minister for the Status of Women update the Assembly on what important steps our Progressive Conservative government has taken to ensure that everyone in the civil service is—can feel safe?

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women):** I'd like to thank my friend and colleague from St. Vital for that question, and I'm very proud to be part of a government who is implementing a policy, a no wrong door policy, so that we can change the culture in this building and change the culture throughout the entire civil service so that we know that women come—when women come to work for the Manitoba government, wherever they work, they can be free of harassment.

And I'm very, very pleased and very proud of our Premier (Mr. Pallister) who is leading the charge and changing the culture in this building for the women today and future generations of women who will come and work in this building.

Thank you.

**Lake St. Martin Outlet  
Timeline for Tenders**

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** The Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) has created a big mess and even the Premier admits it.

The minister was asked on Tuesday if contracts for the road at the Lake St. Martin outlet had been tendered, and his response: yes, they have been tendered. Well, we all know that was false. The minister then said he misspoke, but we know he only admitted his mistake when he actually got caught.

The Premier needs to hold his ministers accountable when they misinform Manitobans.

What action will this Premier take to hold the misinforming minister accountable?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** The member understands fully what sole-source tendering is because, of course, his government did a lot of it.

The difference is we do it with indigenous people as a matter of helping them have jobs and they do it with party donors instead.

\* (14:40)

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

**Mr. Maloway:** The government did promise that they would not have sole-source tendering. They were very clear about that.

We know that this minister can't get his facts straight. He either doesn't know what his department is doing, or he isn't giving Manitobans the actual facts.

The Premier said it clearly yesterday—and I was there, I heard this—if the minister made the mess, he'll clean it up, not the Premier.

But the Premier can't duck responsibility for the actions of his accident-prone minister. He can't pretend that these decisions—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Maloway:** —aren't approved at Treasury Board or Cabinet.

What action will the Premier take to make sure the minister's not giving false information to Manitobans?

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure):** For 50 years Manitobans who live and work around Lake Manitoba waited for the Lake St. Martin channels. In fact, they waited for 17 years for the NDP to do something and they got talk, talk, more talk and then nothing. The last two years, Madam Speaker, we've begun the process of building the Lake St. Martin channels.

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

**Mr. Maloway:** The minister—this particular minister was caught red-handed giving false information to Manitobans. He did not stand up and come clean. The Heavy Construction Association had to call him out and force him to tell Manitobans the real facts.

And I want to ask the Premier: Does the Premier think the minister who made the mess is the right person to clean it up?

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, Madam Speaker, after the 2011 flood our government recognized that individuals who live around the lake, particularly those that were the most impacted, deserved another chance at getting their lives back together again. We know that many of those residents are now being moved back. Their houses are being rebuilt; they're at new locations. And we think all Manitobans find it reasonable that we would offer them an opportunity, that we would offer them hope that they could get work in their communities, build their communities. And we will get the Lake St. Martin channels built.

### **Carbon Pricing Revenue Transition to Low-Carbon Economy**

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and happy International Women's Day to you and to everyone.

My question today relates to climate change. In the budget that we will see next week the government has signalled that climate emissions will be front and centre. Our position has been that every dollar collected in a new carbon tax should go to helping us transition to a low-carbon economy and help vulnerable communities and people avoid the worst impacts of that necessary change.

The government is going the opposite direction with cuts to transit. I'm wondering, will this government commit to the pay-as-you-save idea we have proposed to help people and municipalities save money and reduce emissions at the same time?

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development):** I'd like to welcome my critic back to this Chamber and I look forward to another season of healthy debate.

I'm glad he brought up the climate—our Climate and Green Plan. We are very, very proud of our Climate and Green Plan. It is the most robust plan that this province has ever seen, and where the previous administration failed on reducing emissions, where the previous administration failed on meeting any targets in regards to reducing our climate—or carbon footprint in the province, where they failed, we're going to get it right, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Altemeyer:** Well, I'd love to take that very non-partisan answer as a qualified yes. We might not quite be there yet, so let's try another angle.

Manitobans, right now, whether they live in a home or in an apartment or where they work, where they may choose to worship, the price of heating all of these locations is about to go up. And yet, at the same time the government's rather tortured process towards something called—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** —Efficiency Manitoba, at last report has no budget, no staff and no plan.

I'm wondering, will the government commit to providing pay-as-you-save, no-interest, long-term loans so that all of us can do our part for climate change while saving money in an effective way?

**Ms. Squires:** What I'm pleased to commit to the member opposite and commit to all Manitobans is that the mess that the NDP made of Manitoba Hydro, this government is going to get it cleaned up.

We understand that they—that the mismanagement of the—Hydro has escalated utility rates based on their previous actions. And where they failed, we're going to get it right. Our Manitoba—Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan, it's better for the environment and better for the economy.

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

**Mr. Altemeyer:** If the government has been noticing the policy announcements we've been making, we have pointed out, politely, that Manitoba Hydro actually earns triple the amount of money when more electricity is used here in Manitoba, such as when a government makes available long-term, no-interest, pay-as-you-save loans so that all of us can stop using fossil fuels, which drain billions out of our economy every year and instead use more made-in-Manitoba green electricity.

This will improve Manitoba Hydro's bottom line in such a way that we do not need the enormous rate increases that their new board is proposing.

Will the government commit to this concept and that all carbon revenues will go to these important causes as of next week?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, Madam Speaker, the NDP's record on mismanaging Manitoba Hydro's well understood and will be a

black mark in the history of this province. It will take decades for Manitobans to get out from under the massive debt load that the previous government created when they pursued a misguided strategy of overproducing for American customers of Manitoba Hydro.

They placed the interests of their political party ahead of the interests of Manitobans and they've been taking money off the kitchen table, and it will have to come off in increasing amounts. We know that, Madam Speaker, because of the mismanagement of the previous administration.

But countering that, Madam Speaker, they had absolutely no plan for environmental cleanup, none at all. In fact, their last plan was a back-of-the-napkin thing that would've required, to achieve its goals, every gas and diesel vehicle in the province to go off the road and not operate. Nonsense, Madam Speaker.

We have a plan that'll work better for our environment, it'll work better for our economy and we're moving ahead with that plan, Madam Speaker, to the benefit of Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

## PETITIONS

### Access to Health Care

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

- (1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public-health-care system

that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public-health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

This petition has been signed by H. King, J. Turner, T. Patterson and many other Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more, are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public-health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public-health-care

system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

Madam Speaker, this petition is signed by many Manitobans. Thank you.

#### **Northern Patient Transfer Program**

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitobans recognize that everyone deserves quality accessible health care.

(2) The people of northern Manitoba face unique challenges when accessing health care, including inclement weather, remote communities and seasonal roads.

(3) The provincial government has already unwisely cancelled northern health investments, including clinics in The Pas and Thompson.

(4) Furthermore, the provincial government has taken a course that will discourage doctors from practising in the North, namely, their decision to cut a grant program designed to bring more doctors to rural Manitoba.

(5) The provincial government has already substantially cut investments in roads and highways, which will make it more difficult for northerners to access health care.

(6) The provincial government austerity approach is now threatening to cut funding for essential programs such as the Northern Patient Transportation Program, which was designed to help some of the most vulnerable people in the province.

(7) The provincial government has recently announced it would cancel the airfare subsidy for some patient escorts who fly to Winnipeg for medical treatment, which will be devastating for patients with mobility issues, dementia, who are elderly and need assistance getting to the city.

(8) The challenges that northerners face will only be overcome if the provincial government respects, improves and adequately funds quality programs that were designed to help northerners, such as the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to recognize the absolute necessity of maintaining and improving the Northern Patient Transportation Program by continuing to respect Northern Patient Transfer agreements and funding these services in accordance with the needs of northern Manitobans.

And this petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

#### **Access to Health Care**

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency departments, intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more, are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public-health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse these cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public-health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of a provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health facilities.

Signed by many fine Manitobans.

### Vimy Arena

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** I'd like to present the following petition to the Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

The residents of Assiniboia, St. James, greater Winnipeg area and Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the City of Winnipeg to use the Vimy Arena site as an addiction treatment facility.

The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes, and the City has not considered any other locations that may be better suited, perhaps in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as St. Boniface Industrial Park or the 20,000 acres at CentrePort or the shrines hospital.

The City of Winnipeg has indicated that the Vimy Arena site will be rezoned from park to commercial use to accommodate the addiction treatment facility and not sought public input from the community to consider better uses for the facility consistent with the residential area.

(4) The provincial licensing system is akin to that of a dentist's office and clearly insufficient for the planned use of the site and—by the city and the province.

The—(5) The proposed rezoning changes the fundamental nature of the community zoned as a park area and the concerns of the residents of St. James regarding safety, property values and their way of life are not being properly addressed.

(6) The people of St. James are largely hard-working, blue collar and middle class citizens who are family-oriented toward children and seniors and do not have the financial resources that may exist in other neighbourhoods.

