

Second Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Social and Economic Development

Chairperson
Mr. Clarence Pettersen
Constituency of Flin Flon

Vol. LXV No. 9 - 6 p.m., Tuesday, September 10, 2013

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
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ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
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GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
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HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
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WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday, September 10, 2013

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

**CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Clarence Pettersen
(Flin Flon)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Melanie Wight
(Burrows)**

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

*Hon. Messrs. Bjornson, Chief, Lemieux,
Mackintosh*

*Messrs. Briese, Eichler, Graydon, Nevakshonoff,
Pedersen, Pettersen, Ms. Wight*

APPEARING:

Hon. Jon Gerrard, MLA for River Heights

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

*Mr. Alvin Zimmer, Rural Municipality of
Shellmouth-Boulton*

Ms. Cindy Marzoff, private citizen

Ms. Lorna Keene, private citizen

Mr. Tom Teichroeb, private citizen

*Mr. Bill Ashton, Rural Development Institute,
Brandon University*

*Mr. Denis Carter, Rural Municipality of
Woodworth*

Mr. Jeff McConnell, Town of Virden

Ms. Linda McMillan, private citizen

Mr. Bruce Morrison, private citizen

*Mr. Neil Christoffersen, Rural Municipality of
North Norfolk*

Mr. Ron Pratt, private citizen

*Mr. Robert Sharpe, Rural Municipality of
Saskatchewan*

Mr. Rudy Isaak, private citizen

Mr. David M. Sanders, private citizen

Ms. Liz Foster, private citizen

Mr. Mark McLearn, private citizen

Mr. Walter Kleinschmit, private citizen

Ms. Florence Eastwood, private citizen

Ms. Marjorie Birley, private citizen

Mr. David Lewis, private citizen

Mr. Lyle Lockhart, private citizen

Mr. Robert Lawler, private citizen

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Ken Capelle, private citizen

Al and Susan Kotzer, private citizens

Barry Wowk, Rural Municipality of Silver Creek

Irene and Blair Waldvogel, private citizens

*Richard Funk and Tracey Winthrop-Meyers,
Rural Municipality of Lansdowne*

Laurel Howard, private citizen

Diane Kuculym, private citizen

Shelley Glenn, Rural Municipality of Strathclair

Thomas Mowbray, Rural Municipality of Roblin

Stan Herechuk, private citizen

Roy Ziprick, private citizen

Jim Brown, Rural Municipality of Blanshard

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

*Bill 33–The Municipal Modernization Act
(Municipal Amalgamations)*

* * *

Clerk Assistant (Mr. Andrea Signorelli): Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development please come to order.

Before the committee can proceed with the business before it, it must elect a new chairperson. Are there any nominations for this position?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): I nominate Mr. Pettersen, Flin Flon.

Clerk Assistant: Mr. Pettersen, Flin Flon, has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I nominate Mr. Nevakshonoff.

Clerk Assistant: Mr. Nevakshonoff has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

All those in–

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): I very much appreciate the nomination of the member opposite, but I'd rather serve as an observer on this committee this evening, and I will gratefully and gracefully decline the nomination. But I thank the member for Lakeside for his show of confidence in me.

Clerk Assistant: Mr. Nevakshonoff has withdrawn the nomination. So there are—any other nominations?

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Ms. Wight.

Clerk Assistant: Ms. Wight has been nominated.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): I am truly touched because member opposite is one of my favourite members and—but I respectfully decline as well. *[interjection]* He is. We're close.

Clerk Assistant: Ms. Wight has declined the nomination.

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Pettersen, Flin Flon, will you please take the Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Good evening. Our next item of business is the election of the Vice-Chairman. Are there any nominations?

Mr. Bjornson: I nominate Ms. Wight.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear no other nominations. Ms. Wight has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Ms. Wight is elected Vice-Chair.

This meeting has been called to consider Bill 33, municipal moderation act, municipal amalgamations.

I would like to inform all in attendance of the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment. Except for unanimous consent, a standing committee meeting to consider a bill in the evening must not sit past midnight to hear presentations unless fewer than 20 presenters are registered to speak to all bills being considered when the committee meets at 6 p.m. As of 6 p.m. this evening, there are 40 persons registered to speak, as noted on this list of presenters before you. Therefore, according to our rules, this committee may not sit past midnight to hear presentations.

I would also add that it was previously announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development would meet again, if necessary, on Wednesday, September 11, at 6 p.m. to continue consideration of Bill 33.

Therefore, how late does the committee wish to sit this evening?

Mr. Eichler: I suggest we sit 'til midnight or 'til presenters have been heard and then re-evaluate at that time.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Is that the agreement with all? *[Agreed]*

On the topic of public presentations, I will note that all persons registered to speak tonight have already been called once. If a person is absent, their name will be removed from the list. In addition, all out-of-town presenters called yesterday appear first on the list since they were called first last night.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Chairman, last night we had an agreement around the committee table that we would start with out-of-town presenters, but we also asked that anyone who was more than two hours from Winnipeg would—could present first if they went and told the clerks at the table that they were that far away. Just—it allows them to present first and then they are able to get on the road to get home, and it's just—so I would ask leave of the committee, we will do the out-of-town presenters first but also give those more than two hours away—out of Winnipeg the chance to present first if they so choose.

Mr. Chairperson: Leave? *[Agreed]*

I will read the names that are more than two hours away. Number—these people are asking to go first: No. 4, Alvin Zimmer; No. 8, Cindy Marzoff; No. 24, Lorna Keene are commonly—are commuting together from more than four hours' driving from the city. Is there leave to hear from them first? *[Agreed]*

Before we proceed with presentations, we do have a number of other items and points of information to consider. First of all, is there anyone else in the audience who would like to make a presentation this evening? Please register with the staff at the entrance of the room.

Also, for the information of all presenters, while written versions of presentations are not required, if you're going to accompany your presentation with written materials, we ask that you provide 20 copies. If you need help with photocopying, please speak to our staff.

* (18:10)

As well, I'd like to inform presenters that, in accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members.

The following written submissions on Bill 18 have been received and distributed to committee members: Ken Capelle; Al and Susan Kotzer;

Barry Wowk, Rural Municipality of Silver Creek; Irene and Blair Waldvogel; Richard Funk, Rural Municipality of Lansdowne; Laurel Howard; Diane Kuculym; Shelley Glenn, Rural Municipality of Strathclair; Thomas Mowbray, Rural Municipality of Roblin.

Does the committee agree to have these documents appear in the Hansard transcript of this evening of this meeting? *[Agreed]*

Speaking in committee: prior to proceeding with public presentations, I'd like to advise the members of the public regarding the process for speaking in committee. The proceedings of our meeting are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is the signal for the Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

Thank you for your patience, we'll now proceed with the public presentations.

Okay, I'd like to call the first presenter, Alvin Zimmer, reeve, Shellmouth-Boulton.

Mr. Zimmer, do you have any copies for the committee?

Mr. Alvin Zimmer (Rural Municipality of Shellmouth-Boulton): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Our staff will help distribute them. You can start whenever you're ready, Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Zimmer: Okay. Thank you very much.

Good evening members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. My name is Alvin Zimmer, I'm the reeve of Shellmouth-Boulton. Thank you for allowing me this time to speak on this proposed legislation. The RM of Shellmouth-Boulton opposes Bill 33, The Municipal Modernization Act, in its current form. Shellmouth-Boulton opposes a non-voluntary, forced amalgamation process provided for under Bill 33 for municipalities with fewer than a thousand permanent residents. Using this population number to determine whether a municipality is viable or not is not a valid reason for a municipality to amalgamate.

Shellmouth-Boulton supports a voluntary amalgamation process that would enable municipalities to move forward with amalgamations supported by affected communities and ratepayers in a fair, open and reasonable fashion, with support and assistance

from the Province. A voluntary and properly supported process would result in a number of amalgamations and would create the best opportunity to achieve successful, positive outcomes and results for the communities and the province as a whole.

If the government intends to move forward with Bill 33 and its non-voluntary, forced amalgamation process despite the opposition, then Shellmouth-Boulton asks that it be included in the proposed exemption for resort communities. We are a summer and a winter resort community and in a similar or even stronger position than other resort communities that would support such an exemption.

At this time, I would like to give you a background of our municipality. Shellmouth-Boulton is located in the western part of the province bordering Saskatchewan provincial boundary to the west and the Riding Mountain National Park to the east. We encompass the Local Urban District of Inglis and seven thriving cottage developments with approximately 600 cottage lots along the Lake of the Prairies and the Asessippi ski area and in the Asessippi Provincial Park.

We also have the Inglis elevators and interpretive centre, a professional golf course, among many other attractions. Shellmouth-Boulton attracts residents, visitors and tourists from Manitoba, across Canada and around the world. Shellmouth-Boulton's permanent population, based on Canada census figures, is 930. In the summer and winter tourist seasons, our population increases to approximately 2,500.

Amalgamation: Shellmouth-Boulton has already successfully completed its own voluntary amalgamation when, in 1999, the rural municipalities of Shellmouth and Boulton amalgamated to form one municipality. This amalgamation was initiated by the two municipalities after much consideration and thought that was the best interest of their respective ratepayers 'commu'-and communities then and for the future. The ratepayers in the two municipalities supported this voluntary amalgamation.

Since the amalgamation, Shellmouth-Boulton's mainly agriculture-based economy has diversified, particularly with the development and addition of tourism to the municipal economy. The decision to amalgamate in 1999 has been a benefit to our ratepayers and to the communities, as we have grown and proposed according to plan.

The stated reasons for Bill 33 do not apply to Shellmouth-Boulton based on the following.

Population: Based on Canada's census figures, Shellmouth-Boulton's permanent population is 930, just under Bill 33's 1,000 cut-off figure. The census figure does not reflect the true population or number of residents accurately. The Shellmouth-Boulton's population includes not only permanent 'ren'-residents, but also a significant number of seasonal residents from seven cottage developments within our municipality. Shellmouth-Boulton's seasonal population is approximately—and that's with our permanent residents—is 2,500. Many of these people consider the municipality their second home and plan ultimately to make the municipality their permanent residence. They have become an integral part of our community, whether through volunteering or by supporting local communities and businesses. They also require and demand the same services as permanent residents. Unique to Shellmouth-Boulton is that our seasonal population exists in both summer and winter.

Infrastructure projects and services and financial health: Shellmouth-Boulton provides services to every ratepayer in this municipality that is second to none, whether it be permanent or part-time, whether it be fire protection, transportation, recreational facilities, waste disposal and recycling programs or water and sewer services. The LUD of Inglis has a class 2 water treatment and waste water facility that serves Inglis rural residents, the Asessippi ski area and cottage owners. The waste water facility was recently upgraded and expanded in 2008 to provide for increased seasonal recreational growth.

In 'therm'-in terms of municipal services within the municipality, consider the following. Shellmouth-Boulton's total assessment has increased from a hundred and ten, four hundred and thirty-eight hundred million in 200—in 2007 to 207,864,900 in 2013, or is portioned at \$33,596,160 in 2007 to \$70,562,080 in 2013. As a result of conscientious efforts and strict financial planning, we have accommodated the financial costs for existing ratepayers and attracted growth by maintaining low tax rates. We continue to increase our cumulated reserves for equipment purchases and infrastructure capital improvements. The waste water facility was expanded in 2009 to accommodate both existing and future cottage developments and was paid off in full in three years. Municipality only borrowed \$104,000 for a water line in Inglis. Based on the impact of reassessment 2014 report from the provincial

municipal assessment branch, Shellmouth-Boulton's total assessment is projected to increase by 20 per cent in 2014 or approximately to \$85 million. The report states the increase is based on new construction and supply and demand for real estate.

Promotion of economic development opportunities: Since the 1999 amalgamation, Shellmouth-Boulton has grown from a mainly agriculture-based community to a diversified economy being a major tourist destination. New home construction continues. The services serving the resort and the tourist industry have expanded and continue to expand. The decision to amalgamate in 1999 has benefited all ratepayers and our communities, and we have grown and prospered accordingly. We have numerous amenities that will continue to encourage growth and prosper in the future as result of our hard work and planning.

*(18:20)

Regional thinking and participation: Although Shellmouth-Boulton is self-sufficient, we share and participate in many regional actions and initiatives and we'll continue to do so, including planning district veterinary boards, conservation district and economic development officer. A tax-sharing agreement has been in place for five—with five adjacent municipalities for 12 years. We also belong to the Shellmouth-Assiniboine Valley Economic Development group comprised of municipalities to the north and south of us.

None of the stated reasons for including municipalities in the proposed amalgamation process apply to Shellmouth-Boulton.

I would like, at this time, to question the resort community exemption from Bill 33. Shellmouth-Boulton has recently learned the government is considering amendments to Bill 33 to exempt certain resort communities. These communities include Victoria Beach, Dunnottar, Oak Lake and Clear Lake. The stated reasons for providing an exemption include that resort community populations increase in the summer months, they have a healthy tax base and municipal operation, and this exemption would avoid these communities having to waste resources fighting the government on Bill 33.

If the government proceeds with non—with the non-voluntary, forced amalgamation process set out in Bill 33, Shellmouth-Boulton supports the government's proposal to exempt resort

communities. Based on the stated reasons for the exemption and the circumstances of the resort communities being considered for the exemption, Shellmouth-Boulton is in equal if not better position on all of the stated reasons for the exemption. There's no justification not to include our municipality in the resort community exemption.

Shellmouth-Boulton's seasonal and part-time population is set above—is set out above, almost triple the permanent population. In the case of Shellmouth-Boulton, this influence is not limited to one season a year but includes both summer and winter. Shellmouth-Boulton's tax base, municipal operations and financial help is equal to, and in some cases superior to, other resort communities. Shellmouth-Boulton's residents, permanent, seasonal or part-time, are strongly opposed to amalgamation and will oppose being included in Bill 33 through all available means, including a legal challenge. I have included a brief snapshot of the resort communities included—including Shellmouth-Boulton for your perusal as proof of our identity.

In concluding, on behalf of the Shellmouth-Boulton's council, permanent and part-time residents, voters and ratepayers, we ask that Bill 33 not proceed in its current form with the forced, non-voluntary amalgamation process. If Bill 33 does proceed with this process, then we can—request an exemption from the amalgamation process as the same basis as being provided to other resort communities. Our community has already gone through a voluntary, highly successful amalgamation process that was supported by the community—

Mr. Chairperson: Thirty seconds.

Mr. Zimmer: —and all its residents, as well as the Province.

I can assure you our permanent and seasonal taxpayers do not support this legislation as it reads. I thank you for your consideration of our position and providing us with an opportunity to make this submission.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Zimmer. Does the committee have any questions?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Yes, I just want to thank Mr. Zimmer for coming. He's come a long way, as well as the people travelling with him. We appreciate his comments and respect his leadership. And I've known him for a few years and I know he speaks from the heart on all issues and we appreciate that

very much. Just a quick question. What is Shellmouth-Boulton—what is the—what is your taxable assessment base?

Mr. Zimmer: The apportioned? Well, in nineteen—in 2013, the apportioned was \$70,562,080.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Alvin, for coming in and sharing what Shellmouth-Boulton has to—has offered to its citizens.

I think you've been around on council for a couple of years. Can you share with the committee, if you can, some of the experiences you had doing the amalgamation back in 1999 and some of the issues that you faced back then?

Mr. Zimmer: Well, just to fill you in on the issues that we had in '99, we really didn't have a whole lot of issues, because at that particular time Shellmouth and Boulton jointly owned an office in the village of Inglis. We ran a joint fire department. We ran a joint waste disposal site and yet the ratepayers kept saying, but you got two sets of books, why aren't you just go one step forward and get rid of that, and that was one of the reasons. And we had four public meetings and at those four public meetings, we had two people oppose, which is a total, total opposite from today, really.

So it worked really, really well.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I believe you've had quite a significant growth in the last 14 years of the seasonal population, with the development around the Lake of the Prairies and so on. Perhaps you can give us—right now you've got a number of about 2,500. Back in 1999 you would have had how many people that were seasonal?

Mr. Zimmer: Seasonal, we would have had—in 1999 we would of—have none because the ski hill opened in the fall of—or the spring of—yes, the fall of '99-2000, and it was after that that cottage development started. Up until that time, we had no cottage development in our municipality.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Zimmer. Is there any further questions? Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Zimmer.

I will now call on Cindy Marzoff. Do you have any written materials for distribution?

Ms. Cindy Marzoff (Private Citizen): Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: You do? Okay, our staff will help you there. You can begin when you're ready.

Ms. Marzoff: Good evening, members of the standing committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak on Bill 33, The Municipal Modernization Act. My name is Cindy Marzoff. I have been the chief administrative officer for the RM of Shellmouth-Boulton for five years and I've lived in this municipality for 25 years.

First of all, I would like the standing committee to consider the meaning of the word modernization as it is used in this act. Modernization means refurbish, rejuvenate, restore, revamp and update. I cannot think of a better word to describe the RM of Shellmouth-Boulton. You will find no better example of modernization than what this municipality has accomplished and is continuing to accomplish as we move into the future.

Modernize is exactly what this municipality has achieved by taking the first step to voluntarily amalgamate two municipalities in 1999. The councils for RM of Boulton and the RM of Shellmouth had a common goal, to move two rural municipalities which were comprised of agriculture towards inviting and attracting tourism and cottage development.

I would like to give you a background of the creation of our municipality. Over time, the ratepayers in both municipalities had been very vocal in requesting the amalgamation because they had so much in common it only made sense. The decision to join was an amicable one because it was based on shared municipal entities, cost savings to taxpayers and, most of all, shared common goals such as tourism attraction, which we are continuing to see today and will 'consin'—sorry—continue to see in the future.

Therefore, in 1998, discussions began between the councils, and in 1999 the new amalgamated municipality was formed. The amalgamation process received no opposition as it was achieved because it was in the best interest of both current and future ratepayers. It was not forced by the Province and, as explained, only municipal officials have the knowledge and experience to make that decision on behalf of their constituents. Therefore, I ask that the Province allow municipal officials to represent their municipality as they were elected to do. That being said, we are truly unique in this area of the province, and forcing us to amalgamate with an adjacent neighbour without the same goals would be

detrimental to everyone and, indeed, a step back in the progress we have made to date.

Regarding Bill 33, the Province is forcing municipalities under the minimum 1,000 population to amalgamate. Our municipality believes that to use only the thousand-population threshold as a stipulation to amalgamate without considering other factors is not a valid reason to force amalgamation onto us and will definitely penalize our ratepayers and stall the growth we are experiencing. Our large seasonal recreational population is not included in this number. Do we—seasonal residents contribute to our assessment? Absolutely. Do we obtain any grant funding for seasonal residents? Absolutely not. But we still provide excellent services to those residents, including garbage pickup, recycling, water and sewer and essential services such as fire protection, just like any other tourism destinations in our province. In fact, our municipality is just as financially healthy or healthier than most.

