

## How to win at public speaking

Not everyone is born with the innate ability to speak eloquently. For many, this trait is learned — and it's hard work! That is why groups like Toastmasters exist; Manitoba Hydro is fortunate to have a subsidiary right here in our office. The group was formed in 1978 and is still going strong. *Hydrogram* tagged along for the **Manitoba Hydro Toastmasters Corporate Club 940** Executive Committee pin ceremony on June 27 to find out what this group is all about.



*The Toastmasters all together (most of them!) for a group photo.*

**Alt-text: A large group of Hydro employees posing together with the Toastmasters International banner.**

“Once people find out you’re in Toastmasters, you will find yourself being roped in to emcee a wedding or give a speech,” said the former group treasurer, **Thomas Whynot** (General Counsel & Corporate Secretary). “But now you have this invaluable resource of people willing to sit through your speeches to give you very constructive criticisms and feedback, which makes the process much less daunting.”

Toastmasters believe that getting accustomed to giving and receiving constructive feedback is crucial to improving your public speaking skills. Learning what communication styles the people around you respond to best will do wonders for your professional and personal life. These skills, and many more, are what you can learn from the Toastmasters Club.

“Sometimes, despite how intelligent someone is, they may struggle to communicate effectively,” said **Michelle Johnson** (Customer Care). “Toastmasters brings that into focus as you continue to self-develop, figuring out your leadership style and what attributes you bring to the table to become an effective communicator.”

Michelle is the outgoing 2023-2024 President for the Manitoba Hydro Toastmasters 940, but Toastmasters is a lifelong journey for her. She joined the group when she lived in the Bahamas and was excited to learn there were Toastmasters groups here in Winnipeg as well.

“When you go to a new country, you tend to become timid, you’re more modest and reserved. You’re trying hard to figure out where you fit in this new place. Toastmasters helped me find my voice again,” Michelle said while gesturing to the crowd, pointing out its diversity in age, ethnicity, profession, and experience.

“We’ve created a safe space for everyone, a safe space where you can trip-up, get up, and brush yourself off with support. People are here to help you continue to move forward without feeling embarrassed or self-conscious. We help each other build our self-confidence,” said Michelle.



*Hypemaster Supreme Michelle Johnson getting the crowd excited for the upcoming year of Toastmaster excellence.*

*Alt-text: Michelle raising her arms to motivate the Toastmasters crowd. Jill Forbes can be seen in the background doing the same.*

The club meets weekly on Wednesdays and Thursdays over the lunch hour and each meeting is made remotely available via Teams. There are many roles within the group such as Toastmaster — which is like an emcee — or speaker and evaluator roles, there’s also a “jokemaster” role. Anyone can join the group, even professionals outside of Manitoba Hydro, and they don’t necessarily need to fulfill a certain role. If they wish, they can simply observe or take part in a Table Topic.

“A Table Topic is when you get up and speak for two minutes about an impromptu topic. You won’t always know what your topic is until the day, or even hour, of the meeting. It’s amazing to help you learn how to speak on the fly,” said Executive Secretary **Jill Forbes** (Enterprise Excellence). “All this practice teaches you to get your point across more clearly and succinctly while reducing your ‘uhms’ and ‘ahs’, especially when talking to people who are a bit more intimidating.”

The group offers a robust mentorship program that encourages experienced Toastmasters to be leaders in continuing to improve, evolve and expand the club. It helps connect retirees to the current network while providing invaluable skills to younger employees and students. Everyone, no matter your stage in life, can benefit from the Toastmasters club.



## Gallery

“I myself came to Toastmasters after I bombed an interview. It was terrible and I needed to learn how to communicate better, listen better, perceive better,” said Tom. “After a few years with Toastmasters, I progressed to all kinds of different speaking and communication roles — within both my professional and personal life — I otherwise would have never considered.”

“You don’t have to know someone to say hi to someone. Toastmasters gives us that emotional intelligence which helps us to be better for each other,” said Michelle.

Manitoba Hydro Toastmasters Corporate Club 940 is open to all professionals seeking to unlock their full potential! To learn more, please email [SM-Toastmastersclub940](mailto:SM-Toastmastersclub940).

[Click here to join the Teams Meeting](#)

**Virtual Meetings: Wednesdays 12 p.m. – 1 p.m.**

**Hybrid Meetings: Thursdays 12 p.m. – 1 p.m. (every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> week of each month)**

## RETIREE EDITION ADDITION



“I joined Toastmasters so I could learn to speak more quickly and concisely. I didn’t want to hog the time in presentations, to make sure everyone presenting would have their fair chance,” said Robert Legary, who is now retired after 37 (and three quarters) years in Operations at the Control Center on Dovercourt. But he is still an active member of the Toastmasters.

He quickly realized there was much more to learn than just timing, but he stayed for the leadership skills and mentorship program.

“It’s an excellent social and learning group. I joined the mentorship program in 2008 and still keep in touch with my first team,” said Robert. “I was in the District Director role back then, the leader for Toastmasters in all of Manitoba, Northwest Ontario and the tip of Minnesota.”

Robert says you just need to do it! Get out of your comfort zone, get up in front of people and speak. Start with a small group and work your way up to bigger groups but it only starts if you just do it!

“People never fail. They’re very bold for trying, getting out of their comfort zone, and building their self-esteem,” said Robert.