(7) This type of facility would never be considered for the—for—popular Assiniboine Park nor for Heubach Park which is between Park Boulevard East and West, even though it shares the same zoning designation as the Vimy Arena site.

(8) The City and Province would be setting a dangerous precedent with this, quote unquote, process that could put other neighbourhoods at risk for future unwanted development without proper consultation.

(9) The Province needs to be inclusive in decision-making processes and improve its program

to prevent drug abuse and better supervise the provision of drug prescriptions that could have led to addiction—addictive behaviour in the first place.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

\* (15:00)

To urge the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for an addiction treatment facility.

**Madam Speaker:** The member diverged from the words that were actually printed on the petition and added some new words, which is contrary to the rules.

I wonder if there is leave of the House to accept the petition as printed? [*Agreed*]

**TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA:**

*The background to this petition is as follows:*

*1. The residents of Assiniboia, St. James, greater Winnipeg area and Manitoba are concerned with the intention expressed by the City of Winnipeg (City) to use the Vimy Arena site as an addictions treatment facility.*

*2. The Vimy Arena site is in the middle of a residential area near many schools, churches, community clubs and senior homes and the City has not considered better suited locations in rural, semi-rural or industrial locations such as St. Boniface industrial park or the 20,000 acres at Centre Port.*

*3. The City of Winnipeg has indicated that the Vimy Arena site will be rezoned from park to commercial use to accommodate the addiction treatment facility and has not sought public input from the community to consider better uses for this facility consistent with a residential area.*

*4. The provincial licensing system is akin to that as of a dentist's office and is clearly insufficient for the planned use of the site by the city and the province.*

*5. The proposed rezoning changes the fundamental nature of the community, zoned as a park area, and the concern of residents of St. James regarding safety, property values, and their way of life are not being properly addressed.*

*6. The people of St. James are largely hard-working, blue collar, and middle class citizens who are family-oriented toward children and seniors, and do not have the financial resources of other neighborhoods.*

7. *This type of facility would never be considered for the popular Assiniboine park nor for Heubach Park (park between Park Blvd. east and west) even though it shares the same zoning designation as the Vimy Arena site.*

8. *The City and province would be setting a dangerous precedent with this "process" that could put other neighbourhoods at risk for future unwanted development without proper consultation.*

9. *The province needs to be inclusive in the decision making process and improve its programs to prevent drug abuse and better supervise the provision of drug prescriptions that could lead to addictive behaviour.*

*We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:*

*To urge the Provincial Government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Vimy Arena site is not used for an addiction treatment facility.*

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for—

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

#### Point of Order

**Madam Speaker:** Oh, the honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order.

**Mr. Fletcher:** I apologize for that, Madam Speaker. That was the first petition I've ever introduced in this place. I'll do better next time.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you.

#### Access to Health Care

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Direct cuts to front-line health-care services, including the closure of emergency intensive-care units, an urgent-care centre and more are occurring across the province.

(2) These health cuts will drastically reduce the ability of Manitobans to access timely, quality health-care services.

(3) The provincial government made these decisions unilaterally, failing to consult with front-line health-care providers—professionals who provide direct care to patients.

(4) The provincial government has had its main focus on the bottom line and failed to present a clear and detailed plan for the public-health-care system that will actually improve and optimize patient care in Manitoba—for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the cuts and closures that negatively impact patients' ability to access timely, quality health care.

(2) To urge the provincial government to make real investments in Manitoba's public-health-care system that will provide a direct benefit to patients, such as: increasing access to primary care, the development of provincial health human resource plan, increasing publicly funded personal-care homes across Manitoba and increasing the efficiencies of diagnostic testing in Manitoba's health-care facilities.

Signed by Lily O'Driscoll, Nancy Vystreil, Estelle [phonetic] Holden and many other Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** And just for clarity of the record, following the member for Assiniboia's (Mr. Fletcher) point of order, I would indicate that he did not have a point of order.

Grievances?

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

#### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader):** I wonder—Madam Speaker, we'd like to discuss today, debate the government motion entitled Special Committee on Proactive Disclosure Requirements for Provincial Candidates and, following that, Bill 11.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the House will consider the government motion of the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), followed by debate on Bill 11.

#### GOVERNMENT MOTION

**Madam Speaker:** So we will begin, then, with the government motion put forward by the Minister of Justice entitled Special Committee on Proactive Disclosure Requirements for Provincial Candidates.

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I move, seconded by the Government House Leader (Mr. Cullen),

THAT a Special Committee on Proactive Disclosure Requirements for Provincial Candidates (the Special Committee) be established to study and make recommendations regarding the requirement of candidates seeking office in, but not limited to, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly to disclose matters including (but not limited to):

- (a) past criminal background checks;
- (b) adult and child abuse registry checks; and
- (c) other matters which may be relevant for those who are seeking or holding office; and

THAT, except as otherwise provided in this motion, the Special Committee shall have the same status and follow the same practices and rules as a standing committee of this House, including:

- (a) having the same membership composition as the current composition of the standing committees of the House; and
- (b) having the power to establish a subcommittee for the purposes of carrying out any part of the Special Committee's work; and

THAT, within the parameters of the practices and rules of the House and the instructions of this motion, the Special Committee be authorized to decide how it will conduct its business, including deciding to hold meetings at such times and places it considers advisable to receive briefs and hear presentations; and

THAT, despite rule 4(12) the committee may meet in the months of June, July and August; and

THAT the Special Committee be able to call witnesses, including, but not limited to, the Chief Electoral Officer of Elections Manitoba, representatives from political parties, academia and other experts in ethics, political science and whatever field the Special Committee deems appropriate; and

THAT the Special Committee must report to the House by October 3, 2018.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Government House Leader,

THAT a Special Committee on Proactive Disclosure Requirements for Provincial Candidates (the Special

Committee) be established to study and make recommendations—

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**Madam Speaker:** Dispense?

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** There is no leave to dispense, so I will read the government motion.

THAT a Special Committee on Proactive Disclosure Requirements for Provincial Candidates (the Special Committee) be established to study and make recommendations regarding the requirement of candidates seeking office in, but not limited to, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly to disclose matters including (but not limited to):

- (a) past criminal background checks;
- (b) adult and child abuse registry checks, and
- (c) other matters which may be relevant for those who are seeking or holding office; and

THAT, except as otherwise provided in this motion, the Special Committee shall have the same status and follow the same practices and rules as a standing committee of the House, including:

- (a) having the same membership composition as the current composition of the standing committees of the House; and
- (b) having the power to establish a subcommittee for the purposes of carrying out any part of the Special Committee's work; and

THAT, within the parameters of the practices and rules of the House and the instructions of this motion, the Special Committee be authorized to decide how it will conduct its business, including deciding to hold meetings at such times and places it considers advisable to receive briefs and hear presentations; and

THAT, despite rule 4(12) the committee may meet in the months of June, July and August; and

THAT the Special Committee be able to call witnesses, including, but not limited to, the Chief Electoral Officer of Elections Manitoba, representatives from political parties, academia and other experts in ethics, political science or whatever field the Special Committee deems appropriate; and

THAT the Special Committee must report to the House by October 3, 2018.

**An Honourable Member:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

**Point of Order**

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** Madam Speaker, is a motion in order even though it refers to items outside the Legislative Assembly about people coming into the Legislative Assembly. It seems that this goes beyond the scope of the reach of this place.

**Madam Speaker:** I would point out that the member does not have a point of order. He has not indicated where there was a breach in a point of order and is—therefore, it is not a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I am pleased to rise today and speak to this motion which will improve democracy for all Manitobans.

From the very beginning, Madam Speaker, our government has taken steps to improve openness and transparency in Manitoba's electoral system. Our reforms have ended the vote tax—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Fletcher:** Yes. And, again, I—has this legislation—the point of order is, is this legislation consistent with the Constitution of Canada? Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** I would indicate to the member that he does not have a point of order. He is engaging in debate, and he could bring those points forward during the debate itself, and that at this time, he does not have a point of order, as he has not indicated a breach of the rules or practice of this House. So, if he has comments on this issue, I would encourage him to bring it forward in debate.

\*(15:10)

**Mrs. Stefanson:** This is a very important debate. I look forward to listening and hearing from all members of this Chamber and what their views are with respect to this very important motion that is before us to be debated today.

Our reforms have ended the vote tax and shortened by-election and general election periods to ensure consistency and predictability for voters. Recent changes to The Elections Act passed last year will also, Madam Speaker, expand the number of registered voters in Manitoba by creating a

permanent voter registry to replace costly and outdated door-to-door 'emunerations'.

Madam Speaker, today's motion is consistent with the important work we have done so far as a government, but it is—but it will also help as we work to end the culture of concealment in our politics. We can all cite many examples of this culture across party lines and across jurisdictions, but recent revelations have shown that this culture of concealment has unfortunately taken root right here in Manitoba.