* (18:30)

On Wednesday, September 4th, I read the article in the Winnipeg Free Press titled "Amalgamation flexibility." In that interview, Mr. Lemieux stated that his officials have drafted amendments to Bill 33 that would allow resort communities such as Victoria Beach and Dunnottar to stay as they are. The article also stated that the goal of the amendments is to recognize the populations in resort municipalities climb in the summer months and, because of those seasonal residents, their tax base and municipal operations are healthy.

The RM of Shellmouth-Boulton does have one exception to that statement. Our population climbs in the summer and winter months because our resorts are open year-round. This is apparent, as we host the Lake of the Prairies which is comprised of beaches, an adjacent professional golf course, numerous boat launches, all-season fishing and numerous water activities. We are also home to the Asessippi Provincial Park, which is comprised of the Asessippi Ski Area and Winter Park with an abundance of summer and winter activities. Riding Mountain National Park can also be accessed from our eastern boundary and attracts birdwatchers, cross-country skiing, trail riding and sleigh riding. This makes our RM attractive to developers and, therefore, seasonal residents.

On January 30th, February 20th and again on March 18th, 2013, our municipality wrote to Minister Lemieux requesting an exemption due to

the amount of seasonal recreational residents who call this municipality their second home. We were told there will be no exemptions. I hope that this article means that we will also be included in that amendment, as we are comparable to other resort communities in this province. To do so would be unfair and unjust.

This municipality's assessment has grown 45 per cent since 2005, and another 20 per cent will increase in 2014. This is due mostly in part to the amount of newly constructed cottages. Those seasonal residents deserve to be counted in our municipality, as they most definitely contribute financially to the viability of our resort community and are an integral part of our financial plan. Therefore, like the RM of Victoria Beach, Village of Dunnottar, RM of Park and the RM of Sifton and Oak Lake, we are also requesting an exemption.

If the standing committee will take into consideration that our municipality was one of the first municipalities to become PSAB compliant and our financial plans and audited financial statements have proven that we are healthy and viable, although our lagoon required expansion to accommodate the seasonal recreational growth in our municipality and a new water line was also installed to accommodate the ski area and resort and Cottage Cove development, we continue to be debt free due to careful planning.

Therefore, in closing, I would ask that the RM of Shellmouth-Boulton be allowed to stay as we are like other resort communities and that we also be included in the amendments to Bill 33. Thank you for your consideration regarding our request to be included in these amendments.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Marzoff. Any questions from the committee?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much for presenting.

I'm just wondering, do you know a Gord—or a Daymon Guillas at all?

Floor Comment: I do.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, I'm sorry, Ms.—

Mr. Lemieux: Yes. Just—what does he do, exactly, around Russell and Shellmouth? What's his employment?

Ms. Marzoff: He is the manager of the Russell Inn.

Mr. Lemieux: Are you familiar that he's very much in favour of a large municipal amalgamation in the whole region?

Ms. Marzoff: He hasn't told me that directly, no.

Mr. Lemieux: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Marzoff. Further questions?

Mr. Pedersen: I'm glad the minister has finally found a supporter. Maybe that—alluding to it at least, anyway, and perhaps that person will run for council next time, so.

But—is there—you have—you've sent—you've requested three different times—you wrote to the minister January 30th, February 20th and March 18th. What was your answer that you got back from the minister from those three requests?

Floor Comment: Our—

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Marzoff.

Ms. Marzoff: Sorry. We—our requests—our letters were acknowledged, but, actually, our reeve was told by phone call that we would be receiving no exemption.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, and you have, really, an exciting municipality which is growing rapidly, and tell me the projections for the next five and 10 years in terms of what your population is going to be, what your seasonal population is going to be.

Ms. Marzoff: Like we have said, our assessment is growing to \$85 million for 2014. Therefore, that's approximately 15 to 16 million more than we are currently sitting. We have potential—and requests for future developments to our municipality. Therefore, I can't tell you a number that we will be at. I'm assuming we're only going to grow, based on, you know, the requests that we've had to our council. And I see us growing to probably three, five thousand dollars—5,000 population, I'm not sure. I can only tell you how much we have grown since 2000.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much for your presentation tonight, Cindy. I have a couple of questions. After being—after writing three letters and saying that there would be no exemptions, then reading in the newspaper that there is a possibility of exemptions for another resort area much the same as yours, much in the same situation—and we heard extensively from them last night with a lot of good reasons and a lot of

compassion—if the minister would have come forward with his exemptions, with his amendments, would that have saved how many hours it took you to drive in today, would that have saved you a trip? You could have done the negotiations on the phone ahead of time instead of coming here to have to do this at a committee at a great deal of expense and the stress that you've gone through to prepare for this.

Ms. Marzoff: Yes, I suppose it would have.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Marzoff, for your presentation.

We have received two additional written submissions on Bill 33 from people who registered to speak, and copies have been distributed to committee members: Stan Herechuk, Roy Ziprick.

Does the committee agree to have these documents appear in the Hansard transcript of this meeting? *[Agreed]*

Their names will be removed from the list of presenters then.

I will now call on Lorna Keene. Lorna, do you have any handouts for the committee?

Ms. Lorna Keene (Private Citizen): Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. You can start anytime.

Ms. Keene: Well, good evening, everybody. Thank you for allowing me to speak on forced amalgamation, Bill 33. I'm a councillor and a cottage owner in the Rural Municipality of Shellmouth-Boulton. The RM is against forced amalgamation and, to date, we see no benefit to our ratepayers. This municipality's finances are excellent condition and municipality is a viable identity on its own. We made the decision to amalgamate Shellmouth and Boulton on our own in 1999 in the best interests of all affected taxpayers. The Province did not have to force us into amalgamation then. We did it voluntary and do not have to force amalgamation upon us now.

We're not children who can be bullied. We're elected officials who make decisions based on the best outcome for our taxpayers. I hesitate to think that respect between both levels of government will be in jeopardy because of implications to implementing this legislation not be considered. If the bill is forced onto our RM, there will be no doubt that taxes for our ratepayers would increase, which in turn slows down growth we are seeing in our municipality. We have a very unique municipality

because our diversity of agriculture, LUD, lake development, Asessippi Ski Area and resort, Asessippi Provincial Park and bordering of the Riding Mountain National Park. At this time I have no choice but to feel that we will be losing our vision for the future municipality if forced to amalgamate with other partners because we do not meet the 1,000 population threshold.

I have heard that there will be amendments to the proposed Bill 33 which will include granting exemptions to communities that do not meet the 1,000 population criteria. The RM of Shellmouth-Boulton population is 930 in 2011. That's based on the census. That population only holds true to permanent residents. Our large seasonal recreation population does not account for that number. Because we have both summer and winter attractions, the non-permanent population grows—I'm sorry—the non-permanent population grows in our seven existing cottage developments tremendously to approximately 2,500 people year-round.

We also have three more potential developments proposed at this time, and this will continue if we're allowed to continue to grow and flourish without provincial interference.

In an article published in the Winnipeg Free Press, Minister Lemieux was quoted as stating: The goal of the amendments is to recognize the population in resort municipalities climb in the summer months, and because of those residents their tax base and municipal operations are healthy.

* (18:40)

Therefore, in closing, I would once—I would like, once again, to remind the standing committee that, due to our large cottage developments, we have residents that increase the population of the municipality year-round not just in the summer, but were not counted in the last permanent residents. They are part of our municipal tax base, demand and are entitled to the same services of 'perm'—as permanent residents, that seasonal recreational population is not 'agible'—eligible for grant funding. The Province does not assist with any infrastructure the seasonal developments require. That being said, we're able to sustain a healthy, viable community while being solely independent.

At this time I ask the RM 'shema'—of Shellmouth-Boulton would also be included in this exemption, along with the other resort communities. Thank you very much for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Ms. Keene.

Questions from the committee?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much for your presentation. And I appreciated speaking to you as well as at a couple of meetings that I attended consulting municipal officials. The legislation itself talks about amalgamating with your neighbours. Who would be a natural amalgamation for you when this legislation is passed? When you take a look around you, would that be Russell? Would that be Silver Creek? Who would that be?

Ms. Keene: A natural amalgamation, I kind of look at what I'd be going through. I'm sitting there—we, if we're forced, we have to be forced, but I don't see a natural fit without our ratepayers going through a tax increase. There is no natural fit.

Mr. Eichler: Thank you for your presentation, Lorna.

In your presentation, you make reference to three more potential developments that are proposed. Have they been approved by the Municipal Board, and what—how many sites is in those three developments?

Ms. Keene: Can't tell you completely right offhand. There's three more. There's one that just came to the table here just recently. One is Beautiful Lake's. The other one is the other side, the development for the ski hill resort. They're talking about construction on the far side of the river, there. And those are projected that they could come online in the future here for the RM.

Mr. Gerrard: Just doing some quick calculations from what your reeve had mentioned, that in 1999 there was virtually no seasonable people, and now there's 2,500. That's, you know, an increase of about 160 or so a year. Would you say that that increase of 160 new people in a year would be continuing?

Ms. Keene: Actually, I can see it continuing. If we can keep our taxes down, and like I say, I don't see anything happening good to our ratepayers, if we go through with this. If that happens, where we're forced to amalgamate, I see construction slowing down and it only hurting us. I know what my taxes are, and I'm at wit's end with it. And I'm saying if it goes up much more, I don't know what I want to do. I'm just looking at everyone's sake that way, and I would like to see construction continue, have a viable identity and hopefully continue to grow and flourish.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Keene, for your presentation.

We will now call presenters coming from more than two hours from Winnipeg. We'll start with No. 13, which is Tom Teichroeb. Teichroeb. Sorry about mis—

Mr. Tom Teichroeb (Private Citizen): Tom Teichroeb.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay.

Mr. Teichroeb: I'm sorry, we lost our handouts in the car transfer, whatever, but—

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, begin.

Mr. Teichroeb: I will wing it. I will be blunt. And you'll understand my point when I'm done.

So thank you for allowing me this opportunity to make my presentation. My name is Tom Teichroeb. I am from the RM of Lakeview. I'm a ratepayer and a citizens there who runs a business there, as well.

I would like to start with a quote from you, Minister Lemieux: Is amalgamation going to happen? You're damn right it is.

That is the most sad and perverse way of addressing any crowd that I could possibly imagine when you talk about democracy. If we are truly in a democracy, then we ask the people what they would like to do and what makes sense to do, from a fiscal point of view and a democratic point of view.

So the RM of Lakeview is self-sustaining, fiscally responsible, meets its budget every year. It has enterprises within the RM that have grown and changed to some degree to help it. The community pasture, a water system that is current, it's a—one of the most advanced water systems you could have. So we have the quintessential things that you need for survival, first of all, and, again, we have an RM that's fiscally responsible. If we digress here for a little bit and attach common sense to this conversation and we say, okay, the RMs are charged with making sure that we are fiscally responsible every year—which they are charged to do, well, again, the RM of Lakeview and, I'm sure, many other RMs have responded and have done that. However, the provincial and federal governments don't necessarily have to do that. Imagine if the government of Manitoba was told by the federal government that we're now going to come in and we're going to amalgamate with any other province because you have never been and will always be a province that

always will rely on transfer payments, always. You are not, in essence, fiscally responsible because look at the last tax hike with the PST. Irregardless of whether it's right or wrong, it's the process in how we do these things. It's how the democratic—the lack of democracy that has prevailed in how these initiatives have been driven forward. That is the issue.

The issue with the RM of Lakeview, if it were not fiscally responsible and could not make its budget, then I have no argument for you; then I would say absolutely, that is an option. So we cannot take these RMs and throw it under a blanket system of amalgamation. It is stupidity at its best. It really is, folks. We do things because they are fiscally prudent. They make sense. If we, in fact, amalgamate with the most logical RM, which would be the RM of Westbourne, we now know for a fact that our rates as individual taxpayers would, in fact, go up. The town of Gladstone which is a part of the RM of Westbourne has one of the highest rates. There is only, I think, one other town in Manitoba if—I wish I had my numbers here with me, I don't have my papers with me—but I think there's only one other town in the entire province of Manitoba that has higher taxes than the town of Gladstone.

Would it be prudent for me to take my business to another business, amalgamate it because it's got a higher overhead? I don't think so. And furthermore, when you talk about representation we now take, which we have, four councillors and a reeve, that can effectively take that area and do a good job with it, now we have one councillor that takes that entire area. We will not have the representation we do now. A prime example is the 2011 flood. I know, Mr. Lemieux, that we were one of the most active councils and private citizens in the entire province of Manitoba when the 2011 flood coming to try and draw attention to the net—to the help that we need. I have never received as many compliments from other RMs at how effective the RM of Lakeview was because we, in fact, had the representation and the people who gave a damn and the people that know how to run a business. And I want to further say that we can't be obtuse enough to sit here and, again, blanket and impose amalgamation to every single RM because we want to do so. That is so inherently wrong. When we talk about fiscally responsible and democracy, it's just wrong.

Now, again, I can't offer you any numbers here because I don't have them with me, but you can get those numbers. They're available at the RM. You can check in if you want to, and I guarantee you'll find

what I told you, that they do meet their budget every year, that we have grown as a rural municipality in various ways. We have shrunk in others, but at the end of the day we have grown and we make our budget.

So in closing, again, I'd like to say to you, Mr. Lemieux, would you please take to your government that we do live in a democracy? And I guarantee you that Mr. Douglas, Mr. Tommy Douglas, would roll over in his grave to see what's happening right now. Thank you.

* (18:50)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Teichroeb. Question from the committee?

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I want to thank you for your comments. And, as is the case in a democratic country, you are having your say before your elected representatives, and this committee hearing is, as I've been advised, really unique. In the country of Canada, this is the only province or territory that, when bills come to the Legislature, that people are allowed to come and present to their legislators and give their points of view, whether they agree or not. It's truly a unique situation where the public is allowed to come and present.

So, with that, I just want to say thank you very much for taking the time. You've travelled a long way to express your views. We thank you for that, and I thank you on behalf of everyone. Thank you.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Thanks, Tom, for your presentation, and thank you for coming in today. I—the RM of Lakeview is in my constituency, and your reeve and your CAO and the reeve's wife all presented here last night. And I know, from the flood event and—that went on there in 2011 and the work that municipality did and did it on a timely basis to fight that flood, they're a very healthy, proactive municipality and, in my view, shouldn't face the fate that the minister is throwing at them right now.

Do you see any other option with this legislation outside of simply pulling the whole bill and possibly starting over from a different angle at some point further on in time?

Mr. Teichroeb: At this point in time, it's—again, I look at it the way I look at my business. I am fiscally responsible. I do a budget every year, and I have to make the budget. For my business to exist, that's what I do. And, when I look at this amalgamation and I see the option out there that no

matter what we do as an RM, we are going to pay more taxes than we do now, and the simple fact is that we are, in fact, making the budget with the RM, Mr. Briese, I see no option right now that would be responsible.

And as far as—if I can make one more small, little comment, Mr. Lemieux, a democracy is only true democracy if we're heard and understood and we're taken under consideration.

Mr. Gerrard: I wonder, Tom, if you'd address two points. Clarify for people here how it is that Lakeview can run such an economical, right, with a low tax rate compared, for instance, to Gladstone.

And second, one of the suggestions that came up last night was the possibility that Lakeview could annex areas along the lake north and south of Lakeview and become a little larger geographic municipality but focused on the lake and more consistent with, you know, what Lakeview is now in a sense.

Mr. Teichroeb: What I would—the way I can respond is—again, I don't have the numbers in front of me; again, I wish I did. But the way I will respond is this.

The only way that I can see that our RM manages its books differently and more effectively than the RM of Westbourne and the Town of Gladstone is because they have reduced their overhead. They have found a way to manage. They have found a way to have their tax base that the ratepayers have been able to adjust to the minor changes that have been made and we have other infrastructure and other businesses that—for example, the community pasture that I mentioned.

With that, we also have a business that's moved into town when we had people—we've had other people move into town. We've had a person come in to buy up the store where the person was just going to simply abandon it. He did that for two reasons, first, because he knew the town had really good water, and one of his important aspects of that was because it was environmentally green and friendly aspect of the town the way it was done. Okay? And that's why he came in and bought the store, the reason he did. Secondly, he came in because he saw the potential for more growth in various developments.

And we, too, have cottage developments further out from town, and they are actually expanding as we speak right now, after the flood. And so we have

had growth in that way and, again, that creates more tax base for the RM.

And, as far as Gladstone goes and how they manage their overhead and why their taxes are so high, I can't really tell you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Teichroeb, for your presentation.

Next I will call Bill Ashton—[interjection] Oh, I'm sorry, one more question? The time is up for questions. Thank you.

Oh, No. 14, Bill Ashton. Mr. Ashton, you may begin when you—

Mr. Bill Ashton (Rural Development Institute, Brandon University): Thank you very much for taking the invitation and being able to present on Bill 33, the municipalities modernization act.

Three items that you'll receive tonight, one is the actual words of the presentation that I'll be talking with. I'll be paraphrasing it. Secondly, there will be two reports, and I'll speak to both of those reports in my presentation, if I might.

I know rural amalgamation is a polarizing topic with high—that's got lots of emotions. It provokes lots of emotions around it. It draws a—and what we want to do tonight is I want to draw attention to some of the research that we've been able to conduct at the Rural Development Institute of Brandon University, relative to amalgamation. We want to be able to add this information as well as to contribute to the discussion as we go forward on this bill.

I'm the director of the Rural Development Institute, and I have had the privilege of consulting about amalgamations, municipal amalgamations, in other provinces. For instance, in Alberta, I've worked with and for municipalities trying to voluntarily join together, looking at their financial situations as well as their mill rates in terms of what it would end up with. I've also worked with several of the authors of the New Brunswick study and lived in New Brunswick for 20 years through various amalgamations. That study itself in New Brunswick brought together—looked at about 260 municipalities and local service districts, and they were able to redefine the geographic boundaries, down to about 54 larger municipalities.

I know amalgamations. It's—and this bill is inherent about—is inherently—what this bill is talking about is change, both the geography and even our own community identities. And it's really part of

those, both the geography and the identity, are actually always changing. Each one of us will have a different notion of what our community is, what the boundaries may or may not be—in terms of exact terms—and I'd like to talk a little bit about what that might mean in terms of the geography that—in terms of the boundaries, as well as the notions of a strong community or a strong municipality in terms of indicators.