It is time that we change that culture for the better. It is time that we level with Manitobans. Madam Speaker, it is time that we give voters the information they need to make an informed decision about the people who will represent them in this Chamber.

I want to make it clear, Madam Speaker, that it does not mean prying into the personal lives of candidates for public office. What it does mean is giving voters the tools to determine whether the candidate knocking on their door represents their beliefs and their values. It is those questions that Manitobans need answered. And one of the ways of answering them is for candidates to complete and disclose a criminal record check along with child and adult abuse registry checks. These are required as a condition of employment for many occupations in Manitoba including for positions in the public service.

Madam Speaker, we recognize that this is an issue that matters to all members of this House and to all political parties in Manitoba. This is why this motion will establish a special committee that replicates the composition of a standing committee of this Assembly so that members and parties are appropriately represented.

We also recognize that this is an issue Manitobans themselves care about, Madam Speaker. That is why this committee will be empowered to sit throughout the summer and call witnesses with real expertise, including, but not limited to, the Chief Electoral Officer, members of political parties and academics and others who the committee chooses to call upon. The discretion will be left up to the special committee to decide who, beyond that list provided—that they should hear from at these committee hearings.

The committee will also have the power to decide the extent to which other matters are



disclosed beyond the list that is included in this motion. And also, Madam Speaker, the special committee could expand the scope to include municipal councillors, school trustees, if they so choose. So we have left that door open and left up to the discretion of the committee to decide those parameters.

Madam Speaker, this is a debate and a discussion worth having here in the Manitoba Legislature. We must continue our work making our democracy more open and transparent for all Manitobans. But most of all, every single member of this House must work to end the culture of concealment in our politics, and that's exactly why we're bringing forward this motion today. And we look forward to hearing from other members, but we hope that they will stand with us in support of what will provide a better democracy for all Manitobans. And we hope that all members of this House will support this motion and pass it through today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** I'd like to begin my comments—I think I'd just offer the suggestion that, you know, in this building, in our jobs, we strive to provide good governance, good policy, if you will, and in good politics. And I think this is an example where the government, unfortunately, had an opportunity to bring forward really quite a decent policy proposal.

But there's elements of this which swing it way too far in the partisan direction, and I think it loses a lot of the potential good that could have come out of it.

I don't think many people are going to object to the idea of better vetting of political candidates. I think political parties obviously have an established interest in this already. And all of us have to do much better than what has been past practice. I think we can take all of that as a given.

I'm not at all convinced that having other politicians vet other politicians is going to result in something productive. I think the potential for something like this to end up very much into a partisan festival which none of us will be very proud of looking back on is really quite high.

And there are many areas in our lives as elected officials where we have found that it's very difficult to make the decision. You can take examples like what our wages are supposed to be, what is our—how have—our operating budgets supposed to be. Those

are now done in an independent way. And, in the same way, Elections Manitoba already exists to provide the independent, third-party, objective management of our electoral process.

What the government has proposed, if I've understood the minister correctly and the gist of their proposal, is that in the lead-up to the most partisan event of the electoral cycle—namely, the election—we're going to have a committee dominated by one political party, the one that happens to be in government at the given time, vetting the candidates for all of the political parties that would be competing in the election just around the corner.

I don't see how the general public would have much faith that that will be an objective, non-partisan process such as what the minister has talked about wanting to have happen. I mean, the notion that voters should have relevant information when a candidate knocks on their door—I have no disagreement with that. The idea that political parties need to raise their game in vetting—again, as I said, I don't have a problem with that.

I do believe that, in order for that type of a process to actually work and to work not just from a governance model but to also work for the public to trust—I don't think we should be having other politicians vetting other politicians.

And, as the minister said, there are a number of areas—very serious areas—which this legislation does not touch upon at all. For instance, if, theoretically speaking, a government of the day is having a significant political dispute with another level of government in Manitoba, whether it be a rural municipality or City of Winnipeg or whomever—well, all of a sudden you have a partisan vetting process controlled by government members which could have a disproportionate impact on who even ends up being a candidate in a local council election. I don't see how that serves local democracy.

You can extend it to a group of school trustees which maybe have a different point of view around education funding or education policy that differs from what the government of the day believes, and you can have exactly the same process unfold.

\* (15:20)

There's a number of procedural concerns here as well. Normally, this government tries to make the case that they consult with the people affected by their decisions in advance. More often than not, they don't, or the consultations, as have been already

repeatedly documented, are web-based surveys which—let's be honest—you could have a single bot program in Moscow filling out the form 20,000 times and the ministers here would not know the difference. You also have instances where this government has hired and paid for a fisheries envoy to go and consult with fishers, having told the envoys in advance it didn't matter what the report said; they weren't going to do anything different than what they'd already decided.

But, in this instance, the government did not even consult with anybody in advance. There were no conversations with our caucus or with our party. We understand the same is true with the other political parties in Manitoba. And that strikes us very odd, Madam Speaker, that you would create a new entity. And the government has a majority. If they decide to proceed with this, it's going to be their own creature that they will have created. But it certainly did not start off with—on very good footing and did not involve any discussions with the other political parties who would be involved. It reminds many of us of how the very top-down, dictatorial Stephen Harper government of the federal Conservatives used to operate. This comes out of very much the same page.

I also note, and I have to commend the researchers who discovered this, but, apparently, the lack of listening in the lead-up to this proposal extends to the very membership of the Conservative Party in Manitoba. At their last convention, a resolution suggesting that background checks for candidates should be brought in—well, that was defeated. You know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) doesn't even listen to his own party members or the experts, and, like I said, there were certainly no discussions in advance.

Now, there's also a lot of pieces in this proposal which are perhaps deliberately vague. There's no specifics, for instance, on financial disclosures. If a candidate has been inappropriate in their financial dealings, this has not been spelled out as something that the committee considers important. So there would be some infractions that the committee would be mandated to investigate. But, if someone has walked off with thousands of dollars of other people's money inappropriately, that could very easily slip through the screen of this committee and members in a constituency could end up voting someone where they otherwise may not have voted for that individual had they had the information involved. And we've had discussions back and forth,

in this same Chamber, where members of our caucus have invited the Premier to provide full financial disclosure of assets that he held, and he refused to put them on his disclosure form at first until he was eventually pressured to do so.

So, for all of these reasons and more, Madam Speaker, I want to come back to my initial statement. I think there is absolutely the core of a good idea. There's the potential for—or there was the potential for a good policy to be brought forward to address, you know, legitimate issues. But the government's choice to turn this into a much more partisan exercise, I think, diminishes considerably the good intentions that could have instead been created.

So, as a proposal, a counter-proposal—I know in opposition our primary job is to point out when the government has screwed up, but we also like to bring forward the alternatives. Here's a better way to do things. And you can just look at question period just now. I raised concerns about this government's performance on the climate file so far, this government's performance on affordability for Manitobans, and gave them some perfectly reasonable options that they could and should be pursuing. And, hopefully, they will listen to that and choose to do so. But my suggestion in response to this proposal is that if an additional vetting process outside of what political parties do on their own already is going to be created, it needs to be housed and conducted and implemented by a third party. I think that's a no-brainer. And Elections Manitoba would certainly seem to be a logical place for such an initiative to be housed. I know this is a government which, for its own reasons, is adamant about shrinking the amount of responsibilities and work that it does. So adding new work, whether it's a committee or under an independent agency, is going in the opposite direction for them, but if they're serious about wanting to provide better information for the general public when it comes to the candidates knocking on their doors, then that vetting process which would hopefully produce that outcome absolutely has to be conducted by something that is independent of the members of this Legislative Assembly.

So, with those comments, Madam Speaker, I will take my place and consider the other positions and words that will be raised in the context of this discussion.

Thank you.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** It gives me great pleasure to stand in the House today. I did give

it—give a few seconds before I started speaking before my colleagues on the House were clapping. I was waiting for the members of the opposition side to clap for their member who just finished speaking, but, of course, I guess they're busy listening to various other things that are going on, I guess, in the world.

Madam Speaker, it gives me again great pleasure to stand and speak today to the motion that's—the government motion that's been put before us, brought forward by the Deputy Premier (Mrs. Stefanson). We also know of her other titles. She's the Minister of Justice, the Attorney General, and, most importantly, she's also the MLA for Tuxedo.

She brings forward this government motion today to establish a special committee on proactive disclosure requirements for provincial candidates. And, unlike the member from Wolseley, I strongly support the fact that we should have an open and transparent process for all of our candidates that are seeking election here in—for the Manitoba government, for the Legislative Assembly. And I think that there's potentially other elected groups that might look to us in the future and see how different standards that they want to bring forward in their own electoral process to make various different governing processes in the province work that much better and be a little more transparent and open to those voting Manitobans here in this great province of ours.

*Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Manitobans want to make informed decisions during elections. Proactive public disclosure of a candidate's criminal record could help make elections more transparent and open, like they are currently in BC. Who is the governing party in BC right now? It's an NDP government. And it's interesting that the member from Wolseley would stand in his place today and talk about how unjust this suggestion is, and he, I guess, he comes from a culture of secrecy and hiding the facts from the Manitobans, the electric—electorate who show up on election day to come and vote for their perceived best candidate in that particular constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

\* (15:30)

We want to hear what Manitobans think, as opposed to what the member from Wolseley said, is that—he's saying that for some reason, one way or another, that he feels that this process that's set up by

the Minister of Justice today or this motion that's been brought forward is not going to be open and transparent process for the standing committee that—the special committee that we're so saying—or seeking in this motion.

It's time to end the culture of concealment that resides in various political parties, and we've heard examples of that, during and after the last election, from the opposition party. And—which I know that members that were either in the NDP party at that time, before the election, or shortly thereafter, had spent time criticizing their own party for not being as open and as transparent as they could've with their membership. And so, with this government motion today, I see that we're trying to curb that, Mr. Acting Speaker—Deputy Speaker.

The credibility and the integrity of Manitoba's electoral system and its candidates is essential in order to keep the public's trust in our democracy. When voters are considering whom to cast their ballot for, they want to know more, not less, about the candidate. We know that in recent electoral history, there have been several candidates with legal records that the public would have had an interest in but that were not pro-actively disclosed upon their registration as a candidate. As such, Manitobans are questioning what records and information should be proactively and publicly disclosed, relating to both elected officials and candidates who are running for office in our province.

Proactive public disclosure of a candidate's past is an issue that crosses party lines. While each political party has their own vetting process, there are no formal requirements for a party to share any gathered information with party members on the—or the general public. Currently, individuals can run in elections as party-nominated or independent candidates without disclosing matters such as criminal charges to Manitobans—who are voting in nomination meetings or a provincial election.

I look back to a couple of the words that the member from Wolseley had mentioned, and he said that this is a partisan motion. I have to disagree with the member from Wolseley. I know that, you know, as he stood up in this House and talked about, and was in the Free Press or the Sun, and—talking about a solidarity pledge when he was trying to put his party back together. And they were trying to go around and talk to other members within his party, the NDP party, and try to get them to sign various Kumbayamoment type of pledge, and we saw that that fell

apart fairly quickly. And so he stands here today and talks about partisan politics.

Where I think the disclosure of a candidate's record or requirements for provincial candidates—I think it is a non-partisan issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that this is something that the public will share in. They will come to various committee meetings, and I think that they'll share their views as far as how we can possibly make that happen. And then I think that the parties would, then, possibly embrace this with open arms. But, according to the member from Wolseley, and I guess he's speaking on behalf of his party, they're unwilling to do that.

So it will be interesting, and I'm not sure if all the members on the NDP side really feel the same way as the member from Wolseley. So I know that we're going to have time this afternoon to listen to what some of their other members have to say, and I can almost guarantee that—well, I can't hundred per cent guarantee, Mr. Deputy Speaker—but I can almost guarantee that some of their members will stand up and put things on the record that will go against what the member from Wolseley has said, because I don't think that they all share the—his same sediments.

I'm just looking at the motion, and the member from Wolseley made a comment on how, again, how partisan—on how the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), in the member from Wolseley's words, would hand-pick—or the government of the day would hand-pick the people who are on the standing—on this special committee. And I see right here in the motion—I mean, I don't know if the member from Wolseley just felt that it wasn't necessary to read the motion, but I look at one of the thats that are in there, and it's under—it's letter (a), so we'll just sort of go with that.

So that, except as otherwise provided in this motion, this special committee shall have the same status and follow the same practices and rules as a standing committee of the House, including: (a) having the same membership composition as the current composition of the standing committees of the House.

So right there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is proof-factual proof—and people will be able to read this in Hansard, on how the member from Wolseley went off-script or on-script, I'm not sure what he was reading from. But the fact is is he did not read the motion. I don't believe he read the motion or he didn't interpret it properly. Is that it says right in the motion that the makeup of the special committee

would be established by the same rules is that we have any other standing committee or special committee in this great Legislature of ours.

And it goes on. In the motion, it goes on. It says, also, subsection (b) having the power to establish a subcommittee for the purposes of carrying out any part of the special committee's work. It's all basic rules that we're abiding by already, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're just—the Minister of Justice has brought this forward as far as the government motion to basically open up the dialogue, get the communities, get the public, get the electorate in here, into committees, have their say as far as what they'd like to see happen.

I'm not—I am going to allow other people to have a chance to put some words on the record in regards to some specific possible examples. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, basically with this motion, we know that Manitobans deserve better. They deserve access to the information to make an informed decision prior to electing someone who maybe doesn't share their character or values, as opposed to after the fact—after the election that these types of things have come out.

We know that there exists a variety of proactive disclosure requirements and conflict-of-interest reporting, both domestically and internationally. And we believe a special committee on the—of the Manitoba Legislature should examine what exactly should be required here in Manitoba.

Again, NDP government in BC is the first Canadian jurisdiction to require all electoral candidates proactively disclose a criminal record check. While this is a good first step, we think that the public deserves to know more. And this may include a child and adult abuse registry check, as well.

So, if the government of BC, which I'm not sure if everybody has heard me correctly, but it's an NDP government in BC, feels this, I think, you know, that shows the non-partisan thinking on this topic. And I'm not sure why the member from Wolseley, and again, I don't think that all their members on their side totally agree with him, but I'm not quite sure why the member from Wolseley would feel that he should be offside with the NDP government in BC.

Don't get me wrong, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've seen it right here in this House where members of the NDP party has differed on various topics, and we saw that in my first term. I witnessed it first-hand watching the member from St. Boniface, who was

the premier of the time, having challenges within his own party, trying to keep it together. And I think that's why the member from Wolseley was front and centre trying to do a solidarity pledge. But we know where that got them.

And, at this time, I would also like to take this opportunity, because I didn't—I forgot to do this when I first stood up to speak, but I do want to wish the member from—well, and I guess he's not in here right now and he's no longer—

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Just want to remind the member that he can't indicate it that the person's—a member's in the House or not. [*interjection*] Unless you're—unless it's a former member.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Okay, so do I have to be specific? I'm just sort of looking at—for some guidance on this.

Anyways, you know what, it's okay.

The previous member from St. Boniface, the MLA for St. Boniface, who was the premier back under the NDP government has now resigned, and I was going to say his name, but I'm not going to say his name now.

**An Honourable Member:** He can't.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Now I can't.

So that's where I was going with this here previous. So Mr. Greg Selinger—[*interjection*]-it's this rookie thing, Deputy Speaker.

So I did want to take the opportunity to wish Mr. Selinger, Mr. Greg Selinger all the best in his retirement, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that we had have some discussions back and forth and—in regards to various things within the constituency. So, just with that, I just did want to wish him all the best in his retirement. And, again, he was the 21st premier of this province, and even though some of the thoughts and ideas across party lines I didn't necessarily agree with with Mr. Selinger, I do respect the position that he held and just wish him all the best, him and his family, in his retirement.

I will go on for a little bit longer. I know that there's people that really want to stand up and speak to this government motion.

Basically, I've already mentioned the fact that this is currently happening in BC. We want to afford the same opportunities to the electorate here in Manitoba. A special committee, as I've already

mentioned, would be made up according to the rules that we already have for composition here presently in the House.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to say thanks for the time to be able to put a few words on the record in regards to this great government motion brought forward by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), and I will give some time to other members who I know are eagerly wanting to put some words on the record. And I know that some of the members from the NDP caucus will want to challenge, probably, some of the words that their colleague, the member from Wolseley, put on the record just recently.

So thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Kewatinook? Or Logan. The honourable member for Logan first.

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan):** No, you first.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Okay, the honourable member for Kewatinook.

**Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook):** Thank you. I know—trying to stand up just in case nobody else stands up, so I did.

So this is an interesting move made by this government. While it's obviously a play at shaming the official opposition, our caucus has some suggestions as to what this committee should also look into.

The other matters under bullet (c), "which may be relevant", are a candidate's assets. Whether in Canada or in known tax havens, such disclosures are in the public interest because voters can see whether politicians and candidates are promoting policies in their own interest.

Canadians for Tax Fairness calculate that federal and provincial governments alike lose at least \$7.8 billion every year from legal tax avoidance. The amount of money Canadian corporations have legally been moving into the top 10 tax havens alone hit \$200 billion in 2014. That doesn't even include money placed in tax havens by individuals.

From 2009 to 2012, Costa Rica was on an OECD blacklist for being a non co-operative tax haven. It was moved to a grey list, in 2013, when it committed to improving its disclosure.