I know some people worry about the loss of a—of the way of life, the community spirit, in being able to join or not join with their neighbours in terms of—often our neighbour municipality are also not our collaborators, but we're competing with them in a variety of ways as well. And so this notion of a bill to think that you're actually going to join with your neighbour, in some ways, speaks against that notion. The loss of lifestyle, we've—I know I hear that. I travel across Canada about amalgamation and hear about the loss of economic power and even the loss of local representation.

And I think it's this question around, I think, around the lack of population, even the tax base growing or not in terms of how do we start beginning to look at the future and the services that we want to provide to our municipalities. In our research, what we found in terms of amalgamation is that we started looking, first of all, at trying to identify some of the indicators of what is a strong municipality. And the second question would be, what would the geography, what would the geographic footprint look like for those municipalities if we were to start looking with that geographic footprint notion in Manitoba?

* (19:00)

So on the first one, in terms of indicators, both of the reports were released in April as they've been circulated to you and they're online. On the first one, we—relative to indicators and criteria, we studied 30 municipalities in this province trying to understand what the answer to that—to this question might be, in terms of what are the healthy—health—what is a healthy municipality? We quickly found out that, first of all, it's very complex. Municipalities aren't simple. It didn't matter if you were a rural municipality, a town or a village or a city. What we did find out is that there really isn't any absolute definition of a strong municipality.

So then what we did is we said, well, what are we going to do about that? We responded by saying, first of all, let's examine what's happening in some of

the existing reports. Let's look at some of the existing performance of municipalities in the province and then let's see if we can set out some guideposts to understand this in terms of strong municipalities.

We looked at three reports to help define strong municipalities. One was from the government's report in New Brunswick about building stronger—or, sorry, about building stronger local governments. There they, in New Brunswick, they were talking about trying to establish population levels, tax base, and it went on. But there were several—a good handful of variables that they were looking at.

We also examined the work of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, their municipal healthy checklist. In that they certainly talked about a healthy municipality has a growing tax base. We heard that, and certainly a low debt in terms of a healthy community.

And the third report we looked at was from 19— or from 2002, and it was really about the functional economic area. And the argument there is that if most of the residents are employed in that area and most of the jobs are from the residents or occupied by the residents of that area, that creates an economic region, which means that most of the economic growth will happen within that region.

It's these three notions that we started to look at and say, oh, well, maybe what we've got is some baseline indicators. And so what we did is that New Brunswick had a baseline indicator. They had two—they actually had three that were important: one is they had a 4,000 population level for the new municipality to not only be established, but grow forward. They wanted to have 4,000 population. They wanted to have a tax base of \$200 million and they also had to have a high school, which was appropriate as well in terms of when you're talking about community.

We also then looked at the municipalities in the province and we wanted to simply identify the growth trajectory in the past. Are they growing or are they declining in a variety of variables including population, and we did that. And we offered that up and some of that analysis in the report.

The third set of indicators was around the financial, the trajectory of the finances, as well. We've heard that already; I assume you heard it yesterday and you'll hear probably more of that today. But the financial growth was talked about both in terms of debt and the per capita debt and how

that changes over time, so what's the trajectory of that in terms of the municipality.

We looked at the 30 municipalities. We broke them down into several different categories, four different categories, and we tried to see if there was differences and similarities. And what we found is that in what we're suggesting as a guidepost to start the conversation is that rural municipalities in the province are looking at 3,000—we used a 3,000 population level and, in addition, we were looking at a combination of 3,000 population as well as a hundred-and-thirty-million assessment base.

We think that this combination of both demographic as well as financial capacity is really important relative to the services, both for the citizens and pursuing economic opportunities in the future.

When we look even further at those two numbers, there's 196 municipalities; about 146 of them don't meet the 3,000 population and another four municipalities would not meet the \$130-million assessment. So we're talking about 150 municipalities out of the 196 municipalities that may be needed to consideration in terms of their future viability.

They're not all in the same basket; I recognize that. But when you're looking at a landscape view of municipal development in this province, it's rarely examined. This committee, I think, has an incredible privilege to be able to look at how local government is going to be developing in this province. We're suggesting that the look needs to be beyond just the thousand, but, in fact, to a larger number around 150.

Our second report then said, what's the geographic footprint to this? We coupled up with Stats Canada and we wanted to begin to look at where people live and where they work. And this suggests that with Stats Canada it was one of the very first times it's been applied for the sub-national level—

Mr. Chairperson: One minute left.

Mr. Ashton: Thank you—a sub-national level, and there was 18 municipalities, 18 amalgamated municipalities or municipal groupings that this analysis suggests. Three of them are very large, and we would suggest those to be subdivided and in the report we give some options around how they might be subdivided. Eighteen is what we're suggesting as

these—18 municipalities, and then a few of those would be subdivided further.

I think what we're suggesting in the report is that the interest is to improve municipal management to try to avoid duplication, to streamline government structures and to improve human resource aspects. All of those are really important, but you've got to have at least a minimum size to be able to do that effectively, especially for future growth.

For that, I would thank you very much and welcome questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Ashton.

Questions from the committee?

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very, very much, Mr. Ashton. We appreciate your presentation, appreciate you coming in, quite frankly, to do this. It's been a very thorough look at municipalities in the time span that you had.

I'm just wondering, I have a question with regard to—Victoria Beach is a resort community. I'm not sure, in your document, if you addressed that as a resort community, and I'm just wondering what comments, if any, you could make about Victoria Beach with regard to your snapshot look at municipalities.

Mr. Ashton: The specifics in terms of what we were looking at was where people live and work, primarily in that geography footprint, and with this calculation what we wanted to do is be able to capture 80, 90 per cent of the population of where they live and where they work. And the footprint that we're identifying here in this group suggests that they would be grouped together with others around that area.

I also recognize that there is the resort exemption in terms of what does that mean for a municipality and the challenges, the unique challenges that resort communities face in that area. And I think it's the kind of detail, now, that we're proposing a geography, now let's have the conversation around how that may or may not work with the group that we're suggesting. And, indeed, it might—it may be a bit smaller than we're suggesting at this point, yes.

Mr. Briese: Yes, thank you for your presentation, Mr. Ashton. Some interesting comments in it, but, you know, I'm a farmer for background. I've farmed all my life, and there's large farms, there's small farms, but the key on the farms—and I know you

talked about population, tax base and financial were the three points I think you were putting—trying to put forward here.

Did you ever take into any consideration in your dealings here on this subject on management? Because management is what keeps a small farm operating. Management's what keeps a big farm operating. The same is true of municipalities, and the municipalities that have a council and a CAO and a staff that are very good managers, I think management should be part of the consideration when you're talking about what size municipalities have to be.

Mr. Ashton: Certainly, one of the, you know, one of the limitations we point out, you know, we—there's a number of things we did not look at, and one of those would be management style, management effectiveness. Certainly, another one that we did not look at in the general—in the specific and the general sense is what are the current relations and agreements that they might have with other municipalities? All of those go—yes, those can be looked at, but if you—if there's a sense of a geography of that initial footprint, then you can start looking at the relationships that some of those municipalities have. And we're suggesting that the strategic decision is around what the footprint looks like and the financial capability and the trajectory of the population.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Mr. Ashton, I want to congratulate you. You're probably one of the most quoted people going for the minister right now. He likes to quote the RDI study which he commissioned, but, and—you know, I've read the report. I understand the parameters based on your indicators, your 3,000 threshold population, your \$130 million in assessment.

* (19:10)

So that's all great theory—I'll leave it at theory, but did you ever or have you or will you take two, three, four municipalities—you've picked municipalities within your study to study, have you gone now and taken the so-called small municipalities under a thousand, have you grouped them together and shown how this would be economically viable and a good alternative for these municipalities to do so that you would get them to the 3,000—they would meet the indicators, they would meet the population threshold and they'd also have the assessment base. Have you done any kind of study like that?

Mr. Ashton: Other than what you've seen in the reports, the answer is no.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, just clarification on one point. You've recommended, I think it's an assessment base of \$130 million right now. For example, Shellmouth-Boulton, where the reeve presented earlier on, has a total assessment in 2013 of \$207 million but apportioned at \$70 million. So is this \$130 million a full assessment or apportioned assessment?

Mr. Ashton: Thank you. It would be the apportioned assessment.

Mr. Chairperson: Time for questions up. Thank you, Mr. Ashton, for your presentation.

Another person, Lyle Lockhart, registered to speak and will be added to the list—[interjection]—the last one.

I will now call on Mr. Carter. Mr. Carter, do you have any handouts for the committee? Okay, our staff will help you, and you can begin at will.

Mr. Denis Carter (Rural Municipality of Woodworth): Good evening, my name is Denis Carter, reeve of the RM of Woodworth. I'd like to thank the committee for—you won't need the clock, I'll be done faster than the 10 minutes; I'm a quick reader. I'd like to thank the committee for listening to me this evening and hopefully I can make some points with you folks.

The council of the Rural Municipality of Woodworth have had several discussions of late concerning the Province's announcement in its recent Speech to the Throne to force municipalities with a population of less than a thousand to amalgamate with one or more of its neighbours. Council would like to present the following information to the consideration of the committee on this matter.

Council believes that measuring a municipality's sustainability using population as its only deciding criteria does not paint a full picture of the municipality's current position or its long-term viability. When considering amalgamation in other provinces, sustainability has been measured by assessing municipality's financial stability, level of current and/or proposed services provided to its citizens, compliance with provincial and federal requirements, business strength and the strength of the community socially, as well as other criteria.

The RM of Woodworth is a large municipality in southwestern Manitoba with a population of 860,

according to the most recent Stats Canada census information. Currently, we share several services with our other communities by agreement or membership, including fire protection, mutual aid, recreation, emergency services, a planning district, conservation district, weed district, vet board, hospital board, all producers, southwest flood strategy committee, grazing groups, seniors services, education stakeholders, Handi-Van services, employment skills centre, economic development boards, and the list goes on.

The municipality is PSAP compliant and has received all its current federal gas tax funding. We have a balanced budget, strong reserve base and no debt. As well as a member-municipality in the Mid-West Planning District, we have recently undergone a review and ministerial approval for our development plan and respective zoning bylaw. Our assessment is strong and growing, with an increase in assessment in the last decade of over 61 per cent. The total assessment in 2013 is over \$45 million. With the increase in assessment due to part to the oil industry, as well as an increase in residential and business expansion and commercial growth. In fact, in the past 10 years we have had a total value development provided by the Mid-West Planning District's officer of \$16,333,219, with a 67 per cent of that development having been generated in the past three years—excuse me.

In 2013, with stats accumulated to the end of August only, we have another 1.6—\$696,946 in total value for development permitted in the municipality when the final four months remaining in the year. This trend would indicate a significant growth in our municipality. A recent population count completed by volunteers has indicated an increase in population of approximately 9 per cent since the last non-mandatory census was completed by Stats Canada.

Our office operates a computerized accounting system with high speed Internet. Our office staff are CMMA trained and certified, and we have a staff training program in place. We have full complement of staff and other competitive wage and health benefit package to all of our permanent employees. We have not, now or at any time, had difficulty recruiting or retaining qualified staff for any open positions when vacancies occurred.

The municipality offers a full complement of municipal services to its ratepayers. The Woodworth Fire Department offers fire protection with trained

staff and new equipment, as well as fire agreements in place with two other municipalities to offer fire protection on the fringe areas of our municipality.

We operate two utilities which include both an urban water and waste water system as well as a rural pipeline system which operates in two neighbouring municipalities as well. We have two trained water treatment plant operators and an ongoing training program in place. We operate a licensed waste disposal site with a dedicated compactor on site as well as rural dumpster and recycling program across the entire municipality. We successfully operate our road maintenance program for well over 235 miles of primary roads as well as a hundred miles of secondary roads.

New municipal services include a new water treatment plant project with state-of-the-art reverse osmosis system, increased storage capacity, the replacement of our largest fire truck with a new one, as well as vehicle extrication equipment and a waste water offloading ramp for—to provide for rural waste water disposal, the expansion of our solid waste disposal site and, finally, a subdivision in Kenton to address the shortage of vacant residential lots in the community. These projects are all expected to be completed in 2013.

Future of capital plans for the municipality include an expansion of our rural water system to an existing rural residential development which will allow for council to recreate the community of Lenore and take advantage of an increased requirement for housing in the area due in part to the oil industry construction boom in the area. This expansion will allow for redevelopment of an existing underutilized community within our municipality and has the potential for considerable growth in our assessment base, as well, increase our population.

Amalgamation has merit for some communities in some situations. In fact, the RM of Woodworth has three LUDs within its boundaries until 2009 when the municipality made the decision to amalgamate two of them into the municipality at large. This was a successful, acceptable to be involved—'expediating—'expedeing' forced amalgamations will most likely result in poor planning and decision making and unresolved issues for many years to come.

After our detailed internal review undertaken this spring, for many reasons outlined here the council of the Rural Municipality of Woodworth

would like to suggest that now is not the right time for a decision on amalgamation to be made for its municipality. Again, we currently offer our ratepayers a full complement of services, operated within a balanced budget, with a need for a debenture to offset costs for our new water treatment plant in 2014, to be the first one necessary for the municipality in several decades.

Our municipality is growing as a result of both commercial and residential development and it frankly is not the case—this is, frankly, not the case for some of our neighbours. We're a progressive municipality and the requirement to amalgamate would not necessarily move our municipality forward. As in some cases, amalgamating with some of our neighbours would result in this municipality and its ratepayers taking several steps backwards.

Many of our neighbours do not offer the same services of our municipality as set as a priority for its ratepayers and amalgamation would come as a significant cost to those we represent. Amalgamation may be the right thing at this time for many municipalities to consider moving forward with in order to work co-operatively with our neighbours to be able to offer adequate services to our ratepayers. However, to date, we do not see any advantage for this municipality to undergo this process at this time.

The RM of Woodworth is asking the decision to force the amalgamations upon municipalities based on arbitrary number of 1,000, not to be the only criteria used to draw the line in the sand. Our request is that other criteria be used in reviewing the need for municipalities to amalgamate. Please don't paint all of us with the same brush.

* (19:20)

Council wishes to thank you for this opportunity, and I do thank you for this—except my combine is cooler than it is in here, but that's why I got a cold, I guess. But maybe we can afford air conditioning if we don't have to have these meetings.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation,

Mr. Lemieux: I just want to say thank you very much for coming to the Legislature. It's your building. We appreciate your comments very much, and we have heard and listened to you. And, again, we just want to thank you for being here. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Denis, in your presentation, you said that after detailed internal review and for many reasons, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, now is not the

right time for a decision for amalgamation to be made for its municipality. So what are you going to do if this bill passes?

Mr. Carter: Right now, we have basically done what I would call very little. There's been a little bit of chatter between councillors of neighbouring municipalities, but nothing is in writing and there's been no meetings to this date.

Our municipality, as far as my position on it, it's a—and I'm certainly a lot of councillors share it—we have the honour of probably the highest mill rate in the area, but our ratepayers like what we're doing and they don't seem to be complaining about it, so that any of our neighbours that I—we hit with this poison stick that I'm supposed to do when it wasn't my idea, it's sort of—how would you feel about that if you were elected to do—to have to do that to one of your neighbours without—nobody told me in 2010 that—when I ran this was the deal. How would you feel about it?

Mr. Gerrard: Your population, as you've listed, is 860. You've indicated that it is growing, I think, maybe 9 per cent, something like that. When would you expect that the population would be over a thousand at the current rate of growth?

Mr. Carter: I would say that I guess as long as the oil industry keeps going like it is, I would expect in 24 months or less. My uneducated guess.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Carter. Do you believe that this whole process could have been avoided by negotiations and consultations prior to? We see that we have a study done by different individuals about only six months or four months—six months after the original announcement was made that you must amalgamate. Do you think this—a lot of this could have been avoided by just consultation by the minister and explaining what his goals and what opportunities he saw for you, rather than just say, you must do it?

Mr. Carter: Very much so. I also—to do it in the timeline that's been giving—given us is not realistic. I would see us sitting at the end of this year and there would be nothing done. But they've also indicated that they were going to just point us in the direction we're going, so that's looks like what's going to possibly happen to us. Like, as I'd indicated earlier, that, in my mind, when you're sitting around the highest mill rate in the area, no matter who you touch with—and it's fine and dandy to say that when

you amalgamate that, oh, we'll just do a—we'll just—you'll have your rate and you'll have yours, but what happens in four or five years? I mean, you—no matter where I go, you know, it'll be a gain for Woodworth residents in—if they make us do it, in a 40 or 50 dollars per or whatever. It's—why should I have to be the person that sticks the evil stick in?

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Carter. No further questions.

Next up, I'd like to call No. 21, Mr. McConnell.

Mr. McConnell, do you have a handout for the committee?

Mr. Jeff McConnell (Town of Virden): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: You can start any time, Mr. McConnell.

Mr. McConnell: Thank you. Firstly, I'd like to ask that my whole written 'repres'—my whole written presentation be entered into Hansard, as I won't have opportunity to present the entire thing during this 10-minute presentation.

I do thank you for the opportunity to present to the committee. I will be describing the experience of the Town of Virden, and I am confident that it is not just Virden's experience, though, that it's the experience of many other communities in the province of Manitoba which are not being required to amalgamate because of their size and their assessment but are going to suffer costs and other issues because of the decision to amalgamate municipal partners.

I'm the mayor of the Town of Virden, the oil capital of Manitoba. As you know, the oil industry in Manitoba is growing substantially. It is experiencing record-setting years each and every year in the province. So our area of the province is experiencing substantial growth.

Virden is not opposed—Virden and the citizens of Virden are not opposed to municipal amalgamations. We are—have very serious concerns with respect to the manner in which Bill 33 proposes to complete these amalgamations. Virden does endorse the submission of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the AMM, in its entirety. We've actually attached a copy of their summation of their submission. It is Virden's submission.

We want to share with you more of what's going on with respect to communities of our size. We do not believe that the provincial departments will have

the capacity—complete amalgamations of the size and nature you're talking about in a timely and well-thought-out manner. In fact, we have very serious concerns that the current funding and staffing level will be insufficient to accommodate these amalgamations in a sustainable manner. And we do not see where the Province provides anywhere near the significant additional funds required to accommodate the human resources necessary to complete the work.

We're also concerned with respect to the loss of regional partners we've developed in our community. We have worked very hard. Virden and Wallace, the community around Virden, are both above the amalgamation requirements. So Virden will not be directly required to amalgamate with anyone. However, two of our regional partners, Elkhorn and Archie, will be under the threshold. And these partners are involved with us in fire district agreements, in library boards, a new development plan—brand new last week, finally—and other shared financial and legal sources. These two partners will be taken away.