Another reason this is important is many members of this Chamber have assets in agriculture,

the only industry that will be exempt from the upcoming carbon tax. Perhaps when voters go to the polls, in 2020, they would like to know which candidates are exempting themselves from tax being imposed on every other Manitoban. Such—that's a conflict of interest. I've heard many members in this Chamber speak about their ability to pay for services like health care because both they and their partner have excellent jobs, yet many of their constituents do not have that same privilege. Perhaps a look into their assets will show the voter that they don't necessarily represent them and the challenges they face on a daily basis because they possibly can't understand.

So we also do want to hear what Manitobans think. Hopefully, the PCs will have their ears and hearts open that time, at committee. Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Any other speakers?

**Ms. Marcelino:** Transparency, honesty, full disclosure are certainly required of all persons seeking an elected position. Definitely the bar for mental and emotional fitness, intellectual capacity, good moral character should be higher for those who are tasked to lead our province.

Before we come knocking on doors and asking for the support of the voters, we should have done a full disclosure. I remember—and it's common knowledge—teachers, policemen, policewomen, church leaders, priests, ministers, the imam and other religious leaders are all held in high esteem and if they commit ethical transgressions, they will receive stiffer penalties than ordinary mortals. I guess that applies to us, legislators or leaders of our constituencies.

Recently, the head of the American Gymnastics Association, I believe the—sounds like Nassar is the last name—was found guilty of many, many sexual molestations done to young gymnasts. And if I'm not mistaken, the guy will be incarcerated for life. That's how stiff the penalty is for people who have leadership positions and who have abused their power.

Same thing with—I remember there was a teacher who tried to molest or entice a younger student and there were several cases of that in the past. And they, too, were meted stiffer penalties.

However, I—this—I'm quite surprised about the motion that suddenly is before us. Why is the government introducing this motion that is clearly meddling into the internal affairs of other political

parties? Why is it being introduced on the second day of the spring session? Are there no urgent, important bills the—for the government to introduce? We're wanting to hear answers to those two questions.

This motion would create a special committee on proactive disclosure requirements for provincial candidates. This is a serious issue that ought to be given the proper attention and consideration it deserves. However, I believe this vetting exercise is the sole responsibility within political parties and not to be assigned to a committee whose membership are mostly populated by the governing party or their chosen members.

\*(15:50)

Definitely, voters need information—the right information to make informed decisions at the polls. And all of us, all political parties, need to hold themselves to a high standard so that the confidence of the public is maintained and strengthened in our democratic processes and in our democratic parties.

If a political party has failed to do their due diligence in vetting their official candidates, it is that political party who will suffer on so many fronts, especially in credibility and in the area of accountability. And, when the day of reckoning comes, if the vetting process done was flawed, that vetting process will be unmasked. But let it be the concern of every political party, not a special committee, such as what is being asked by the Minister for Justice.

We certainly believe that this issue—we believe that this issue can too easily be politicized and turned into a political attack rather than an exercise which could help ensure better practices are put in place. I've mentioned that we believe that candidate disclosure requirements are an important matter. There are third-party, independent and impartial experts who are better placed to conduct this type of hearing, such as the electoral office—Chief Electoral Officer or Commissioner of Elections, and not just a—and not a special committee formed by a governing—the governing political party.

Instead, the government decided, without consultation of any political party, to launch a committee where a majority of the membership will be members of their government caucus. We just found out about this committee today, this afternoon, and I don't know if my colleagues from the Liberal Party had known this earlier than us. So, in the

interest of transparency and even accountability, they should have—there should have been consultations on this and not just suddenly being brought out in the fore.

There—this—we've heard the motion, and we noted several pieces missing in the motion. The government neglected to include any discussion regarding financial or corporate disclosure requirement of matters pertaining to financial assets in foreign countries. And, thankfully, this was also raised by my colleague from the Liberal Party. Also, the government did not seem to think that candidates for municipal elections or school division elections ought to have disclosure requirements. These kinds of omissions suggest strongly that the intent of this committee is not constructive but rather one that is meant to engage in political posturing.

Why the selective—you could even describe this motion as selective perception—one of selective perception. It is concerning to see a government that is engaging in political theatre when there is important legislation and matters for this House to attend to, as one of my questions have referred to.

It is unfortunate that the government of the day has not consulted other caucus members before introducing this motion, nor did they consult with experts in the field or look at the work of other jurisdictions. As mentioned by my colleague from Wolseley, at the last PC convention a resolution suggesting background checks for candidates was defeated.

Why did the minister not listen to her own party members and experts?

And also I would like to say that addressing these concerns in a politicized venue is unfortunate and does a disservice to an important and relevant issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some clauses of the motion are problematically vague. How can a committee profitably engage in an investigation when its own mandate, its marching orders, are so unclear as to either include everything or exclude nothing, like clause c, other matters, which may be relevant for those who are seeking or holding office? It's extremely vague, as is the government's intention with this motion.

We didn't see that part of the disclosure—supposed disclosure—would include financial disclosures. It is unclear, and the individuals who

would make this decision would be the majority of the committee composed of government MLAs.

With the clause being extremely vague, it is hard to support this motion when it is unclear what the government's intentions are.

This motion seems to be more of a fishing expedition rather than a well-thought-out motion with substantial clauses that will ensure a coherent policy could be put forward for debate and discussion.

If the government feels that the present process is lacking, they have the opportunity to bring forward meaningful comprehensive legislation that describes strong provisions in how far they should vet their own candidates, but they've decided not to. Instead, they've engaged in a political tactic that looks like an attempt to distract from the serious cuts that are being made to the services Manitobans count on in health care and education.

We've just heard of a motion by our caucus about the special drugs. They're very critical to the lives of many Manitobans who are suffering from serious illnesses. This could have been attended to and resolved earlier today, but instead we're here talking about this motion that would not make the life of someone with cystic fibrosis much easier, making them breathe easier by having the drugs that they badly needed.

If the government were serious about proactive disclosure requirements, this motion would also require the examination of how to disclose foreign holdings and financial assets in different countries. That is not part of this motion.

There are serious concerns about this Special Committee. What the minister is proposing is that an independent or impartial way to come to a solution on how to put best practices for a candidate vetting in place.

\* (16:00)

We are unsure of how the committee would function. Would witnesses be compelled to speak, given that the government has put in language to the effect that the committee could call witnesses? And who will be these witnesses?

Section 34 of The Legislative Assembly Act gives the Legislative Assembly the power to compel attendance of witnesses. We have just had a committee meeting on organ donation. It was a very important, informative committee hearing we had,

and there were witnesses. I don't know if they were compelled to come, but we are grateful that they did come because we learned so much from their personal experiences related to organ donation, how those organs have saved many, many lives. Those organs that were donated have saved lives.

And with this committee, who will be the witnesses who will attend and be compelled to attend and to witness? Has this been contemplated by this committee?

Given the fact that the government has not consulted, has not made its intentions clear or given any direction as to why it is engaging in this exercise, we are concerned the majority of government members on the committee may use this power in a way which would not strengthen confidence in our democratic institutions. Rather, it would undermine such confidence.

More generally, witnesses may not be comfortable coming forward to speak when they know they are contributing to a non-independent committee. More importantly, this investigation would be better conducted by an independent third party rather than a committee dominated by members of the government caucus.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the government is serious on ensuring candidate disclosure, they should have asked independent offices such as the Chief Electoral Officer or Commissioner of Elections to carry out this task. Why have they not asked them? The Premier (Mr. Pallister) himself stated yesterday when this was introduced, this isn't about one political party, it's about the process. Fine, we agree. So why not let it be led by impartial experts? Or, at least, why not consult all parties? If the Premier believes this truly is not about one political party and he wants to make democracy work better, he should consult all parties and we will work—all work together with all of our membership to bring forward a more comprehensive bill which tackles the problem at hand.

The government should be open and transparent, like we have been about our policies in place.

Is—another question that begs to be asked: If this is a genuine concern of this government, we believe it should be done in a fair and impartial manner. Why has not it been done that way? If the government's concerns are brought forward in a meaningful piece of legislation, these concerns could be taken more seriously and fairly. Selecting an

independent committee to determine the best way to move forward with ensuring full candidate disclosure would certainly ensure that all public interests are respected, and also ensure all areas that could influence voters are identified. This would ensure that the public is fully aware of all information to make an informed decision during elections. We believe the government should be recognizing and listening to what the public needs and not trying to do better their own political agenda.

Just wondering, who did the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) consult first before coming up with this government motion? We would be interested to know the people, the organizations, and the experts that were consulted.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a flawed motion. It has glaring deficiencies. It's not a well-thought-out one, one that hugely lacked consultation. So we cannot support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** I'd like to start my remarks off, Mr. Speaker, by acknowledging today is International Women's Day, and as I do every day, I look at my own two young daughters and I hope that they will be those young women that today and tomorrow smash those glass ceilings that prevent them from achieving their goals. Women as a whole have achieved a great deal in the last century, but clearly we all heard the member—or the Minister for the Status of Women share some of those statistics about the number of women on international boards about the pay gap between men and women, so clearly there is more work to be done. But I think, partisanship aside, I think all members of this House are agreed that's something that we can all get behind in terms of lifting all women up this generation and the next.