Since the '80s, Virden and Wallace have been involved in a community development plan that's required under The Planning Act. We endorse and believe in proper planning. We apply those principles. We believe in them. In 1999, the Town of Virden annexed portions of the RM of Wallace. Since that date, since 1999, Virden and Wallace have been working to create a new development plan and to address some of the issues that annexation created, including the fact that the land that the Town of Virden annexed in '99 is still being governed by the RM of Wallace zoning bylaw. We have worked with community planning to move that forward, but they've suggested that we wait until the new development plan is complete to do that. So we have been enforcing an RM zoning bylaw for 14 years while we're waiting for this process to be completed. You tell me how those same people are going to complete a ton of amalgamations. Not going to happen.

On September 5th, last week, those four partners finally, after several years of work, completed their development plan. It's in the works. It's done. We can now do our zoning bylaw. That will last 14 months, according to this legislation. We find that with our two of—our partners gone now, what's going to happen to our development plan? How are we going to move that forward? We don't see Community Planning have the capacity to assist us in this—sorry—

in this, in a short- or medium-term way, and I just described to you that we've got the most significant growth probably in the province. There's other areas experiencing growth, but how are we now going to accommodate that growth if we don't have a working development plan?

What we expect will happen is that Virden and Wallace, two communities that don't have to amalgamate, will be required to retain private consultants, which will be hard to do in this environment because there will be so many consultants working, to develop and recommend any changes needed for a development plan, the fire district agreement, our library board agreement and other agreements that are legal and financial, to complete that work. So now we're paying money to accommodate this legislation that we didn't ask to happen.

We will also be required to have our development plan, once it's finally reviewed and consulted and completed, which takes a long time, then put into the Community Planning department for review. It'll be stacked up against all the amalgamations. It will take a long time for that work to be completed.

While we're hiring these consultants, we'll also be paying in the PST on that. We thank you very much for that, too.

* (19:30)

To confirm this, our—one of our councillors, who is a developer, a very strong developer in our community, was actually told just in the past month that his subdivision application, which is in process at this time, will not be completed to the same speed that it was in the past because Community Planning will be working on the amalgamations. This is a low-income housing area that the town of Virden so desperately needs. Our housing prices are probably close to Winnipeg's and Brandon's right now. RM of Woodworth has got lots of growth because people can afford to buy there. It is the oil industry. They can't buy a house in Virden; they'll buy it in Woodworth. That is fantastic, as far as I'm concerned, because that's a regional growth opportunity. But we can't now develop a low-income housing area because we're waiting on community planning, and we need that today.

We don't like the idea that the growth of our community will be bottlenecked because of the need for the Community Planning office to continue to

work on these forced and ill-conceived amalgamations. This benefits no one in the province. Furthermore, developers in our areas will not want to come here. When they go to an area that is going to be amalgamated and they now don't know what their taxes are going to be, they don't have a clue how they'll be assessed, they're not likely going to build the hundred-million-dollar building until they know that. But if the two communities are fighting over what the taxes are going to be assessed and in what area or how they're going to be shared or what area it's going to go to, you're not going to see that growth opportunity show up here. It's going to go to another community that's either not amalgamated or been affected by it, or it will go to another province. And that is a very real possibility in our part of the world because Saskatchewan on the other side of the border is seeing a lot of the growth that we're not necessarily getting. Moosomin is also one of the fastest growing communities in Saskatchewan.

We believe that, you know, the legislation was created to help solve inefficiencies and to emphasize the benefits of regionalization. Instead, it's going to cost all Manitoba communities money, every single one of them, and this at a time when it's—like, the time to make that financially irresponsible decision, when we're supposed to be fiscally responsible and showing restraint, we're now being forced to spend money.

The Province—or, sorry, the town does believe amalgamations are a good thing when agreed to, when it benefits the communities and when they like the idea of doing it. However, this legislation does not allow that. The Province could have made funding programs for things like infrastructure, renewal or other programs like that conditional upon a regional concept. One of the biggest issues was we were too small to apply, we're too small to get the money. Well, say that there's a huge pool here available if you make regional partners; that will create regional partnerships. That will force the communities to look at each other and say, what makes sense, and then, might actually lead to amalgamation or at least improved regional partnerships in the province of Manitoba.

We heard Mr. Ashton say earlier, talking about healthy communities, healthy municipalities make healthy partnerships. This legislation hurts our partnerships. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. McConnell.

Mr. Lemieux: Just thank you very much for coming. Much appreciated for your comments, and I know the members at the table may have some questions for you. Thank you.

Mr. Briese: Yes, thanks, Jeff. You know, we've heard through the IDI—or RDI your—about municipal amalgamations that are possible, amalgamations in New Brunswick and places like that, and we know a few years ago there were amalgamations in Ontario. We know Saskatchewan looked at it and backed off, and Saskatchewan has some 900 municipalities in total. And if I remember properly, I think I'm right, New Brunswick, with about half our area, had over 400 municipalities and three municipal organizations.

And I know you were involved with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for a number of years, maybe still are, and could you expand a little bit on some of those if you—from your memory, what went on in some of those other provinces and what the successes were, or failures?

Mr. McConnell: Saskatchewan, certainly, has got significantly greater—[*interjection*] I apologize. I turned all alerts off. That was my time.

The—Saskatchewan, certainly, has greater municipalities in number than Manitoba, and it's my understanding the concept of doing amalgamation is at great peril to whatever provincial government undertakes that as, obviously, municipal governments in Manitoba are trying to express.

But, if I recall, New Brunswick, I don't believe completed them. I may be wrong. But New Brunswick certainly does have a significant number of municipalities, as well as three municipal organizations. Like, the AMM is one for the province of Manitoba; New Brunswick has three: cities, French-speaking communities and anglophone communities, and they seem to be just fine. And I would suggest that those communities are as strong as they've ever been.

In Québec, they did amalgamation, and then very shortly afterwards, the next provincial government looked at it, didn't like it and offered something called 'defusion,' de-amalgamation, and many communities undertook that because they did not like what happened to them or the way their community resulted.

Ontario, of course, went through it. I don't think it was ever turned around. I don't recall. But I don't

think any great savings were realized or great efficiencies were realized.

Amalgamation makes sense when the communities choose to do it. There's lots of opportunity for that. And I think there's lots of opportunity for this government to continue down the path that it set under Premier Doer, which was, we would like you to do it and we're there to help, as opposed to, okay, you're doing it tomorrow—didn't tell you.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Jeff, for your presentation. And I'm very interested to hear how this—although you're not affected directly by amalgamation, how this is going to affect your development plans. We heard some of those same concerns last night, that development plans have been put on hold because of, you may amalgamate. So this is something that we will continue to pursue, and certainly thank you for your input on that.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Briese—oh, I mean, Mr. Eichler, I'm sorry.

Mr. Eichler: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The presenter, Mr. McConnell, had asked for his presentation to be recorded in Hansard. I ask leave of the committee for that to be done, as well as his verbal presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Agreed? [*Agreed*]

Regarding Bill 33

The Municipal Modernization Act (Municipal Amalgamations)

September 9 to 11, 2013

The Town of Virden Manitoba ("Virden") and its citizens are not opposed to municipal amalgamations. However Virden has serious concerns with respect to the manner in which Bill 33 proposes to complete the contemplated amalgamations.

Virden endorses the submission of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities ("AMM") in its entirety and attached hereto is a copy of the summary of that submission.

Beyond the AMM presentation Virden's main concern is that the necessary Provincial Departments lack the capacity to complete the substantial work contemplated by this legislation. We have faith and confidence in the staff of the Local Government department of the Province. However we do not believe the current funding and staffing level will provide the department with the capacity it will require to complete the amalgamations in a timely

and sustainable manner. We do not see where the Province provides anywhere near the significant additional funds required to retain the necessary human resources to complete this work.

Virden is also concerned with respect to the loss of our regional partners that we have worked so hard to develop. While Virden's numbers do not require amalgamation, nor does the RM of Wallace surrounding Virden, we have created significant partnerships of a legal and shared development nature. Two of our partners, the Village of Elkhorn and the RM of Archie, are involved in fire district agreements, library boards, now a Development Plan and other shared resources. These two partners will be required to amalgamate with another community.

Since the 1980s Virden and Wallace have been partners in a Community Development Plan as required under The Planning Act. Virden endorses and believes in proper planning and applying those principals. In 1999 the Town of Virden annexed portions of the RM of Wallace. Since that date the Town and the RM have been working on creating a new Development Plan. Our two new partners, the Village of Elkhorn and the RM of Archie joined in the deliberation and creation of a Development Plan.

Since 1999 Virden has been working under the Zoning Bylaw of the RM of Wallace for the lands that were annexed in to Virden. A new or updated Zoning Bylaw has been waiting on the completion of the new Development Plan to complete the work required to have the annexed property brought in to the Town of Virden zoning scheme. That is 14 years. Attempts were made to update it outside of the Development Plan process but members of Community Planning Department were concerned about how that would be received by our partners.

On September 5, 2013 (last week) the four municipal partners adopted the new Development Plan. Now Virden can get to work on the zoning by-law and other matters that have been waiting for as long as 15 years. We admit a lot of the delay was due to the partners but what will happen with forced partners in amalgamations?

Now two of our partners will be lost to this legislation; what happens to the Development Plan now? We do not believe the Community Planning department has the capacity to assist us in any meaningful way in the short or medium term. We can't have that belief as they will be too busy looking after the amalgamations across the Province to

dedicate time to each community's specific concerns. How do we amend the Development Plan and other legal agreements with our partners? Is there funding coming our way to assist with that?

Instead what we expect is that Virden, a community that does not have to amalgamate, will have to retain a private consultant to develop and recommend any changes needed for the Development Plan, the fire district agreement, the library board agreement, etc. going forward. Wallace and Virden will have to arrange the financing of these costs. Wallace and Virden will have to complete the paperwork and submit changes to Community Planning. And then Wallace and Virden will have to wait for the paper work to be reviewed and approved in the same line that the amalgamation work will be waiting. Why are the citizens of our community being expected to pay for the costs in accommodating the loss of a partner they did not want to leave?

To confirm our concern with regard to the ability of the Community Planning office to complete the work in a timely fashion a member of our council who is a developer and is waiting on a subdivision approval was advised by the Community Planning office that his subdivision will take longer than in the past. The reason he was given was because the staff are also working very hard on amalgamations presently and therefore he can expect long delays, and this is before the main work of the legislation even begins.

Our area of the Province is seeing significant growth that sometimes does not wait for permission from the Planning department unfortunately. Virden has tried to continue to follow the policies and processes of Planning. Often this is done to our detriment as the development will move to another community, or Province that either does not have as many planning concerns or can accommodate immediately. To have the growth of our community (and other communities) bottle-necked because of the need for the Community Planning office to help complete ill-conceived forced amalgamations benefits no one in this Province. Furthermore developers may not wish to locate in communities that are unable to resolve issues like where surpluses are to be used and how taxes are to be assessed after amalgamation. Developers prefer some certainty as to the cost of their development including property taxes. Uncertainty will send them to other locations or delay development.

Virden does not think the concerns we've raised here are unique. Rather we feel they will be felt

Province-wide. The legislation was created to help solve inefficiencies and to emphasize the benefits of regionalization. Instead it is going to cost the majority of the communities in Manitoba extra money on consultants and experts going forward while each tries to resolve how to amend agreements, account for lost partners in shared resources, and develop new plans for their communities. There will not be sufficient funding made available to help communities with these concerns. This at a time when we are all trying to find ways to reduce expenses as each of our citizens is feeling the tax pinch.

Not only is the Province ill prepared to meet the challenges created by the legislation but the municipalities are as well. The administrative staff of municipal governments have been focused on meeting the requirements to bring the financial plans up to the standards required by the Public Service Accounting Board (PSAB) that many have not yet completed. To move the administrative staff in to working on amalgamations and all the work required to have the financial plans make sense is untenable. Many communities are not capable of doing this with their current staffing levels and will also be required to spend extra funds on consultants. These are dollars that should not be needed to be spent by these communities.

Amalgamations should happen. They should happen in a more reasonable manner than this legislation allows and with willing partners. The Province could have made funding programs for things like infrastructure renewal conditional upon a "regional concept" in order to achieve many of the stated objectives of the legislation instead of forced municipal amalgamations. Using a regional requirement for funding programs will help create partnerships that make sense for the communities. Instead of arbitrary numbers around size of a community the community leaders will look to the other communities that would be the best partner for the various projects. This may result in a more natural progression to amalgamation, or at least better regional partnerships, than those created by way of forced arbitrary amalgamation.

All of which is respectfully submitted

Mayor Jeff McConnell, Virden Manitoba

Mr. Chairperson: Next up, I would like to call Linda McMillan.

Ms. McMillan, do you have the handouts?

Ms. Linda McMillan (Private Citizen): I do indeed.

Mr. Chairperson: You can start when you're ready.

Ms. McMillan: Okay. My name is Linda McMillan, and for 25 years I was a cottager at Victoria Beach. For the last 11 years I've been a permanent resident; although, using some of the methods of the government is currently using, I might not have been considered a permanent resident all that time. I am also a cottage owner. I jointly own a cottage with my son.

Over the years, I've been very involved in the community, sitting on the executive of the Victoria Beach Club, editing the local newspaper called the Herald, organizing sporting activities and being very involved in the initiation of our local recycling project. I have roots in my rural municipality and great concerns about Bill 33.

I understand, to a certain extent, the intentions of Bill 33. It was designed to allow some of the smaller communities, that once were viable but are no longer so, to amalgamate. It allows communities that do not have the resources or manpower to unite and share the responsibilities of providing services. Combined communities would be able to have more personnel to fill in the forms and provide the financial information required by the provincial government. It allows communities which do not have a strong tax base to once again flourish.

But none of this applies to the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach. Our community has a sufficiently large tax base to pay for the services provided. Our assessment base is over \$360 million, the 28th highest in the province. And we have 26 thousand—no, that's 2,600 taxpayers. We are not small, despite the assertion of the government. I believe that when determining the size of an RM, all taxpayers should be counted, not just the ones who spend the winter in the RM. We all pay property taxes. We all pay school taxes. Why should we not all count equally?

* (19:40)

Victoria Beach has community-owned resources: a store, a bakery, a restaurant, a doctor's office, a golf course. We have bought and paid for a fire truck, a garbage truck, rescue vehicles, snowplowing equipment and road maintenance equipment. We have financed a water treatment plant. We are happy being independent.

While in some parts of the province, municipalities can look around and have options, they can choose a similar municipality to amalgamate with; we cannot. As a peninsula, we can only unite with the RM of Alexander or part of Alexander. That RM would like to unite with us, Lac du Bonnet and Pinawa. That would make a massive area to service. As you all should know, the RM of Victoria Beach does have its own amalgamation plan. The Victoria Beach plan would create a smaller, more manageable RM.

But in reality, most members of our community would like to be left alone. We do not see a reason to fix something that is not broken. Our mill rate is 10.42 for the 2013. It is lower than Alexander, whose rate is 11.22. We have more services. The administrative costs of the RM of Victoria Beach is \$200,000, less than half of that—of the RM of Alexander, which is \$401,000. We have municipal police, fire, medical rescue, garbage pickup, brush pickup, a golf course, as well as our seasonal store, restaurant and bakery. There is no financial reason to unite with Alexander. In fact, the result of amalgamation would be less service and more taxes. Our municipal employees do a good job of keeping our roads cleared in the winter. They know where the shut-ins who get home service live and they make sure the roads are open promptly. I worry that in a massive municipality our roads would not be plowed as quickly. I am getting older, I can't go out if the roads aren't plowed. As a result of amalgamation, it would mean less mobility to me.

We currently have our own policing and we're happy with it. We have a police officer living in the community. That acts as a deterrent to those who might break the law. During the summer, when the population explodes, we hire six more officers. They enforce bylaws and laws. The reeve of Alexander has recently suggested that we could keep our police for three years, as long as we paid a special levy to do so. But why should we have to pay extra for something we're already financing? And after the three-year period, we'd be relying on the RCMP for policing. At present, the RCMP calls our police force when they're busy. In three years' time, we will not have anyone enforcing bylaws. There will be no one answering the call of a fire on the beach or a noisy party. It just won't be an RCMP priority. So the result of amalgamation would be less security.

I live in a forested area. I do not own a truck. At present, when a tree dies, I can cut it down, set the logs aside for winter heat and put the brush out on

the roadside. Twice a year, my RM sends a crew around to remove the branches, chip them up and remove the fire hazard from the area. Alexander does not have such services. I would be forced to hire a contractor to take the brush to the dump where it needs to be disposed of. So, as a result of amalgamation, it would be extra expense or more risk of fire.

At present, we have a well-used recycling set up. I'm very proud of it as I was instrumental in establishing it almost 25 years ago, several years before the provincial recycling plan. We hire a contractor to empty our bins several times a week during the summer. Alexander has no such service. People must personally take their recycling to the dump. Recycling is important to our environment. Making recycling more difficult is not a wise move. So, as a result of our amalgamation, we'd have poorer services for higher taxes.

During the summer, we have weekly garbage pickup. We have year-round garbage drop-off. When asked about maintaining our summer garbage pickup, the reeve of Alexander said we can maintain it by paying another special levy. Once again, additional cost.

We currently have a reeve and five—and four councillors. We can find a councillor to talk to about issues. Under the amalgamation plan, we would join Traverse Bay and Hillside in ward 1. So instead of having 10 ears to hear our concerns, we would share one member with a much larger group. It is possible that we would have no one from our area in a combined council. So we would have far less representation and less chance of having our concerns listened to.

I have invested many hours being involved in a shoreline advisory committee. It was established after the devastating weather bomb of 2010. We studied options, hired a consultant firm, and have recently received their advice on how to protect our threatened shorelines and beaches. The RM of Alexander has never invested time or money in the issue. It is unlikely there is any interest in this issue. Our committee work will be for naught.

We are the only Manitoba municipality to have implemented the smart fire, red zone program—

Mr. Chairperson: One minute left.

Ms. McMillan: Pardon?

Mr. Chairperson: One minute left.

Ms. McMillan: –to implement that program.

We are a proactive RM and proud of it. In the past decade, the Province has asked RMs to develop a community development plan. Hours have been spent by our community and the council and provincial civil servants developing the program. All this has been wasted: efforts spent on a provincial 'direclive,' only to have it tossed out. This lack of long-term planning on behalf of the provincial government—the community development plan designed to Victoria Beach will be—not work in a massive RM, so it is a waste of time.

Perhaps you can put the last three paragraphs into the Hansard?

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Thank you, Ms. McMillan.

Mr. Bjornson: I would move and ask leave of the committee that the rest of the presentation be recorded in Hansard.