As well, as some of my colleagues, including the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), who seemed confused about the rules of the House in the mentioning of sitting members and non-sitting members, I do wish to put on the record my sincere congratulations to Mr. Greg Selinger for his tenure as both MLA for St. Boniface of 18 years, as Finance minister for a decade and as premier for several years. As well noted, this is not an easy life, and especially for those individuals, whether they're in a portfolio or, more importantly, if they are our premier, all roads lead to that office and to that desk. So I do not pretend to know the stresses on that individual and on any individual who has held that



office, but he did so to the best of his ability and I have no doubt that he did his best to achieve the goals that he felt were in the interests of Manitobans. And so I think all of us deserve to recognize his role in Manitoba politics, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I listened, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened to the comments that my colleagues across the way have made in reference to the idea of proactive disclosure for provincial and municipal candidates. And there seems to be a difference of opinion, not only between ourselves and members opposite, but actually amongst members opposite themselves.

So I would assume, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the member from Wolseley being the initial speaker, that he is the front man or the point person on this file for the New Democratic Party, and I listened carefully, and if I do make an error, I apologize and I'll obviously look at Hansard tomorrow, but I did my best to make some notes on his comments. But he said that no one will object to the idea of better vetting. So that was a comment made by the NDP member not, you know, more than an hour ago, that no one would object to the idea of better vetting. The member of Wolseley went on to say that all of us must do better in terms of vetting candidates. He acknowledged that there have been failures on the part of vetting of candidates.

\*(16:10)

So it's interesting Mr. Deputy Speaker that you have the point person for the NDP, in his very initial comments on this bill brought forward by my colleague, the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), say that we need to do a better job, we can do a better job and, yes, mistakes have happened in terms of the vetting of candidates.

Now, I don't know if the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) was alluding to his leader, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) or not, but there is—clearly, there has been a failing across the board. And this is the point the members opposite try to make this about partisan politics and I think it's very clear that failings have occurred I think amongst all political parties and I don't think the public is served by that. I don't think the public is disserved—served well by non-disclosure of any candidate, whether it's for the Progressive Conservatives, the NDP, the Liberals, Green or Independents, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino) talked about, you know, that if the vetting process is

flawed, then the political party will suffer. They'll suffer in terms of credibility and accountability, and she knows what she speaks of, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I mean, her own party has suffered tremendously. I think the editorial in the Winnipeg Free Press referenced the NDP in, quote, free fall, end quote. And I don't think that's something that benefits all of us. I mean, obviously any government wants and needs a strong opposition and I do hope members opposite fill that role for a long, long time and ensure that Manitobans have that voice and that our government for a long time is held to account and that they continue to bring forward ideas on behalf of their colleagues and those that they represent.

But, absolutely, the member for Logan, you know, talked about how, you know, if there is a flawed process that it will be unmasked, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that was her exact words, unmasked. So, the member for Wolseley is saying that the process is flawed and the member for Logan is saying that, you know, if it is flawed that, you know, our credibility and accountability suffered. So they're not even on the same page when they're talking about the very same bill.

So you wonder why voters in Manitoban are a little confused when it comes to the NDP.

And then, of course, you have the MLA for Fort Rouge, the leader of the opposition, saying that my vetting process with the party was thorough, end of quote. And he said that just recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just back in August of 2017.

So, again, the member for Wolseley says that no one will object to the idea that we need to do better vetting and that the—that errors and mistakes have happened, and then yet—but his own leader is saying, well, no, my own vetting process was very thorough.

So obviously somewhere within that system there was a failure to communicate not only obviously in the MLA for Fort Rouge's own book talking about his transgressions or I remember actually the member—the opposition House leader, I think she referred to the incidents and the issues of domestic violence as an unfortunate incident, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, you know, here on International Women's Day it's just—it's—I think it's unfortunate and unbecoming of any elected official to talk about violence against women, about violence—violent domestic assault, about threats to kill or maim and leave permanently scarred women as unfortunate incidents, end of quote.

But, again, I want to emphasize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that whether these incidents occur with members opposite, whether they occur with any political party that currently exists or that may be created going forward, I think that all voters would benefit from that full disclosure, because it's clear. I mean given incidents that we have seen that political parties, in particular the NDP, can't be trusted to share that full disclosure, because that full disclosure didn't meet with their long-term desire of political power. And, unfortunately, when principles collide with power for the NDP, principles are often swept aside and that power becomes the paramount objective.

I mean, we saw that in the comments by the member—I remember the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), when he was part of the rebellion, I mean, he said that very thing. He said that the powers that be that included the Premier Greg Selinger and his entire government and all these colleagues and MLAs except for the fabled five were more concerned about power than over principled government, that they were more concerned about continuing to rule over Manitobans and doing—I think his exact words were doing what was in the best interests of Manitobans. And so this is what this motion is, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is about bringing forward something that is in the best interests of Manitobans.

The member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino), you know, spent a long time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, talking about how it's not fair that this committee will be dominated by government caucus. Now, two things there: (1) I make no apologies that our government won the last election—a little over two years—with a historic mandate from the people of Manitoba. I think that was a recognition of the 17 years of benevolent socialism that did not benefit anyone except members opposite. But the member for Logan, who actually used to be the leader opposition and a government minister didn't seem to have any qualms about the setting up and the establishment of membership on government committees during those 17 years, which—of which, when they were office were dominated by—surprise, surprise—NDP government members. So, if the NDP is looking forward to—would like to bring forward an own motion that on a go-forward basis that all committees of government have a minority membership of the sitting government, they're welcome to do that. In their 17 years of office, they didn't abide by that, but now in their attempt to find

some sort of perceived flaws in a very good piece of legislation, a very good motion that's brought forward, they are literally picking fly shit—oops—flies out of pepper.

You know, the member talks about the necessity to have an independent committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I would agree that there is that necessity to bring in those independent members. And I will note, in the motion, that the motion does talk about bringing in those very independent members that the member, the MLA for Logan, made reference to. So the Chief Electoral Officer of Elections Manitoba, bringing that individual in as a witness to share their views and their perspectives of the need of proactive disclosure for political candidates here in the province of Manitoba, I think that—I think we'd all be well served as a committee of Manitobans, to hear what the Chief Electoral Office for Elections Manitoba has to say. You know, representatives of political parties—again, this is the goal here behind the proactive disclosures: to make sure that we as elected officials and as even—as the next generation of elected officials who may seek office in the elections ahead, are clear in terms of that proactive disclosure.

And it's important to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the goal of the proactive disclosure is not to limit individuals' ability to seek office, to run for election, but it is the goal, is to ensure that the very voters that you're asking for their support fully understand the character of the individual. And so, if that individual is concealing or covering up events in their past like, for example—I'm just trying to think—let's just say charges of violent domestic abuse, if those kinds of incidents are hidden from the public, you know what I think voters would like to know and have the right to know that. And so, when a political party, you know, so when a leader of a political party says that, quote, my vetting process with the party was very thorough and that they were fully aware of the charges, that same political party kept that from Manitobans, kept that from voters and, I would assume, kept it from all the NDP MLAs at the time.

And so it is clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the political system that the members opposite are 'advicating' form—for, in terms of the continuance of the process of vetting candidates, is flawed. But, again, I go back to the member for Wolseley's (Mr. Altemeyer) initial comments on this bill on behalf of the NDP, saying that no one would object to the idea of better vetting, that the—all of us must do better. You know, in my own circumstances, I

recall when I sought the nomination in Morris after my predecessor, Mavis, left to take care of her dying husband who was stricken with cancer, and despite the constant catcalls from members opposite trying to shame her for making that decision, I remember going through that process and having to go to the RCMP and getting that criminal background check, the going to the Adult Abuse Registry and the Child Abuse Registry, you know, and providing all those documents to the selection committee and, as well, ensuring and making that affidavit that there were no other—or no other circumstances within my past, legally or otherwise, that they would bring disrepute, but not only just to the political party in question, but I think to the very office that we all seek to hold today.

\* (16:20)

And I have no doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if I had presented myself and if I had had, as the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) says that he did, if I had a similar past in terms of violence against women, I have no doubt that I would not be sitting here today as the MLA for Morris. And I think that would be the—a reasonable course of action.

But, again, it is up to those political parties to, ultimately, vet the candidates in the sense that—whether or not they will allow that candidate to carry that banner forward on behalf of that political party.

And so the object of this legislation or this motion and this review is to make sure that we are talking to those experts, whether we're talking to those political parties, whether we're talking to the individuals within the academic circles, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are a great number of academic minds out there that work on the issue of ethics within political systems and political parties. We see their comments, obviously, in newspapers. We hear them on the radio. But, obviously, those are just snippets of comments. I think we'd all be well served by a more fulsome conversation with those individuals in a committee basis where we can ask and have that conversation about what they see is necessary in terms of a proper vetting and disclosure of candidates.

And that's the key point here. We're talking about the disclosure of candidates. It's not—again, this is not a goal, and it's no desire of government to vet the candidates. I mean, if members opposite want to put forward individuals of disrepute as their candidates of record, they are welcome to do so,

Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, as the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino) indicated, I mean, that is a—that will—their own credibility and accountability will suffer, and that was her very words. And we've seen that occur amongst members opposite.

So we want to make sure that we're listening to Manitobans on this, and I think that's the goal of the committee: is we want to make sure that we're holding meetings throughout the summer months, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, over a number of months to—so that if an individual who wants to make comment is, you know, at the—is away at the lake or maybe with their children or whatever—that there is multiple opportunities to make those submissions, whether—you know, whether those submissions can be made in person in a more conversational style where there could be that Q & A, back and forth, whether they want to make a submission informally, in writing or through a website. But that—so the committee as a whole and that all members of the committee, whether they be Progressive Conservative or NDP or Liberal or independent, have access to that same information—unfiltered information and, more importantly, the direct link from that individual and that direct perspective from that individual.

And it's not limited to those individuals that I mentioned, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Whether it's the Chief Electoral Officer, whether it's members within academia, whether it's ethicists within the political system, the special committee could choose, at its own volition, that there are individuals that we want to speak to. I mean, there may be—and I'm not the expert, and I don't pretend to be, but there may be individuals—and I have no doubt there are individuals throughout the world that do have interesting perspectives. I mean, we talked earlier about the province of British Columbia leading the way in terms of disclosure. And, you know, it's worth noting that the province of British Columbia is led by a New Democratic Party, and they currently remain with these proactive disclosure rules.

So, again, members opposite, their own brothers and sisters within the British Columbia government, abide by proactive disclosure for themselves. It didn't seem to be a threat to their democracy; it didn't seem to be a dominated—or be an overly partisan issue over on the west coast, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I think it's more the members opposite are—again, they're trying to create that illusion of partisanship in order to dance away from their responsibility to the voters of Manitoba to within—to their own membership but,

more importantly, to the individuals whose door that you knock on.

We need to ensure—I think there's no secret when it comes to elected officials, I think we rank up there, and, again, at whatever level of government, whether it's municipal, provincial, federal or other, we probably rank somewhere around the idea of used car salespeople in terms of trust factor. And so that is a theme that I think all governments should seize upon. And a failing of governments, successive governments, that have, you know, maybe have knocked on the voter's door and said, you know, if the idea of us raising, you know, I don't know, the PST, for example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the idea of us raising it is ridiculous and utter nonsense, again, hypothetically speaking, you know, and then proceed to not only expand but raise that same PST, and you wonder why the credibility of all elected officials are not impacted by those decisions.

So I think it's incumbent upon all of us to take a look at motions that come forward to this House that allow us an opportunity as elected officials, as members of the legislative Manitoba, to say, you know, how can we restore and start rebuilding that trust with Manitobans? I mean, for ourselves on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've taken action along those files. I mean, one of the first things that we did as a government is we got rid of the vote tax, again, something that members opposite never ran on. They never ran on the fact that they would be siphoning millions of dollars out of seniors housing directly to the bank account of the NDP. They did—but they didn't have any—they apparently had no issue doing that, so it's always interesting to see them rise in the House and decry, you know, certain situations. But, again, a short time ago, they had no issue, again, of siphoning monies out of the health-care budget, taking monies out of those health-care facilities, out of those front-room classrooms and resources, resources that teachers need, again, for their own political purposes.

So, again, we wanted to rebuild that trust. We wanted to show Manitobans, say to Manitobans, you know what? We need to earn your trust, and part of earning that trust is earning your support. And part of that support, let's be honest, there's two components. I mean, there's the support of an individual marking an X by your name on a ballot, Mr. Speaker. But no political party can function without financial resources. So all of us are out there and we're all raising funds, some more successful than others, but, you know, let's be honest. There—costs money to run

a campaign, and so we need to build that rapport and trust, and so we said to Manitobans, you know, we trust you to make that decision whether or not you want to financially support us as a political party. The NDP, on the other hand, said, well, we don't trust you to make that decision. We're going to force you as a taxpayer to financially support us.

One of the other decisions we made, in an announcement that was echoed by the Minister of Status of Women (Ms. Squires), had to do with our—the no-wrong-door policy that we've implemented here as part of government, that the history of concealment of sexual harassment, abuse and assault perpetuated under the former government, that the idea that you—that young women who are employees, they're employees, that they could bring forward complaints, and they were told, and this is a quote from one of those victims, that they were told by the NDP to shut up and suck it up, end quote.

\* (16:30)

And so it's unfortunate that here we are, you know, celebrating International Women's Day and we see the NDP again failing to use an opportunity to work with this government and restore that trust that they eroded and lost with voters, with women and with a whole bunch of other Manitobans.

I think back to, you know, it wasn't that long ago the former minister of Northern Affairs and relations, Mr. Eric Robinson, talked about how the NDP had utterly failed. They had failed and were no longer representative of women, of the LGTTT community, of First Nations, of Metis and basically any other group. They'd utterly failed Manitobans. And, you know what? It was one of the few times that I'll agree with Mr. Robinson.

So, with those very brief comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no doubt that there's other individuals that would make—like to make a few comments on the record. But I would urge all colleagues to listen to the member—the wise, wise member for who—Wolseley, who said—and, again, I will quote—that no one will object to the idea of better vetting and all of us must do better.

And with that, I can say I agree with the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), that this bill—as he indicated—needs to be supported. I look forward that this motion is—if there are ideas in order to improve it. I have no doubt that my colleague, the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), be more than willing to entertain those because, again, we want to make sure

that this is done in the best interest of Manitobans, that they have a fulsome picture of all candidates. And, again, it will be up to each individual political party to decide whether or not they want that particular candidate to carry their banner in an election setting, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But it is incumbent upon us to make sure that there—those things do not come afterwards, in terms of disclosure that should have been shared, that may have impacted an individual's vote.

Again, hypothetically speaking, maybe a battered woman may not have voted a particular way if they, again, had the full set of facts.

So, with those very, very brief comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you very much for your time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Before we continue, I just want to remind the members to watch their language when they're speaking. And I know you came back and—to apologize, so—for the—so we'll continue on with the speakers.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia):** I also know that you'll encourage everyone here to tone it down a little bit so can hear myself speak. The—because, probably, who's listening? Me and my mom. And Andrew's—or, and the member from Minto.

Mr. Speaker, what we're talking about today is very, very serious. And I enter this discussion reluctantly and unexpectedly. This motion came forward this afternoon, as the member from Logan indicated, and it has far-reaching consequences. But let me start with this quick antidote.

I was at Sturgeon Heights Collegiate in my riding two nights ago, and they had a Holocaust exhibit featuring Anne Frank. Terrible situation. There's a—I'm going to paraphrase a quote that I think could apply to what we are experiencing here today, and it—the quote goes something like this: First, they came for strangers. And I said nothing. Then they came for my neighbours, and I said nothing. And then they came for me, and there was nobody left.

And where this applies here is—it is a little ironic that the NDP have, no doubt, accurately said that they have not been consulted on this motion. And, of course, that means none of the independent MLAs have been consulted.

Now, we haven't been—the independent MLAs haven't been consulted on anything—zippo, and now

the NDP is experiencing exactly what each independent MLA in this place has experienced.

Now, are we going to continue that culture in this place or are we going to stop it? And, though my friends across the way, I've introduced this motion and later my remarks it will be about principles and fundamental principles to this place, I am very saddened that the democracy in this place seems to, year by year, just inch away from what has made the Westminster parliamentary system great.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

What this motion does, it—and again, I'm agreeing with the member from Wolseley with just this. Politicians deciding what or who their opponents should be or what criteria there should be, that is against everything I—and every tradition of our great political system—everything.

At the end of the day, Madam Speaker, it doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is, did that person get the most votes in their constituency? It's up to the voters to decide what is and what is not acceptable.

Now, there was a great question from a member from Radisson, asking well, or heckling, how would they know. Well, let me tell you how they can know or should know. That is through the conflict-of-interest legislation that I have introduced. The conflict-of-interest legislation in Manitoba is terrible. It doesn't disclose anything. It doesn't tell you anything. You only have to disclose mutual funds and private property. That's basically it—private property in Manitoba. And that is a—it's just laughable.