Mr. Chairperson: Agreed? [Agreed]

Forty years ago when the then provincial government looked at education and decided that larger school divisions would be better, there were concerns. I lived in a community where the amalgamation was logical and went through smoothly. I have relatives who were negatively affected. Rural children now spend long hours on school buses. But the government of the day did not dogmatically enforce their decision—insisting that all school divisions amalgamate. They were wise enough to allow some wiggle room. They allowed the mining towns of Snow Lake and Lynn Lake and the milling town of Pine Falls to remain one school divisions. They saw that one solution did not fit all.

Now I am aware of the item in the Winnipeg Free Press that suggests the government might allow the resort communities of Victoria Beach, Dunnottar and Winnipeg Beach to remain as they are. But at this point we have no proof that it will happen. We know that we are the exception and for the last 80 years have been recognized as exceptions. We hold our elections in July. We count all of our tax payers, not just the winter residents. We have unique services that we fear will be lost under forced amalgamation.

And force is the correct word. During the last election, there was no hint that the government would be introduction this legislation. There has been no public consultation. The attitude of the minister implies that no amount of complaining on

the part of unwilling citizens of the province will alter the outcome. No reasonable objections will be listened to. While the minister may claim that he was misquoted, many of the residents in Victoria Beach resent being called whining children. We are voicing our concerns. My golf partner is likely correct in his letter to the editor of the Winnipeg Free Press when he claimed that the government is acting like bullies. Up until last week the government appeared to be saying, "We have the power and you will obey." I do hope that the Free Press item of September 4 is correct. I really hope that the government will no longer ignore the other 87% of the adult population of the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much for your presentation. We appreciate it. And I asked last night a number of people that came from Victoria Beach and Dunnottar, why should we look at Victoria Beach and Dunnottar, indeed, Winnipeg Beach, as being special or unique. Could you try to answer that question?

Ms. McMillan: We have been a municipality for 80 years. We have always been a viable municipality. At present, this present plan, you're ignoring 87 per cent of our taxpayers. It does require a special look because right now you are saying that that 87 per cent of our tax base doesn't count at all.

Mr. Pedersen: Ms. McMillan, I want to thank you for bringing your presentation here. You and many others last night brought the concerns of Victoria Beach here, and I encourage you to continue to express your concerns about this plan, and we wait with bated breath to see what the minister has in mind for Victoria Beach and for all municipalities in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you so much, Linda, for coming in and presenting. What strikes me is that, you know, when you've approached amalgamation that the RM of Alexander keeps saying, you know, you can only have the services you've got by paying another special levy doesn't make any sense to me, and I don't know why they would propose that. [interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: I'm sorry. Excuse me, Ms. McMillan.

Ms. McMillan: Sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: Go ahead. I have to recognize you.

* (19:50)

Ms. McMillan: Oh, I apologize. I was warned of that, yes. We, too, are very concerned about the attitude, and because right now we have a lower mill rate, we are really quite concerned that for our services that we, as a community value, he is simply saying pay more, pay more, pay more. It won't make for a good bedfellow.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. McMillan.

Before we move on to start at No. 1, I'd just like to say that the presentations have a limit of 10 minutes and we have five minutes for questions, okay?

So now we'll go back to No. 1, Mr. Ernie Wiebe. If a person is absent, indicate that their name will be removed from the list, then continue with calling the next presenter. Okay, Ernie Wiebe's list will be removed from the list—[interjection]—name, thank you.

Okay, No. 2, Reginald Atkinson.

An Honourable Member: Not here.

Mr. Chairperson: Not here? Reginald Atkinson's name will be removed from the list.

No. 3, Brent Fortune. Brent Fortune? Brent Fortune's name will be removed from the list.

No. 5, Bruce Morrison. Mr. Morrison, you have a papers? And you can begin at will.

Mr. Bruce Morrison (Private Citizen): I would just like to say our last Victoria Beach presenter just stole all my thunder. I had a long presentation for—until we've heard some of the news lately and again today in the House, apparently, so I just want to touch on some of the points which I thought were very important to me.

My name is Bruce Morrison. In the past I've been a renter, then a cottager, and now I'm a permanent resident of Victoria Beach. As of last week I was glad to see there will probably going to be some movement, and again today I hear maybe some more, on the amalgamation plan to allow us to stay as we are and not have us join our closest neighbour.

Being a person that believes in democracy and then having a situation such as amalgamation shoved down our throats in such an undemocratic manner was very upsetting to me, considering it was proposed by the New Democratic Party. I know there are many RMs that have not been doing proper accounting practices, as well as not having proper

audits done which are required each year by the Province. Victoria Beach is not one of those. These are the RMs that should have been targeted, as then you would have had a good reason to suggest or force amalgamations.

We have resort status, have never, to my knowledge, been allowed to benefit from all this provincial money that we hear flows to many RMs. We built a water treatment plant a few years ago without any financial help from anyone as we were told, you do not qualify because you're a resort. We are mandated by the Province to supply potable water to our residents. We built a new water treatment plant, which is being paid for by the taxpayers of Victoria Beach with no help from anyone.

What got my dander up on council's first meeting with our closest neighbour was that we were basically told, here's the new boundaries. At election time, if you want something done in your area, make sure you elect a councillor as well as a reeve from your ward, that way you will only need one more vote to get anything done. Nice.

On joining our neighbour we have too much to lose, including public works department which runs very efficiently and also employs people with water treatment plant qualifications, regular garbage pickup—we own our own garbage compactor, very active recycling depot that is very accessible to our residents, police department which is year-round and expands to six constables in the summer months. We lease out a store, bakery, restaurant, as well as run our own golf course. We own and lease a parking lot which allows us to have restrictions on vehicles in the summer plus make our area very unique.

The RM also owns many acres of undeveloped green space and, for environmental reasons, we do not want this area developed.

The RM also gives a small grant to the Victoria Beach Club which run summer programs to keep the young people busy, as well as run a swimming lesson program—lesson program. The same grant is given to Victoria Beach Community Centre which runs activities all year long, including our curling rink. The same grant also goes to the East Beaches Senior Scene, who runs programs year round for people over 55. One other program the RM has taken on is the shoreline protection study. We have hired an engineering firm to determine options on how to save our shorelines and preserve our sandy beaches.

This study will be invaluable to the whole south basin of Lake Winnipeg.

A couple of things that should happen in the near future: recognize all taxpayers not just permanent residents, as they pay our bills as well as a hefty school division tax. This would take us well over 2,000 residents; and when we are doing local improvements we should be eligible for grant money for items required the same as any municipality in the province of Manitoba. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Morrison.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Morrison. We appreciate you coming in. We heard—there are many individuals coming from Victoria Beach, also Dunnottar, and making a passionate case why they're unique, and we appreciate your time, and even though some things are repetitious, it's—sometimes it takes some repetition for politicians to hear it. As a former school teacher, it's repeat, repeat, repeat. So I'm not—I don't certainly object to that, but we appreciate your comments with regard to the uniqueness of your community as well as Dunnottar.

We've heard quite a few presenters, and I know we've—and I've mentioned to many people, in fact, those in the media, as well, and in the Legislature that we're looking forward to putting forward some amendments with regard to Dunnottar and Victoria Beach, and we certainly intend to do that. So I just want to let you know that we've heard you and listened to you. We appreciate it and we appreciate you taking the time and—to speak to all elected representatives to make the case for your community. Thank you.

Mr. Eichler: Thank you, Mr. Morrison, for your presentation. As the member from Carman also had said—from Midland—in regards to the proposed amendments, we will wait and see what happens with the government, whether or not they're going to hold true to their word. We certainly hope that they do. So thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for coming in and presenting. One of the items that you mentioned was the shoreline preservation study, and it seems that that's a fairly unique and potentially important contribution to people all around Lake Winnipeg and probably Lake Manitoba, and yet we heard of the presenter earlier on suggesting that the RM of Alexander really wouldn't be very interested in that. I mean, it highlights to me the difference between

your municipality and the RM of Alexander. Just give you an opportunity to comment.

Mr. Morrison: Well, we know this is true as anyone in—oh, this is our problem. It's a very bad problem to have, I guess, is when your neighbours treat other people that way. I don't get it, personally, why you would tell people—you know, they want—they don't want to control or look after anything. And this is true, we know it's true. This is why we're so afraid this is going to happen. When it comes to the lakeshore and, like, in the Bélair area and that, Hillside area, if anyone goes in there—to the RM and wants a permit to do something, they say, go to see—go to Selkirk and get a permit there. Selkirk sends them back over to their own RM. You get permit from them. No, no, you go get a permit. Then they're told, under the table, do it at night when no one's watching and get it done. And it's all mishmash, it's all different types. There's metal. There's—wood. There's rock. There's everything and it looks like hell.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Morrison, for your presentation.

Next up is No. 6, Gary Williams. Gary Williams. Gary Williams will be taken off the list.

Next up is No. 7, Colin Bjarnason. Colin Bjarnason. Bjarnason. He'll be taken off the list.

Next up is No. 11, Neil Christoffersen. Neil Christoffersen. Do you have a handout Mr.—our staff will help you.

You can start at will, Mr. Christoffersen.

* (20:00)

Mr. Neil Christoffersen (Rural Municipality of North Norfolk): Good evening, Mr. Chairman, esteemed committee members.

I'm the reeve from the RM of North Norfolk, population 2,799. So, if Bill 33 passes in this present form, our municipality will have to amalgamate with the town of MacGregor which is population, 963. So, according to the 2011 census, MacGregor experienced 4.6 per cent growth from 2006. So, continued growth, which we expect, by now, they're over a thousand. But, that being said, I'm not against voluntary municipal amalgamations; I'm here to perhaps make some points and some suggestions and encourage the government to tune this bill up a bit so that it can be more palatable to municipalities.

So, municipal councillors take their roles very seriously, as you do, and want to make decisions for

the communities that they live in, the best decisions. So, to quote the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) from an article in the Free Press of 2010, maybe it's out of context but this is what I read, we're not going to force amalgamations, municipal-municipalities themselves know what's best for their situation.

In fact, we have had amalgamation on our agenda, at our joint meetings with North Norfolk and MacGregor, about a year before this came down the pipe at the last—just around last convention time and we've been seriously looking at it already with—and we've had people from Local Government out talking to us about it before. So members are talking about it and the one good thing, I suppose, is that this gets it front and centre and gets a lot more people talking and so that's a good thing.

So a few years ago, the Province forced municipalities to change to the PSAB method of accounting. Now that change cost municipalities tens of thousands of dollars in software, in employee time, and there was a three-year window of implementation for the PSAB. So, three years for an accounting and here, we've going to turn people's lives upside down in a year. You know, speaks for itself. So, this legislation is going to change some people's lives. This is more than a dollars-and-cents exercise. More importantly, when and how municipalities decide to amalgamate or not, it's also an emotional decision, which I found out in the coffee shops around my municipality.

And the minister's saying, at one of our AMM meetings that, you know, we have a majority and it's going to pass. And he repeated basically the same thing in the Hansard today and phrases from Local Government like, well, the Province created municipalities and—leaving the last part off—we can destroy them too or we can amalgamate them too.

You know, it tends to make all this public input pretty redundant, I think.

So, just consider this for a second. The decision to pass this bill is going to be made in Winnipeg, and it's going to start a chain of events in rural Manitoba, mostly rural Manitoba. Suppose that three municipalities are being forced to amalgamate. Now, that's three offices, three CAOs, three sets of employees, but only one office is required. But all three are too small. What do they do? Do they build a new office? Do they add on? There's no money saving there. And only one CAO is required, so municipalities are required to pay severance and

other benefits. No cost savings there. But maybe one 'munic'—maybe of these employees only has a couple of years to go to retirement. So it's pretty tough to get another job in a small town.

So what does the family do? It moves on. Maybe councils have been talking about joining together and wanted to wait for the appropriate time when fewer lives will be adversely affected in certain situations. So provincial employees probably have read the same articles that I have re amalgamation, yet they bring out the same shibboleths of increased efficiencies and cost savings that other jurisdictions report are tenuous at best.

An example of cost savings became apparent to me when the Province introduced the municipal Road Improvement Program. Had we been amalgamated with MacGregor, we would have lost money, \$25,000. The Province would've saved money and also would've increased their efficiency by having one less application to deal with.

I'm also concerned about policing costs, which have probably been mentioned. And I'm concerned because McGregor has a contract and we don't, without being a municipality, a rural one. So what assurances do we have that the cost of our policing won't escalate in line with the amalgamated numbers? Has this been discussed with the feds? Has it been communicated to people to alleviate our concerns, and is there going to be any written agreements so that nobody can change their mind in the future? Anything's possible, but I can see that happening.

So—has the assessment branch been involved in amalgamation discussions? Our two municipalities have identical roll numbers. Now that—and our software precludes adding another number or adding another symbol. So big problem, big cost. And the taxes are just coming in now. When are we going to change? When are we going to get time to do this? We have to work that out.

So we just can't do as Local Government suggests; here, sign on the dotted line, we'll take care of that later. Nobody, absolutely nobody, conducts a business merger that way. Do you realize how much time and money these situations are going to take to resolve, on top of everything else that our employees are asked to do on a daily basis?

So other areas which have been—I've heard tonight—that require scrupulous attention to detail are planning districts and bylaws. So they have to be

really looked at closer, and I'm not happy with the way that they're going.

So pushing this legislation through in its present shape just, to me, isn't logical. The government has shown in the past that it can be open to concessions that are in everybody's best interests. The example I'm thinking of is the sewage ejector system of a few years ago. Some concessions were made, everybody's happy. So we can do the same here. Just going to take some time.

So people respond to incentives. So, for an example, Manitoba Hydro came out to our office and offered us money—or offered—yes, to our municipality. They offered us money and they offered money to municipalities that are affected by the proposed bipole line. I don't know whether we're ever going to see it or not, but cash incentives have also been offered to neighbouring municipalities. MacGregor is about seven miles from the line, from the nearest tower, and they were offered an incentive. Now, incentives can go a long way to change one's outlook. So how can the Province make the amalgamation process less forced and more palatable? An incentive, maybe a PST exemption. Municipalities could be exempt from paying or will receive a permanent PST refund once they amalgamate. It's a win-win and Local Government would be very busy.

So, in closing, I know you're not going to withdraw this bill, but, for gosh sakes, make some amendments to it and tune it up a bit, you know, give the municipalities some incentives to buy into this—

Mr. Chairperson: One minute.

Mr. Christoffersen: —legislation and some more time to assess what is the best course for them and the families—to Manitoba families that they represent. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Christoffersen.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Well, thank you very much for coming in, Neil, and sharing your views and being part of this important discussion. It's appreciated.

Mr. Christoffersen: Thank you.

Mr. Briese: Thanks, Neil, for coming in. Another municipality from my constituency heard from, along with Lakeview, one or two others. Certainly appreciate you coming in and making a very well-reasoned presentation, in my view.

So you're—what I'm hearing from you is your recommendation would be that the government back off at the present time on pushing this bill forward, give it some sober second thought and move on to probably the next four-year election time frame and offer incentives rather than the stick, I guess, is the—what I'm hearing from you.

* (20:10)

Mr. Christoffersen: I do hope, Mr. Briese, that something is built into the legislation that reflects your words.

Mr. Gerrard: Just in terms of your own process with MacGregor, I think what I hear you say is that you would prefer to have a little more time so that if there were amalgamation in the works, you'd like to be able to do it by, say, 2018 instead of much sooner.

Mr. Christoffersen: Yes. We're moving towards getting a resolution to this situation in the next election cycle. That's correct.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Christoffersen: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Next up is No. 12, Randy Lints. Randy Lints? Randy Lints will be stricken from the list.

Next up is Stuart Olmstead. Stuart Olmstead? Stuart Olmstead will be stricken from the list.

Next up is Ron Pratt. Ron Pratt?

Do you have a handout, Mr. Pratt, for the committee?

Mr. Ron Pratt (Private Citizen): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Our staff will help.

Mr. Pratt: I wish that I'd been called ahead of Linda and Bruce. I'll try to leave out the redundant parts. Maybe—what I would like to put across to you tonight is what Victoria Beach is. Dr. Gerrard has been there. Is there anybody else here who has ever visited Victoria Beach? Good, good.

My name is Ron Pratt. I've spent every summer of my life at Victoria Beach, where I'm currently enjoying my 79th season. When I was young, I felt as though each year was divided into halves—the beach half and the school half. The summers were long and idyllic.

In my later life, I've attempted to give back to the spirit of Victoria Beach. I've served on the municipal council and as president of the Victoria

Beach Club and secretary of the Cottage Owners Association. I've served as editor of the weekly summer Herald for six years, and through this I gained—I claim to have gained some insight into the workings of the beach.

Victoria Beach is, in many ways, a unique municipality. It wasn't formed by any amalgamations. There were two families early in the 20th century who sailed from Winnipeg by boat and discovered on Lake Winnipeg an uninhabited island—it was called Little Elk Island at that time. It was heavily wooded—spruce, pine, birch—and these families came year after year. They gained possession of the island and eventually formed a company, the Victoria Beach Company.

The idea from the outset was that the beach should be modelled after an English village with a central green and avenues—wooded avenues—surrounding this. They wanted to hold down commercialism, so the Victoria Beach Company ran, at that time, two stores: a bakeshop, a lumber yard, a golf course, Moonlight Inn, and these buildings were leased out to seasonal operators. The CNR was persuaded to extend the Grand Beach subdivision to Victoria Beach while they were building it, and only with the building of the railway causeway was the beach first connected to the mainland. It's now a peninsula.

The railway took part in promoting the sale of cottage lots, and they took their beach line circuitously out of Winnipeg east to Transcona and then back through Winnipeg again, and the purpose of this was to make this resort available to workers in the CNR shops. And it was, I think, only in 1912 that the first permanent residents—up to this time there's no permanent residents—Michael Ateah and his family settled at Victoria Beach and established a successful mink-ranching industry, and the Ateah family still is very prominent at the beach.

My grandfather worked for the CNR and bought a lot in 1919 and built a cottage in 1920. This is where I grew up, and my daughters now own this cottage, fourth generation. If my grandfather could visit the beach at this time, he would see precious little change. Victoria Beach hasn't changed. The people there don't want it to change. It took two years in the late '40s, two referendums before people would vote to have electricity brought to the beach. They thought this was going to change the place, and they don't want it.

The provincial government put a road through and this spelled the end of the railway after a couple of years, and those are really the only changes that my grandfather would see. The place still looks exactly the same. It became a municipality in the 1930s, and, in 1962, the municipality acquired the assets of the Victoria Beach Company, and it's for this reason that the RM is in the unique position of owning the store, the bakeshop, the Moonlight Inn, and it also owns all the property that recreational facilities are located on in the beach: the clubhouse, which was the community club, the tennis courts, the sailing club and the golf course. And the municipality operates the golf course. Automobile traffic in the restricted area has been limited during the summer months from the inception of the beach.

Victoria Beach is considered to be one of the most desirable summer resorts in Manitoba. It is what the cottage owners want it to be. They have developed it over the years and paid for everything that it is. They've paid for everything. From Victoria Day to Thanksgiving, the 3 and a half million dollar treatment plant, which has been explained to you that we paid for this ourselves, distributes drinking water to the cottages. Four public works employees certified as class 2 operators, control the plant.

Our six-man police force maintains within the beach and is called on an average of four times per week to back up the RCMP in neighbouring Alexander. Our volunteer fire department similarly operate—pardon me, co-operates with Alexander as far south as Grand Beach.

I could probably just stop here and say that if we are forced to amalgamate with Alexander, it won't be an inconvenience, it will be the absolute destruction of Victoria Beach as it is now. It will still be the municipality. The land will be there. But one thing that the council from Alexander said, they will eliminate the parking lot. They'll allow cars to come in. The winding wooded avenues at Victoria Beach are not suited to traffic. People are happy during the summer to pay a modest fee to park their cars at the parking lot, allowing their children to play on the roads, to ride their bikes in safety. This is the No. 1 thing that would destroy the beach. It just would not—we wouldn't have any of the services that make our place unique. It would be destroyed.

I think I'll leave off the rest. Some of it's a little cheeky, perhaps. It was what I had in mind while I was typing this out, and just go to the last line: Please leave Victoria Beach alone. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Pratt.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much for presenting. I know we've heard very good representation from Victoria Beach and Dunnottar, and we appreciate your comments. Thank you.

* (20:20)

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Pratt, for your presentation and your history lesson in there. And I didn't realize there was—I didn't know about the history as what you've outlined in here, and thank you for that. And it never hurts to keep repeating the message; perhaps this government will listen, We—again, we're waiting to hear what they have in mind with this bill. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you very much for coming in, Ron, and talking so passionately and telling us so much about the history of Victoria Beach.

One of the things that's very difficult to understand—you help the RM of Alexander out at the moment, if they've got trouble, with extra policing. But if the RM of Alexander took over, they're telling you that they would eliminate the parking lot and let cars in. Why would they do that? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Pratt.

Mr. Pratt: I'm sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: Go ahead, Mr. Pratt.

Mr. Pratt: The RM of Alexander is a farming community. It's not a—they have ward 1, a little bit of land on the lakefront, but they have no feeling for Victoria Beach. They—our—we do get help from the RCMP, in return, if there's a serious crime like murder. We still—the RCMP is still the primary policing, but Alexander has as few as two men on, on a weekend, and they have a vast area.

And Victoria Beach gets a lot of police calls, but as someone pointed out, it's for fires on the beach, noisy parties. We have bylaws that say no construction between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. the next morning to keep the place quiet. All parties will be silenced by 11 o'clock. The RCMP aren't interested in coming to quieten a party down. They don't have the manpower; they don't have the interest. They don't enforce bylaws.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, no further questions. Thank you, Mr. Pratt.

Another written submission on Bill 33 has been received from a registered presenter, Jim Brown,

deputy reeve of the Rural Municipality of Blanshard, and copies have been distributed to committee members.

Does the committee agree to have these documents appear in the Hansard transcript of this evening? *[Agreed]*

Great. Mr. Brown's name will be removed from the presenters' list then.

Next up is Tirzah Ateah. Tirzah Ateah? Ateah. Not here? Her name will be stricken from the list.

Next up is No. 19, Don Forfar. Forfar? He's not here, so his name will be stricken from the list.

Next is No. 20, Robert Sharpe. Robert Sharpe? Do you have any handouts?

Mr. Robert Sharpe (Rural Municipality of Saskatchewan): I don't have a handout per se, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, you can start.

Mr. Sharpe: My name is Robert Sharpe, and I'm the reeve of the RM of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. On behalf of the council of the RM of Saskatchewan, I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to address the committee and voice our opposition to Bill 33 as presented.

The Rural Municipality of Saskatchewan is a large, agricultural-based municipality located in western Manitoba with a current population of just under 600 residents. We currently enjoy good working relationships with our neighbouring municipalities and share numerous services by mutual agreement.

We are PSAB compliant and have always filed our yearly financial statements with the Province on time as required. Our office staff is well trained, CMA—CMMA accredited and highly efficient. We operate with a balanced budget, have zero debt, and have reserve accounts to accommodate major purchases and repairs to infrastructure when they're required.

Of our neighbouring municipalities that the Province would have us merge with, we have the largest land base, we have the highest assessment and we have the lowest taxes. There are no tangible benefits for the RM of Saskatchewan in amalgamation. I will not dispute that, for some municipalities, amalgamation may have merit and may be beneficial to their community. However, that

union should only occur through mutual agreement and through a lengthy process of negotiation, not through legislation based solely on population, with restrictive deadlines attached.

In a voluntary amalgamation, both parties come to the table with motivation, eager and willing to compromise for the mutual benefit of all. Much thought and preparation goes into every step of that process before any agreement is ever finalized. Bill 33 would force the Rural Municipality of Saskatchewan to amalgamate in a hurried-up process that, by our best calculations, would initially raise our taxes for our ratepayers by 2 to 3 mills while our counterpart ratepayers would see a substantial decrease. The overall area of a new proposed municipality would be far too vast to manage properly and efficiently. It's difficult for us to comprehend the problems that we would encounter with staffing, machine operators and facilities, not to mention the associated costs with such a merger. These are hardly motivating factors from our side of the table.

A forced amalgamation would only create resentment, increase costs and reduce effectiveness. My entire council, including myself, are farmers or cattlemen. Our farms and ranches are run as a business, well-managed and efficient, and we take pride in being our own boss. We're all active members of the community; we live here, work here and play here. We were elected here to govern to the best of our ability and in the best interests of the municipality and the people we represent. To this end, we're the ones that should be making the decisions on amalgamation. We have listened to our ratepayers; now I urge the government to listen to us.

In conclusion, forcing amalgamation on municipalities is not in our best interest. I urge this committee to recommend the government scrap Bill 33 as presented. Respect our right to govern. Forced amalgamation did not work in the province of Ontario. It was scrapped in the province of Saskatchewan and it won't work in the RM of Saskatchewan.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Sharpe.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much for your presentation and coming here this evening and waiting for the opportunity to be able to speak. It's much appreciated, thank you. It takes some effort to

do that and you put together, well, a very good presentation. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, and you're, from the sound of it, run very efficiently. You have a lower mill rate. Tell us how you do that. And you're an example of, sort of, a municipality which works, from the sound of it.

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry. Mr. Sharpe.

Mr. Sharpe: I guess our municipality is quite fortunate in that we have a compressor station from TransCanada pipeline. The pipeline pays in excess of a million dollars in taxes alone. This affords us the opportunity to manage our infrastructure quite well.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Robert, for your passionate presentation. And I keep hearing this disconnect between Local Government and rural municipalities, because I think if the minister and his department had gone out and consulted with you ahead of time, we probably wouldn't have to be here now. Or we'd be here in a much different version.

Just a quick question, and maybe you can't answer it, but you're being told you have to amalgamate. Have you, as a municipality, looked at what this will cost you cash-wise upfront just to carry out this forced marriage?

* (20:30)

Mr. Sharpe: The only extent that we've investigated is with the tax calculator based on a merger with the Town of Rapid City and/or the RM of Blanshard. And the cost is that two to three mills that I indicated earlier.

For my personal ranch property, that's an increase in my personal taxes of close to \$800.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Sharpe. It was a great presentation.

I'm just wondering—when I was a young man, my dad used to tell me I had to do something or there were consequences, and he made those consequences pretty plain. Have you had any indication of what the consequences are if you don't do what you're being forced to do under Bill 33?

Mr. Sharpe: The only indication that I have had is the generic terms that Mr. Minister has told all the other RMs, that it will happen. It is not indicated to our office, to myself or our staff any direct, if you don't, this is what's going to happen.

Mr. Graydon: What—in a case of you will do it, it will happen—and you were elected by the people to

represent them, they don't want it to happen—what happens, then, if you just walk away from it and say, well, then, Mr. Lemieux, you're now the reeve? What's he going to do then?

Mr. Sharpe: I've never quit anything in my life, and I will not—will not—resign. The minister has the power to remove me from office. If he chooses to do so, he can.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further questions?

Thank you, Mr. Sharpe.

Next up, we'll call No. 23, George Thompson. George Thompson? George Thompson will be stricken from the list.

Next up, we'll call No. 25, Richard Heapy. George Heapy is not here, so we'll 'strick' him from the list.

Next up is No. 26, Jim Brown—[interjection] Oh, that's the written.

Next up is No. 27, James Brennan. James Brennan? James Brennan will be stricken from the list.

Number 8–28 is Rudy Isaak. Rudy Isaak?

Mr. Isaak, do you have a summary of your report to hand out?

Mr. Rudy Isaak (Private Citizen): No, it's strictly verbal and it—I'm from Victoria Beach, but I will not repeat all of the details you have heard. I support them all. So I do thank you for the opportunity to—

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Continue.

Mr. Isaak: Thank you. I firstly will acknowledge the rumour in the newspapers that we—Victoria Beach—will have an exemption, in which case, if that were, in fact, in place and in paper, I would probably not be here. But, just in case, what appears in newspapers doesn't always appear in the Legislature.

I—sorry, I put—firstly, I've been introduced as Rudy Isaak. My wife and I own a cottage, have owned a cottage in Victoria Beach for the past 42 years and rented prior to that, so we are well-satisfied residents in the—and taxpayers to a substantial amount.

I am personally, and my wife is as well, strongly opposed to a forced amalgamation with the RM of Alexander. VB, at an apportioned assessment of \$164 million, is fully sufficient, being in the top 28 of the municipalities in this province. So, using

the Brandon University's criteria, I think we do meet that fairly well, and if you count us taxpayers, we even meet the population numbers. And, probably finally, strongly opposed to the concept that property owners have no position in this proposed forced amalgamation legislation. It's as if we don't exist, and I have a hard time believing that, because I am exist—I do exist. I've existed for quite some time. I've paid taxes for quite some time. And I guess I've heard that paying taxes without representation has led to tea being tossed into the Boston Harbor. We also have a very large harbour.

And, similarly, not necessarily part of amalgamation, I similarly pay taxes without representation to our school board and have done so for the past 42 years. That's very aggravating, as you know, and rightly 'suff'. That is a basic right. If you pay taxes, you should be able to say something. Now, this is an opportunity to say something, but you will not give me a chance to actually vote on something.

Just to finalize, you've heard the history of VB; I'm part of that history, I've volunteered, worked there and lived my life. My grandchildren have gone and grandchildren come back every year. It's a very important place to us. We are self-sufficient. We have been self-sufficient from the beginning. We are older by decades than RM of Alexander and have done a much better job with providing services to our citizens. I cannot see a rationale for us being forced to amalgamate.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, thank you. Thank you so much and thank you also for your brief presentation because you're piggybacking on many others, and your neighbours and friends have been presenting in a very strong way why Victoria Beach and Dunnottar are very, very unique, and we appreciate it.

Mr. Eichler: Thank you, Mr. Isaak, for your presentation. I don't know if it's been said, but I'll certainly say it, and if it has been, that's okay. I sense the pride in your community, in your municipality, and I commend all of you for your efforts and we, as well, will be waiting to see what the minister has to say, you know, once we hear from the rest of the presenters here tonight. So thank you for attending.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you very much for your presentation, and I know you've, I think, contributed significantly to the discussion and the better understanding of Victoria Beach. Tell us a little bit about the harbour which you spoke of.

Floor Comment: Well, we have a harbour commission—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Isaak.

Mr. Isaak: And we have a deep pier off the end, so if any tea needs to be thrown over, we could provide the place for it. And the kids ride the bicycles in place of tea sometimes. That works. So thank you very much, gentlemen.

Mr. Chairperson: No further questions? Thank you, Mr. Isaak.

Next we'll call up No. 29, David Sanders. Do you have anything to hand out to the committee, Mr. Sanders?

Madam Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Please go ahead whenever you're ready, Mr. Sanders.

Mr. David M. Sanders (Private Citizen): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My name is David Sanders and I'm appearing as a private citizen in support of Bill 33. I live in Winnipeg and, therefore, I am not directly affected by this proposed legislation. However, as a citizen and taxpayer in Manitoba, I'm certainly interested in supporting the efforts of the provincial government to facilitate the further development of efficient and effective local government services for my fellow citizens.

Now, just what are we talking about here? I've attached a list of the 91 towns, villages and rural municipalities in Manitoba which had populations of less than 1,000 people, according to the 2011 census. They range in size from 183 people in the village of Waskada to 977 in the town of Deloraine. Each has its own municipal council, office staff, equipment and legislative responsibilities, and the total population served by these 91 local governments is just 54,580 people. So that is who we are talking about. I will add that, of course, we are talking about any other municipalities who may become their partners.

The economies of scale which are available to larger government organizations are one reason for giving favourable consideration to the proposed amalgamation of complementary municipal partners. But even more important, I suggest, is the enhanced ability to finance and deliver an improved level of municipal and community services.

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities is objecting to this bill's, quote, unreasonable timelines. I don't think so. I think the AMM is just objecting to change.

* (20:40)

A very long time ago, in 1965, I was a reporter for the Winnipeg Tribune and I travelled around the province with the members of the Municipal Affairs Committee of the Legislative Assembly, like this committee, holding public hearings with respect to the need for change in our local governments. Then, as now, the reeves and councillors were very reluctant to consider any changes. Our local government leaders have had literally decades and decades to consider and plan for change, and it's a fact of life that most municipal leaders have difficulty with it. And I guess we all do.

Back in 1965, it was the Conservative government of the day that had already bitten the bullet and insisted on bringing in the large unitary school divisions which were able to administer and pay for modern school facilities and programs. The present gentle push for a start on municipal government amalgamations really seems rather unambitious if you compare that with the mandatory school division reorganizations of 50 years ago. But, if you were ever to go beyond the old one-room schoolhouses, that is what had to be done, and it was done.

And, as an aside, I would ask you to note that the municipal amalgamations which are proposed now will have no effect whatsoever on school tax rates because there is no change in school division boundaries contemplated as far as I know.

Again, it was the Conservative government of Duff Roblin which created the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg in the 1960s to take over responsibility for Capital Region municipal services and planning. And after the NDP government of Ed Schreyer took office in '69, it passed legislation requiring the unification of the present day City of Winnipeg by January 1 of 1972, much faster than what is now being asked of the smaller communities in the province, and certainly it was a much more complex task.

As the first employee of the Department of Urban Affairs in that year, my particular responsibility was to design the province's transitional tax base relief program, which facilitated the phasing in of a single municipal tax rate throughout the unified

City of Winnipeg. The task required projecting what future budgets and tax rates would likely be and then smoothing the transition for taxpayers.

Now, here, we have one city with the strength of many. And, sure, there were many bumps along the way, but I doubt that anyone today would argue that we should turn the clock back on Unicity.

In the late 1970s, it was the Lyon Conservative government, which followed through with The Planning Act and which used the carrot of the offer to delegate local control to planning districts, which had been retained by the Province. In this case it insisted on the formation of planning districts involving more than one municipality. And we continue to see similar moves in the establishment of water and sewer districts, conservation districts, and stronger initiatives in the evolution of the regional health authorities.

In all of this, the provincial government of the day is fulfilling its constitutional responsibility for municipal government institutions. It is the responsibility of the provincial government to maintain a solid legislative and financial framework for local governments to serve the needs of their communities in an effective and efficient manner.

So I recommend that the Legislative Assembly now pass Bill 33, and I urge the communities concerned to embrace this opportunity to empower themselves through co-operation with their neighbours. I'm sure the minister and his staff stand ready to assist the amalgamating municipalities in every way, and if the municipalities' own—their own public consultation processes, which the legislation requires them to have, are not sufficient to resolve differences, then the Municipal Board will be available to adjudicate disputes in a relatively informal but effective manner.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Sanders.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, just a quick question. Thank you very much for your very articulate presentation, and, obviously, you have a lot of experience going through this. And you pointed out the City of Winnipeg and what they went through, and we often hear from the opposition and others claiming about how, you know, this is so cumbersome and the timelines are tight, and so on.

I'm just wondering what your thoughts are, too, and what kind of, maybe, challenges, you know, legitimate challenges, someone may have if they're saying they can't do it within a year's time.

Mr. Sanders: From my experience, then, I believe that the Unicity legislation was put together and passed between the government of the New Democrats being elected in '69, and, when it became effective January 1st of '72, it was a new city then.

As in this case, everything carries on until it's changed and fixed and amended by those who are put in power. In the case of the City of Winnipeg, it was at least 10 years before many bylaws were amalgamated or consolidated and before organizations were changed, where union agreements were corrected. It took time. It took time, but it can certainly be done. But, frankly, unless there's a push somewhere, it never would have happened.

Mr. Lemieux: Just a quick follow-up, so I guess, just to be clear, you're saying that it's not necessarily everything has to be done the moment that the boundaries are changed, and so a new council actually could move forward, and to bring into play different bylaws and so on as they're going forward into the future.

Mr. Sanders: I would certainly expect that the good people who are responsible for these municipalities would take the time and seek the help required in order to approach each of these problems, pick them up, one at a time, and deal with them. And it is the fact that the employees of the municipal governments will carry on doing what they always do until someone tells them to do something differently. But for that, of course, things would fall apart. Here, too.

And, of course, as problems arise, there are processes for adjudicating them, and my understanding is that in view of this process the Municipal Board that is, you know, gearing up to, I guess, deal with whatever comes forward, whether it's a matter of assessment or reserve funds or whatever the issues might be. But I would emphasize that the process in the act, as I read it, requires the municipal parties involved to have their own public consultation process to begin with and then to report on that to the minister. And to the extent that there is difficulties, then, that's all the more reason why I would expect the minister to—may provide for further opportunity for a more formal adjudication and advice from the Municipal Board.

Mr. Chairperson: No further questions? Oh, Dr. Gerrard.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, what are you doing?

Mr. Chairperson: No further questions?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I do have a question. What I would like to ask, I mean, there needs, it would seem to be, to be some similarities, in a sense, between the jurisdictions that you're amalgamating, and we've heard a lot about Victoria Beach and the RM of Alexander being quite different in a lot of respects and the fact that Victoria Beach, although it has fewer permanent residents than required, has more seasonal residents, and actually has an assessment base which is one of the top 30 in the province. So, I mean, it would seem to me that it would make sense that you not force amalgamations in that circumstance because of the difference, and I would just like you to comment.