The fact is, at the federal level, we couldn't—especially if you're on Treasury Board or Privy Council or Cab—we could not invest in anything other than mutual funds or treasury bills. That was it.

But, in Manitoba, you could do whatever you want. You could have a zillion penny stocks in Company X and in your TFSA and make—and be involved in this, and you never have to disclose it—don't have to disclose any penny stock or any shares in any company—nothing like that.

I introduced a conflict-of-interest bill last March where it was based on what Brad Wall did in Saskatchewan, a very comprehensive private member's bill. It's 35 pages. It's on the—it was introduced in last session. It's introduced in this session, including a private member's resolution on conflict of interest. That is the answer to the heckler

from across the way—conflict-of-interest legislation—real conflict-of-interest legislation that has teeth.

\* (16:40)

Why? Why this government did not introduce conflict-of-interest legislation right off the bat I have—it boggles the mind because it is something that was right on and now every—there are questions about every member simply because they didn't bring forward conflict-of-interest legislation. But now they flip around and say, well, we'd like to have a special committee to screen candidates, to check out, you know, what should be disclosed or whatnot. What—first of all, in our system, that is done on many levels, and there are restrictions in and around criminal convictions and so on and your eligibility to be a candidate. So—and, then, beyond that, there are political parties that do the venting. And that venting is getting more and more comprehensive. I've gone through it many times—got through it with flying colours.

**An Honourable Member:** Not anymore.

**Mr. Fletcher:** But—well, no, even now—even now—because I'm a Conservative. The last Tory—hashtag, the last Tory.

Madam Speaker, where else do they screen at politicians—screen or set criteria for other politicians? Where—what's—who does that? Let's think. Oh, Vladimir Putin does that. He kicked out the—his main opposition and he put in—or allowed a candidate to run that he's clearly going to defeat. So that's the Russia example. And you might sink, oh, well, they—you know, that's going too far. But, yes, it is going too far. And why would we even go down that road? Let the people decide; introduce conflict-of-interest legislation, like everywhere else, that's comprehensive and reflects the 21st century. Yes, and, if people have bankruptcies in their past or been involved with the law, make that transparent. Fine. It'd be very wise of political parties to have that as a policy of the political party.

And what about independent candidates? Are the—is this standing committee going to prevent independents running? Because they really don't have a clue about that—but they don't trust the people to make the decision. They don't trust the people.

You know, Madam Speaker, sometimes people in power try and keep power, and, even in situations where you think there's no more power to have, there is. And we're with—what would a recent example—you know what, you know where that just happened?

The member—maybe the member from Lac du Bonnet, I can share that with him: China. Yes, that's right—president for life in China. They used to do a 10-year rotation. That was China's definition of democracy: one party but 10 years at your leader—but now it's president for life.

So that principle continues on and on. And everyone who thinks they're an MLA thinks they're going to be an MLA for life. They never—most people don't contemplate that they will be members of the—former members of the Legislative Assembly. And I'm—as I—may not have occurred to me that I would become a member of the former members of parliament association in the time frame that it happened. But that's beautiful about democracy, because the people have the say at the end.

Now, let me go to first principles. Now, I was minister of democratic reform federally during a difficult time in Canada. Right after the '08 election, we have the prorogation issue, we had the economic downturn, we had—we were trying new things with the Senate—the distribution of seats were skewed across Canada, and there was a whole series of things that in—that needed to be addressed and some that seemed very difficult to address, like the Senate.

But it did allow me to take a very deep dive and gain a huge amount of experience and knowledge about our parliamentary tradition. And, as Edmund Burke said—the chap that was on the cover of my reply to the Speech from the Throne—it's not about political party. It's not about your career. It's about the people.

Well, first, it's queen and country—or king and country, in his time. Queen and country. Country first. Then it's the people you represent. And somewhere down the line it's, you know—it's party stuff. But, fundamentally, it is the people who decide who their elected representatives are.

So, if the government was serious about this, yes, we would have conflict-of-interest legislation. I suggested a framework. Anything less than that is not acceptable. Perhaps they can go further. That would be great. They can copy the bill I introduced, if they wish, or any other province, because any other province is better than what we have here in Manitoba.

If the government was serious, they would do that.

Now, this is a procedural, boring item that 25 people probably care about, but it's an important

distinction. This motion talks about a special standing committee with all the rights and powers of a standing committee. We heard something like this on the organ donation file. In fact, if you go to 'Hansart' on October 29th, you'll see under creation of standing committee of organ donation comments the government made.

But it's—what has happened is it's not a standing committee; it's a task force. A task force. There's a huge difference between a standing committee and task force. And the reason that is relevant in this conversation, it just demonstrates how powerful and influential this standing committee that is proposed will be.

And not to mention the ridiculousness of the composition. It's going to be majority government members. I don't care who the government is. Majority government members and then—so the government will get to do whatever it wants and—regardless of the number of independents in the Chamber, they'll have no voting rights or any speaking rights, unless they are very motivated.

\* (16:50)

So the standing committee on this issue is basically going to look at whatever the government of the day wishes to do, and what is really sad, from the perspective of being a Conservative, a Progressive Conservative in Canada, means being a Tory. A Tory and Toryism, from Britain to Australia, New Zealand, throughout the Commonwealth, has certain meanings and principles. And one of those principles that is inherent in that is the ability of the people to choose who represents them, not other politicians. If you want other politicians or political parties to choose who you can vote for, go to China or Russia.

There's only—you know, if you want power, supporting power, indefinitely, go down this road, because this Legislature has done this type of thing in the past. There's a piece of—a constitutional challenge right now on the fundamental freedoms of Canadians and the restriction that this place has tried to place on all the MLAs and all the electors in Manitoba. The government has acknowledged it's unconstitutional, and I'm sure that's what the court will find too. But it is an example of what happens when you go down these paths of undermining the fundamentals of the Westminster parliamentary democracy.

Now, there are some things in the motion which may help people make an informed and complete decision, but that could be dealt with political parties and/or current legislation and the electoral elections officer and the reports that are provided at the end of each election, or somebody could read the annual report from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and listen to what he has to say about these types of things. He knows that there are no real ways conflict of interest can be dealt with in the system. Has any government listened to him? No. I know that the people do. I know I was not a very popular guy with some people when I introduced the conflict-of-interest legislation. But it was the right thing to do, because MLAs in the Tory tradition can bring forward private members' bills on issues they would like to talk about.

Now, there are some people in powerful positions that would love to take that power away from MLAs. But, going to first principles, Toryism, our Westminster parliamentary democracy, it is a fundamental ability and right of MLAs or MPs to do this. It's called parliamentary privilege. And it's a way that backbench MLAs can represent the views of their constituents.

And I have about a dozen bills on the Order Paper that represent the views of my constituents. I take full responsibility for those bills. I will defend those bills. It is beyond me why the other parties, particularly the government, does not simply embrace the bills as good ideas and moving forward, like the conflict-of-interest bill or The Gift of Life Act on organ donation. Was on the government's agenda, but, ironically, by allowing me to—recessing me from the government caucus, it allowed me to bring that to a vote and force the government to at least do something on the issue, though what they said they would do is not happening, and they probably made statements that were blatantly false about religion and organ donation, and limited what the results could possibly be. But at least it's getting talked about.

And my bill never passed, but the objective was achieved. And that was to bring awareness. That is diversity of thought. In this motion, it could screen out that diversity of thought and prevent people from even having the opportunity to bring their points of view to the public. It's a very slippery slope. And why does it have to be a standing committee? They don't do a standing committee for organ donation, which is life-saving, but they do it for a clearly, in

my view—a pure political play based on personal, petty politics, because that's what could happen here.

Now, some people say, oh, well, that— isn't that clever? Well, you have to go back to the first principles. You have to go back to the Constitution. You have to ask yourself, would you want that to happen to you? Because when you can't—you know, if you don't stand up and say no when it doesn't affect you, or stand up for what is right, even though you know what others are doing is wrong, don't be surprised when it happens to you. And that is—that goes to every member in this place. Don't be surprised when your rights as an MLA—or, citizens of Manitoba—if your rights to participate in a democratic process are not fulfilled or you don't have that ability—and it won't be—it'll be because of things that this Chamber—such as this Chamber made maybe even decades ago, such as the legislation that's in front of the courts at this very moment that deals with unconstitutional legislation. That was brought forward for clear political reasons. We all know why, and we all know it's unconstitutional.

This bill—or this motion is in a similar vein. It is not consistent with our traditions, our beliefs, with Toryism, with our democratic principles in the 'Westminister' model—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have three minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

And I would ask—there is an event going on in the Chamber, on Saturday, so, if you could take any of your valuables with you or empty your desk as much as you're able to, it would probably protect your—the stuff that's in your desk. So, if you could do that, that would be great.

Thank you. Have a good weekend.

And the House is now adjourned until Monday at 1:30.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, March 8, 2018**

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