Mr. Sanders: As it happens, I've been to Victoria Beach many times. I'm familiar with it, and I've also been to Alexander and I've also dealt with the Alexander council. And, yes, they're different—as explained here, they are different communities with different interests, but is it possible for people to find a way of working together and taking advantage of the benefits and opportunities that they have and respect things, the different needs and interests? I believe so. If I can just step back for a second, we have a country called Canada, which tries to do that and with some greater difficulty, but, in fact, we do it. And the municipal level, certainly I think it's possible. Certainly, I think it's possible.

Mr. Chairperson: No further questions? Thank you, Mr. Sanders.

Next up is No. 30, Richard Brownscombe. Richard Brownscombe. Richard Brownscombe will be stricken from the list.

Next up is No. 31, Dave Zeglinski? Dave Zeglinski. Zeglinski will be stricken from the list.

Next up is Liz Foster, No. 32. Liz Foster. Do you have a handout, Ms. Foster?

Ms. Liz Foster (Private Citizen): No, I don't. It's a very short presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Begin at will.

Ms. Foster: Okay. Good evening, Honourable Minister and members of the standing committee for Bill 33. Thank you for allowing me to make this short presentation, to let you know why

amalgamation is detrimental to our unique community and beach life we have enjoyed over the past many generations.

* (20:50)

Victoria Beach, being a resort community, has very specific and different requirements to other communities. We chose this beach for many reasons, one being the quiet family atmosphere where children can enjoy freedom. In today's changing world, the children are not given freedom to explore, ride their bikes without adult supervision. Today, at the beach, the children enjoy such things as going to the store to buy a treat on their own and going to a movie night where the biggest thrill is not the movie but going on their own and coming home with a flashlight.

Parents feel safe because of the no-car restriction and they know the area is well policed. One policeman cannot possibly monitor the municipality or the safety of the beach. The no-car area works because we have police that can apprehend violators immediately. The—these pleasures are what I enjoyed as a child, my children have enjoyed and I would like my grandchildren to be able to continue to enjoy them. Mixing a resort community with one that has no interest in paying taxes for policing, running a golf course, maintaining buildings such as the store, the bakeshop, the doctor's office, is totally absurd. There is no tax advantage to the rest of the community, and since this is not a burden on the government, why is this happening?

As you are aware, we paid for our water treatment plant without any money from the provincial or federal government. Some cottage owners decided to pay for it immediately, and others through their taxes over the next 10 years. What will happen to this agreement? Will we be in—reimbursed, if it's taken on by a larger municipality?

My biggest problem is seasonal residents pay 87 per cent of the taxes of Victoria Beach, but we are not considered in the count of the municipality. For the past four years, I have paid just under \$4,000 yearly in property tax, and now I'm told I don't count. By the way, I have not been approached by Homes and Gardens to put my cottage in; it's a very simple plywood cottage.

Cottage owners pay higher taxes than permanent residents, as cottage owners do not receive the \$700 rebate for school tax, and since our cottages are assessed much higher than a permanent

homeowner outside the Victoria Beach area, our taxes are higher. This takeover of our municipality is not only undemocratic, but I believe it's against the Charter. The Charter stated that people are to be treated equally and fairly under the law. By ignoring cottage owners in the count for the municipality is treating some taxpayers more equal than others. If all taxpayers are counted, we would be well over the mandatory number required for municipalities to amalgamate. Dividing the wards up with equal population of permanent residents only has—has resulted only on paper with wards having approximately 865 voters. However, our ward would have nearly 5,000 voters, because there's seasonal residents.

With one representative, is this fair? Seasonal residents are limited to two voters per household, which, again, is not democratic, as many cottagers have more than two owners. The government does not limit permanent residents to only two of the registered owners, yet we pay the same taxes. To—in my estimation, and I could be wrong in this, not one member of the present government ran for election on the issue of amalgamating municipalities. Should the government not delay this bill until after an election and let the people vote? Why does our vote not count with equal weight as a permanent taxpayer's vote? To force people to amalgamate and take away a unique part of our life that many families have enjoyed for generations is unconscionable. The basic tenet of democracy is free election with one person, one vote and one value. In our community, we have approximately 2,600 voters, yet the government is only counting 372 permanent residents in this community. This means that over 2,000 taxpayers are not represented. There is no possible benefit or any tax saving to this amalgamation.

And I know school divisions were forced into amalgamation a few years ago, and our taxes did go up, but at least the school divisions have a lot in common—you know, the—to educate our children. This is a unique resort community.

I was encouraged by the minister, when he stated that perhaps resort communities should be a separate municipality, so I urge this committee to recommend that there be an amendment to Bill 33, allowing resort communities to remain as a resort community. I also would like to urge this committee to put our election date back to July.

We bought into this resort because of the family way of life at this beach. I hope that this committee will look seriously at the reasons for not amalgamating. I do have faith in this committee, that you'll do the right thing and let this community remain as it has been, a summer resort that we have enjoyed over the past several generations. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Foster.

Mr. Lemieux: I would just like to take the opportunity to thank you on behalf of our caucus and government for presenting tonight. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you so much. I just want to clarify, so I've got it clear. There are, in terms of residents, there's something over 5,000, if you include—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: I'm sorry—Ms. Foster.

Ms. Foster: Sorry. The 5,000 number is what I got when we looked at the amalgamation with the resort areas with RM of Alexander because they had put our resort area with Hillside and some others. So seasonal residents would be over 5,000. But they had us all in one ward.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Ms. Foster, for your presentation. I remember being up at your community meeting this summer and enjoying your community when I was there. And, certainly, we look forward to seeing what the minister will present whenever these magical amendments show up.

Mr. Chairperson: No further questions. Thank you, Ms. Foster.

Next up is No. 33, John Deacon. John Deacon. John Deacon's name will be stricken from the list.

Next up—*[interjection]* Yes, Mr. Eichler—Mr. Briese.

Mr. Briese: It shouldn't probably be stricken. These are ones that haven't been called before, aren't they? So they should be called and then dropped—

Mr. Chairperson: They have been called. They have been called. We have to go through them.

So John Deacon will be stricken from the list.

No. 34, Mark McLearn. Mark McLearn is here. Do you have something to hand out to the committee?

Mr. Mark McLearn (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Begin at will.

Mr. McLearn: Thank you. I'm Mark McLearn. I'm a non-permanent resident and taxpayer of the RM of Victoria Beach. And, because of the position of Bill 33, some of you can't see me because you do not consider that I exist. And, if any one of you would like to come up and pinch me, please do so, and I will prove to you that I do exist.

These are my tax bills. And these tax bills that I pay are very similar to my next-door neighbour who is a permanent resident. I receive no discounts or any other concessions because I'm a non-permanent resident. I pay the same rate as permanent residents. And yet you don't think that—or the authors of Bill 33 do not think that I exist.

Other people have said certain things, and I'm going to leave parts of it here because I don't want to be repetitive, but I am one of the 85 per cent of taxpayers in the municipality of Victoria Beach. I have to come to the conclusion that this is a modernization bill based on feudalism. It revives feudalism as part of its justification to pass the bill. Taxation without representation was abolished over 200 years ago. Surely, the authors of Bill 33 know about the French Revolution and the American Revolution. I mean, come on. This is fundamentally flawed.

* (21:00)

There have been people here, and I've been listening to them, who have sort of been begging for concessions with respect to the fact that Bill 33 doesn't acknowledge non-permanent residents in Victoria Beach and in some other municipalities. And, personally, I have far too much self-respect to negotiate or bargain with anybody or position that does not acknowledge me as a real person and yet demands that I pay money. I don't think anybody should acknowledge an authority that treats them as a nonentity. It's fundamentally flawed. And Bill 33, the authors have known about this from the very beginning. So I don't know what the other plan is or what the other hidden agenda is. I can only guess.

This particular situation, I think, is a—is rich. It's rich for a discussion scenario with high school students in social studies to really examine how things work in government or in other places of authority where you present a premise that is flawed. The formula, under a thousand, okay, I've been around the block. I know if you want to get something done, maybe you go for the moon and you

don't get there, but you get a few things on the way. But I'm insulted that I don't count.

I don't want to repeat what other people have said. I think the municipality of Victoria Beach is a gem, fiscally and ecologically, and I'm baffled why the authors of Bill 33 don't acknowledge that. It's certainly a gem in the whole country.

I could go on, but I prefer just to say my point, that the fundamental part of this is that the premise of not taking into account people who pay full taxes and who aren't even acknowledged is wrong. It's bad form. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. McLearn.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I had mentioned earlier to other presenters from Victoria Beach and Dunnottar that you will be acknowledged, you will be recognized, and we will be bringing amendments forward to acknowledge and recognize Victoria Beach as well as Dunnottar as a special and—special communities in 'specle'—special circumstance. Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mark, for your presentation. And one of the great things about when presenters come, sometimes they reinforce the ideas, the issues that we've brought forward. And we have told this minister from the start that it was a poorly crafted, poorly designed bill with little thought, and I would certainly recommend this as high school reading material to figure out—try and figure out what went wrong here. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for your presentation. I mean, I think that one of your recommendations would be very strong; count everybody who pays taxes, and right away Victoria Beach would be over the top in terms of the thousand. Is that right?

Mr. Graydon: Mr. McLearn, you presented an excellent case and you pointed out the flaws, and many people from Victoria Beach have pointed out the other uniqueness of Victoria Beach. Would you say that a situation like yours that exists in Shellmouth-Boulton municipality where there's a large seasonal camp—or seasonal cottagers the same as they are in Victoria Beach—would you suggest that they should be treated the same way? We've heard the minister say that you will be recognized: We will do something for Victoria Beach, but he hasn't said anything about Shellmouth-Boulton. How do you feel about that?

Mr. McLearn: I'm not totally familiar. I did hear the presenter. I will just say that, generally speaking, I think there are always, whether you're talking about municipalities or people, there are always individual differences that have to be—that should be taken into account, that if you do things in a blanket way, you're going to make mistakes, and I think it has to be—I mean, there are certain things that apply here. What is the intent of the bill? It's to be helpful, and if it's going to be extremely detrimental, then it obviously needs a second look.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. No further questions?

Thank you, Mr. McLearn.

Next up is No. 35, William Charles Kennedy. William Charles Kennedy. He will be stricken from the list.

Next up is Walter Kleinschmit.

Walter, do you have a handout for everyone? Begin at will.

Mr. Walter Kleinschmit (Private Citizen): Good evening, gentlemen, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this evening.

My name is Walter Kleinschmit. I'm a resident of Winnipeg, but do own and spend significant time at a year-round second residence in Albert Beach, one on the RM's Alexander side of Saffie Road. Half of the community of Albert Beach is on the other side of our main road in the RM of Victoria Beach. As a family, we operate small businesses in both RMs and, with our children, have six residential units in the area—all to say that we are vitally interested in municipal affairs, in municipal health, especially community well-being. And that is why I'm here today.

Albert Beach is a living example of the consequences of out-of-date boundaries and/or applications of regulations without proper local examination and feedback. So it is a demonstration of the validity of the WHEREAS introduction to Bill 33. But the bill fails to deliver what is needed in response to the second WHEREAS; in particular, the boundaries no longer reflect where people live, work and do business. Bill 33 does not provide a process that takes that important consideration into account, which is further defined in clause 4.2, community of interest, which is also otherwise ignored.

Amalgamating two rural municipalities, which is the only option provided, each of which were established a long time ago, and each of which may

not have a population with commonality of interest, does not solve the problem identified other than possibly herding enough people into a group of in excess of 1,000.

I would like to address the fundamental assumptions of the bill. As written, it is a one-dimension proposed solution to a single dimension of the problem: increase the arbitrarily defined population of the RM. There's no obvious benefits to the resident, full time or seasonal, only to the size of the incoming mailbox of our Minister of Local Government, the Honourable Ron Lemieux. He'll have less RMs to deal with. That is not really a good reason to amalgamate rural municipalities and reduce our numbers.

I do recognize that some rural municipalities would benefit from a physical reorganization. Bill 33 should better respond to its objectives to ensure that tomorrow rural municipalities are better able to deal with change, new challenges and new opportunities. To succeed, the final bill must ensure that community of interest of its residents be the prime consideration of any modification of boundaries. For example, an RM with a large farming community and a large seasonal waterfront community has very divergent interests, as has been mentioned earlier today. Community must have a sense of connectivity, belonging together, a geographical dimension of the community of interest. Some boundaries reflect history, but include residents that are so physically disconnected from each other they're not able or need to develop a sense of community. The RM of Alexander has such a case with residents that are on the east side of the Winnipeg River. They would never come to our side of the river; they would go down towards the Whiteshell into Winnipeg.

The first two points are necessary if the RM is to have a pool of residents that can work together, as has been indicated in the bill, whether as volunteers in their community or as part of the local government structure. This addresses a third WHEREAS of Bill 33, but it's ignored otherwise. The magic number 1,000 does not guarantee the above. There is no magic formula.

Financial resources, current and projected, to meet the needs of a community of comparable cost-effective basis, have been hinted as a reason, especially by the acquiring RM, as has Alexander has done with our V—Victoria. But evidence in both private and public setter-sector demonstrates that

savings are rarely realized to the extent expected, and often the reverse is true.

* (21:10)

Another area of concern I have with Bill 33 is a fairy-tale approach to its proposed process. The RM with a population, and I quote, below the arbitrary threshold of 1,000—and no other specific consideration—is directed, in clause 3(1), "acting jointly with its amalgamation partner or partners," and it is further stated in 4(1), "the neighbouring municipalities must work cooperatively with A"—that's the small municipality—as their 'amalgation' part—amalgamation partner or partners—excuse me.

The law does not address the possibility, or the consequences thereof, if there's no likelihood that the smaller RM does not necessarily have a co-operating partner to work with. In fact, with the difference of size, one party is more likely to act like a bully in the schoolyard, which, I think, was the subject of this room's meetings last week.

This happened in our area, with the RM of Alexander pre-empting the process and doing an amalgamation plan, even though there is no provision in Bill 33 for the big brother RM to initiate such a process. It very clearly states, it's a responsibility of the RM with less than 1,000 people.

Had the minister's office rejected the plan as unsolicited and not in compliance with Bill 33, it is likely that a more harmonious process would have been initiated if they had been forced upon and the proposal been sent back to the table.

Until the recent ministerial announcement that Bill 33 may be amended so that certain municipalities will be exempted from the process, the community interests in our area are being damaged, not enhanced, by proposed amalgamation. This can continue to be the case in other areas of the province if the anticipated amendments, which are narrowly defined, are passed. It helps a couple of us, including where I live, but it doesn't help better government for the province.

Bill 33 further abuses the citizens' rights of affected communities in the following manner. Other than this week's submissions to the government, no public debate has been promoted by the public-provincial government throughout the province, nor is a public debate a condition of the process of Bill 33. Clause 3.3, notwithstanding, as it's—RM of Alexander has demonstrated by ignoring it in their submission to you—or to the minister. Even if the

minimum population of an RM is primarily defined by the number of permanent residents, all taxpayers should be allowed to decide by vote on the direction and decisions being made about their community, as they are all equal under the law as taxpayers to the RM and the local school board.

It is our recommendation that Bill 33, as currently framed with incomplete assumptions and definitions of objectives, and with regulations that are impractical as they do not adequately deal with the need to co-operative—for co-operative discussion need to—needed to create a positive amalgamation, is not fit for purpose as written. It is not likely to be comprehensively amended in the time available. It should be rewritten and submitted during the next session. This would be preferable to the likelihood that many RMs are likely to avail themselves of clauses 3(5) and 3(6), which does allow for delay from 2015 to 2019 as a stopgap measure, hoping for changes of governments or other reasons they can run away from it.

A better thought-out bill could eventually bring more rapid, friendly and productive reorganization. A better Bill 33 to do on proper review—or better, drop Bill 33 and do a proper review of The Municipal Act so that the RM can amend their boundaries through a process if and when deemed needed by the governed, not the government, nor the whim of the minister.

An example of the results of a better law would be the 'vilability' of an orderly expansion for the RM of Victoria Beach by annexing some of the adjacent East Beach's community which would meet the population requirement; unite communities with a high level of community of interest; unite communities with a high degree of similarity of residential presence—small percentage of permanent, many seasonal and growing general population—shared interest of waterfront, watershed areas and responsibility to manage it; similar requirements for security and other community services, which are—

Mr. Chairperson: One minute.

Mr. Kleinschmit: Thank you—and allow the participation of the to-be-annexed residents in the decision-making process, as provided in The Municipal Act, because The Municipal Act calls for voting under the current elections act, which enables all property owners and taxpayers to vote.

This is logical, it's possible, would most probably be endorsed by the large majority of

the community through plebiscite, and meet the 1,000-resident threshold targeted. The only issue; it's not possible under Bill 33.

Bill 33 misses the point. Respectfully submitted.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Kleinschmit.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much for your presentation. It was well put together and thoroughly thought out and also well presented. Thank you very much for staying with us later tonight and being able to present your paper. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Kleinschmit, thank you for your detailed analysis, your recommendations for Bill 33. That's the purpose of this committee, is to hear these kinds of ideas and I hope the minister takes them seriously. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you very much. You've got some very good ideas here. You live just in the RM of Alexander and I have a sense that you feel that you may not be getting the services that you should be if you were in the community of interest of people along the shore.

Mr. Kleinschmit: Yes, absolutely, I live in the RM of Alexander side, but I own the business with my daughter that lives on the other, so I am very much of a witness to what they get and the services they have. Saffie Road, which is divided into the two, has basically two grass-cutting regimes, two police regimes for parking tickets. It's a division of a city which doesn't make sense. They have garbage pickup, we don't. They have—the most valuable service is the police services which are available and thank God they do help us on our side of the road occasionally, in an emergency.

But, what I really want to address today, because the Victoria Beach strength and qualities of life have been well, well documented, and, yes, we would benefit, and if nothing else, I would hope that at least part of Albert Beach would be eventually annexed rather than amalgamated. It's that even in exception of Victoria Beach we shall welcome, personally, selfishly, is a cop-out by the government. It's got to look at Bill 33 in its entirety. We've got to be fair to all the residents in all the communities. We have the better community spirit, which we've demonstrated and you've witnessed it and you've beared with it through yesterday evening and this morning, I understand, and tonight again.

But I'd like to go beyond that issue. I'd like to make sure that Bill 33, to the extent or that the need,

the opportunity that exists under The Municipal Act, actually be more enforced, be more encouraged because the thousand people, they're part of the act, but there's also room for annexation which is ignored in Bill 33, which is what concerns me as well.

Mr. Briese: Yes, thank you. I just wanted to say thank you, Mr. Kleinschmit, a very well-thought-out and very well-presented presentation and it certainly—there's a couple of points in there that even with all the presentations we've heard, hadn't really been put across quite as well as you did and I really appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Kleinschmit.

Next up is number 37, Florence Eastwood. Florence Eastwood.

Ms. Eastwood, do you have a handout for the committee? Okay, our staff will help you. And you can begin.

Ms. Florence Eastwood (Private Citizen): Thank you. I'm happy to be here to give you my views, some of which you've heard before, repeatedly, but I'll say them anyhow.

I'm Florence Eastwood. I'm a lifelong, dare I say, resident of the village of Dunnottar. I'm one of the ghost-like inhabitants who was not counted in the 2011 census of permanent residents. That census, by the way, was voluntary, so its accuracy is somewhat suspect. I'm what's called a summer resident, except I live in my home in Dunnottar, from time to time, during the spring, during the summer, during the fall, during the winter. That makes this whole resident thing kind of confusing, eh?

* (21:20)

Now, Dunnottar has 696 permanent residents, although our numbers swell to about 3,000 during the summer. Of those 3,000, 1,800 are eligible voters. Now, if you subtract the 700 from the 1,800 voters, you get 1,100 voter residents who haven't been counted in to this process. We've been lost in the shuffle, as other people have mentioned. Even if one was to count those 1,100 as sort of a half a resident a piece, then our village would still have many more than the arbitrary number of a thousand residents. This single arbitrary benchmark, though, is far, far too simplistic, as has been pointed out repeatedly by others at these hearings.

But we, those 1,100s who weren't counted, we still matter. Together we all make that village. Together we the 1,100 are counted on. We the

1,100 are counted on to pay our taxes, so our municipal leaders and administration can provide for our village's needs. The needs of resort municipalities, make no mistake, are very different, in part because our populations explode between the spring and the fall. Now, these differences were acknowledged and set into provincial legislation decades ago for good reasons, and those reasons still exist today.

We the 1,100 are counted on to maintain our residences and our properties, those very residences that supposedly no one lives in permanently, at least if you go by the 2011 census. We the 1,100 are counted on to vote so our municipal leaders will hear our voice over local municipal issues.

This legislation will silence the 1,100. How can you hold a real election when the bulk of your voters aren't there during the campaign or the election?

We the 1,100 are counted on for a lot. So how do we get counted in to this process? We implore the government to count on us when the population of Dunnottar gets toted up.

Now, I prefer to believe that this issue of resort municipalities was just an oversight on the part of the drafters of this bill, and I take hope in the minister's comments of the last few days and in the hearings tonight regarding amending the bill as it relates to resort communities. But his statements help me with my problems with this bill.

But what about the others who are frustrated and frightened by this bill? What about, for example, all those good folks of Plum Coulee who came out last night, who have had economic growth threatened due to this forced amalgamation that's hanging over their head, and its impossible-impossible timeline. I think it can safely be said that this forced bill and its impossible timeline is flawed. It's just flawed.

Now, we heard from a happy mayor last night who told us how successful amalgamation works and how long it really takes, and I—do you remember what he said? It was years and years and years and years and years. And it worked. So let's just slow down, for goodness' sakes. Let's give municipalities who want to amalgamate time to work this out with their neighbours, with the help of the municipal association, whose mandate it is to help them do things like that. Then, and only then, let's have the provincial government act as a helpful facilitator of the process.

Now, I also wanted to take the opportunity to read part of the handout that I gave you regarding an editorial that Bob Campbell—you all nod your head; it's great—I love it—and show you the picture that's in the handout as well, which is on the—

Mr. Chairperson: Hold—hold on. You cannot do that.

Ms. Eastwood: Okay. Sorry; you are quite right. Sorry.

I draw your attention to a—

Mr. Chairperson: Excuse me. Excuse me. Exhibits are prohibited, okay.

Ms. Eastwood: —I draw your attention to an item in your handout, which is a—

Mr. Chairperson: Excuse me.

Ms. Eastwood: —in your handout from the Province of Manitoba's main web page. It is a picture of the poplar piers that are found in the southwest corner of Lake Manitoba shoreline—pardon me, Lake Winnipeg shoreline, which is where the village of Dunnottar is. The Village of Dunnottar pays to put those up every year out of our, you know, tax money. It's a small thing, but it's really, really culturally relevant. They're our village square, and if we're amalgamated with another municipality that, frankly, looks and goes, geez, you guys, you know, eight little piers, you know—well, what we have, we'll let you have them now, but five years down the road they're gone.

It's a big deal to us. It's a big deal to our community. Our kids, grandkids come from all over Canada, all over the world, to come back to these resort communities, like Victoria Beach and Dunnottar. They bring money with them. There is economic value to keeping these communities intact and thriving.

There's a new TV channel. It's called Cottage Life, and they're going across the country right now and they're taking—they're doing items on really special cottage communities. Well, they didn't fly over Manitoba; they went to Victoria Beach and they've been filming there.

There's good economic sense to leaving us alone, okay, as well as, you know, some of the other arguments I've made.

Anyhow, I won't take any more of your time. I thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Eastwood.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much for your presentation. Thank you for coming out this evening.

Mr. Eichler: Thank you, Mrs. Eastwood, for your presentation. Well thought out, well spoken. I did make reference, just last week, when I was talking in the House on this particular bill, in regards to the article—was written by the councillor, Bob Campbell. I totally agree with his comments; he's done a great job. So you should be very proud of your community, which you are. And we thank you for your presentation. Well done.

Mr. Graydon: I want to thank you, as well, for your presentation. It was well done, with a lot of passion. And we've heard many, many of them. I also want to thank you, as well, for—you must have been here last night and I want to thank you for the comments that you made on Plum Coulee as well. So thanks a lot.

Mr. Gerrard: Florence, thank you very much. You made some very good points, and I just hope the minister's listening.

Mr. Chairperson: No further questions. Thank you, Ms. Eastwood.

Next up is No. 38, Marjorie Birley. Marjorie Birley.

Ms. Birley, I understand that you had a written submission last night.

Ms. Marjorie Birley (Private Citizen): No, I was told when this all started to come about, by our council, that we could write and/or speak. I wrote—that we—I was told that we could do both. When I wrote, it was not last night; it was several months ago. It was late winter, early spring. At that time, I wrote in case I could not manage to be—because we didn't have much notice, I understood that I wouldn't be able to come and speak.

As the summer went on, and then I became aware that it was quite likely this would be dealt when I would be available to come, I phoned in and put my name on the list to speak. I'd be happy if you want to withdraw the letter that I wrote in the spring. It's basically the same content.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been accepted by another committee last night. I'll recognize Mr. Pedersen.

* (21:30)

Mr. Pedersen: As I understand, in our proceedings last night, when we started, her written submission

was accepted. I would ask leave of the committee to have that written submission from last night withdrawn and allow her to give an oral presentation now.

Mr. Chairperson: What is the word of the committee? *[Agreed]*

You can continue, Ms. Birley.

Ms. Birley: Okay, thank you. I appreciate that, and I know you've had a long evening. It would be easier if I just left, right? Okay.

Okay, my name is Marjorie Birley, and I'm a resident of Winnipeg and, yes, a seasonal resident and property owner at Victoria Beach—another Victoria Beach person.

Our Victoria Beach property has been in our family since 1959, and I'm sure you're aware after your two long evenings with several VB presenters that, yes, we really love our community, almost as much as our first-born children, not quite, but almost. And, in fact, our community is the lifeblood of our families. So many cottages are passed down in the family to descendants, and it is our cottages in this very unusual resort that bring our descendants back to join and keep that family web strong.

I mentioned the date of 1959 when the cottage came into our property and my father bought the lot and had the cottage built. That means that our family, living in Victoria Beach only during the summer months, has, for 54 years been dutifully paying full taxes on our property at the same rate as those that live year round in the RM of Victoria Beach.

I, too, have been very involved in the community affairs of Victoria Beach and spent many volunteering hours helping to enhance our lifestyle at this unique community. I've also been voting in elections, I and my family, in the RM of Victoria Beach for many years.

Victoria Beach was given status as a resort municipality by the Manitoba Legislature, allowing summer residents to vote in municipal elections. These seasonal residents currently make up the majority of the population of the RM of Victoria Beach. The same statute that allows Victoria Beach status as a resort municipality allows the RM to hold its municipal elections in July rather than October, facilitating access to the polls for both seasonal and year-round property owners.

Bill 33, which requires a minimum of a thousand year-round residents flies in the face of this statute.

The RM of Victoria Beach has 2,616 taxpayers, but based on a voluntary 2011 census, we have only about 374 year-round residents. Why, especially in the light of the statute granting our RM resort municipality status so seasonal people can vote, are all 2,616 paying and voting heads be—not being counted? This seems entirely undemocratic. We seasonal residents comprise about 87 per cent of the taxpayers and we've contributed for many decades to the financial viability and the governance of the RM of Victoria Beach.

Our councils are comprised of a mix of permanent and seasonal residents. Our current council has a majority of permanent residents and two seasonal. These councils, again, comprised of both permanent and seasonal residents have, over many decades, done their jobs very well and with great forethought. We have many services that other rural municipalities lack, yet our mill rate is slightly less than that of the RM of Alexander, our proposed amalgamation partner.

The RM of Victoria Beach has weekly garbage pickup, recycling, brush removal spring and fall, our own police service year round, a state-of-the-art water treatment facility, a fire department and medical rescue. We're the only municipality to have implemented the fire-smart red-zone program in partnership with the Manitoba Model Forest, and the only Manitoba municipality to have implemented a wild fire protection plan in partnership with Manitoba Conservation and the Fire Commissioner's office.

We're in the midst of an ongoing study, conducted by a national engineering firm, of our shorelines. The purpose of this study is to decide how best to reduce erosion and preserve our sandy beaches. Taxes paid by all 2,616 taxpayers, both year round and permanent cover these important services, and we wish to keep them.

We have a unique culture at Victoria Beach. I'm sure you've heard about it. By act of the Manitoba Legislature in 1933, we can control our vehicle access to our roads, and we do not allow vehicular traffic within our restricted area during July and August. Exceptions are a small taxi service and business or emergency vehicles. All ages of residents, from toddlers to the very aged, can enjoy walking or cycling on our narrow, shady lanes without threat to their person. We can enjoy walking without threat of vehicular pollution or noise, and we don't have street lights. Imagine, going for a walk

with your family at dusk or after dark without a street light. How many people get to experience that?

Commerce within our area is restricted to a grocery, a bakery, and a small unlicensed restaurant. They're owned by the municipality and leased to operators. We don't want more commerce than that. We value and strive to protect our retreat to a more simple, non-commercial time. We have large areas of green space that could potentially bring in large sums of money to a council that is not dedicated to preserving our current atmosphere and culture. Our council, again, comprised of co-operating seasonal and permanent residents, is in the process of preserving these areas through the completion of a development plan.

Amalgamation would put this decision and many others at risk of being reversed. An amalgamated council would have the current RM of Victoria Beach as a portion of one ward in a four-ward municipality. That would mean that at most Victoria Beach would have only one councillor, at most, representing our wishes on an amalgamated council of four councillors and a reeve. Even if the first few amalgamated councils agree not to change the climate at Victoria Beach, over the years, with a maximum of one out of five votes, we feel strongly that decisions would be made that would erode our culture.

The first to go would likely be our vehicle restriction. Why would anybody else love it? We love it. Even if the law forbidding vehicle traffic in the summer months remained in place, without our local police force to enforce it, it would be meaningless. I'd like to give you an aside about the vehicle restriction. I married a Saskatchewan man. I grew up in Winnipeg, grew up with my summers at Victoria Beach since I was a 6-year-old, moved to Saskatchewan to chase another \$100 a month I got at that time—it was big money. I married a Saskatchewan man, I said, you have to come back and see my parents' cottage at Victoria Beach.

Oh yeah, what's special about that? Well, we don't allow cars in. It's great. You don't allow cars in? No, we don't.

Well, who the heck would want to have a cottage where you can't have your car right there?

I said, come with me and see. It took two days and he got it. You have to experience it and it's so important to us.

Without our police force, it's highly unlikely that the RCMP in Pine Falls would have the time to send an officer to Victoria Beach, half an hour away, each time a car drives into the area illegally. The RCMP have more critical issues to deal with. Should vehicular traffic ever be allowed into the restricted area, during July and August, huge stretches of bush would need to be cleared to widen our roads and to allow for parking for all those hundreds of vehicles. Street lights would have to be installed. The peace and quiet of our resort, with only the sound of the breeze in the bushes and happy children's voices, would be a thing of the past. The issue of keeping vehicles out of our restricted area is currently well looked after by our local police without detracting from other police services. This local police force is paid for by all 2,616 taxpayers, both seasonal and year-round.

The RM of Victoria Beach is viable. We have a tax base in excess of \$360 million, the 28th highest in all of Manitoba. We don't need to amalgamate in order to remain viable. I can understand legislation allowing, or even promoting, amalgamation of municipalities that are struggling to remain viable.

Mr. Chairperson: One minute.

* (21:40)

Ms. Birley: Forced amalgamation of municipalities who neither need it nor want it doesn't make sense. The RM of Victoria Beach is viable in large part due to the taxes paid and the political contributions of the huge percentage of its taxpayers who are seasonal residents. Please allow these tax-paying, voting seasonal residents in this RM that has been given status as a resort municipality by act of the Legislature, to be counted. An amendment to Bill 33 that uses tax base rather than a count of permanent residents based on a voluntary census would be much more democratic. Should this not be possible, please adjust the minimum, such that it includes all taxpayers.

Victoria Beach has been viable for 94 years. We'll continue to be viable. I want to thank the current government for its recent announcement that it's revisiting our bill, and for the announcements tonight that there will be amendments in the works with regard to Victoria Beach and other resort municipalities. That's taken a huge weight off our shoulders. Believe me, we've all been living in fear all summer. I'm also very appreciative of the opportunity to express my views to this committee. I thank you all very much.

Mr. Lemieux: I'll just be brief. But your opening comment said, well, I'm sorry, we're—you know, taking up your time, and I'm sure we would wish that you're not here. That's not correct. It's not. I know you're saying it tongue-in-cheek, but, you know, it's been a long day, yes, but, you know, we want everyone to have their say. And it's important, as far as a Manitoban and democracy goes, that you have your say and give us suggestions and give us a sense of pride why you feel your community's unique. And that's important. So I just want to let you know that we appreciate that very much. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: I just want to say thank you very much for an excellent presentation.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Marjorie, for your presentation tonight. Your passion comes through for your community, and it's—we appreciate that, you taking the time to come and speak to us tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you, Ms. Birley. *[interjection]* You're done. Okay, thank you.

Okay, apparently, we don't have the right to withdraw the submission from last night, so this will just be added on to the submissions for today. Agree? *[Agreed]*

Next up, Robert Lawler. Robert Lawler. Robert Lawler will be taken off the list.

Next up is No. 40, David Lewis. David Lewis. Do you have a handout, sir?

Mr. David Lewis (Private Citizen): I'm here.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes. Do you have a handout?

Mr. Lewis: I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Begin.

Mr. Lewis: Thank you, members of the committee. My name's David Lewis. I live in Winnipeg, but I have 'cottage'd' in Dunnottar for 25 years, when I met my wife. I met a woman who had just bought a cottage, and I've stuck with her ever since. I got—and all of her sisters and brothers have cottages out there, and they've 'cottage'd' in that community for, oh, 50 years—the original cottage was built by Wendy's *[phonetic]* father. And I've really experienced a tremendous sense of community in Dunnottar. I'm not going to be repeating the same things that people have said over and over in respect to Victoria Beach and Dunnottar and the reasons why we're unique.

I am strongly urging the committee, though, to consider seasonal residence and taxpayers such as

myself to be included in the number to get us up over 1,000. I know in Dunnottar there's 1,800 voters. The sense of community really struck me just last week in the opposition to this bill seeking an amendment. And I'm very encouraged from what I've heard tonight from yourself, Minister Lemieux, that you are considering some amendment, and we'd be seeking an amendment so we wouldn't be subject to this bill. And this community in Dunnottar really came together. I was at a rally 10 days ago where 200 people showed up. And that thing was organized in a matter of a week.

Mr. Bjornson, I know you got a letter from me. I think you got a letter from a whole bunch of other people.

The petition, the opposition to the amalgamation was really almost—it seemed unanimous to me, and I met all kinds of families similar to my own who have this strong connection to the place and they've been there for so long. It's got those poplar piers you heard about. It's got its own garbage collection. We get sewer pump-outs as part of our taxes. We have a bylaw officer. I met the bylaw officer about 25 years ago at about 2 in the morning around a campfire, and now my kids met him just last week. I don't know if it's the same guy.

Another thing I found interesting is in the study that—I think it's—was it a Mr. Ashton from Brandon University who spoke tonight?—recognized Dunnottar in that very study as the most healthy municipality in Manitoba by one of their indices. So, really, why are we trying to undo one of the most healthy—the most healthy municipality in the province? We have four councillors. We have a mayor, Mayor Gamble; I know he spoke here last night—very well represented, and, again, the passion—last year, there was an issue about whether or not we were going to have a sewer installed in the community, and there was a referendum. And, man, the passion of the community on both sides of that issue was evidenced again last summer. And I think it took a while for the community to sort of gird its loins for this fight, because they had what I called post-traumatic sewer disorder. People just didn't want another fight.

But we're here, and I understand that lots have spoken and I'm just another one, but I urge you—again, I'm so encouraged by what I've heard about the proposed amendments. One thing I would urge you, though, is definitely continue to have summer voting. The seasonal residents—I'm usually around in

October, but most of them aren't, and you're going to disenfranchise most of the electorate if the portion of The Municipal Act that currently allows for the summer voting in Winnipeg Beach, Victoria Beach and Dunnottar is done away with, because I don't know how you're going to run an election in October for a community that's as unique as ours.

So that's it. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Lemieux: Just thank you very much. It's also much appreciated that a lot of the great comments were made before you—you made sure that you addressed other, different—other types of comments that hadn't been mentioned. So it's appreciated very much. Thank you very much for coming.

Mr. Eichler: Thank you, Mr. Lewis, for your presentation. Thanks for staying later in the evening. I know that it's important, and your group is very passionate about what you believe in. And any time people make presentations, it's incumbent upon all governments to make sure they listen and take action. We're encouraging the minister to continue to honour what he's put on the record, so we'll see here just shortly what those amendments will look like. So thank you for being here.

Mr. Gerrard: I just want to say thank you for coming and presenting so well.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Lewis.

The last presenter tonight is No. 41, Lyle Lockhart. Lyle Lockhart.

Mr. Lockhart, you can begin.

Mr. Lyle Lockhart (Private Citizen): Thank you. This presentation is the result of a meeting held in Dunnottar—or Dunnottar. Now, that is the big question tonight. I've been there for 20 years, and—so I'm—not been there long enough to have learned the right way, so whichever it is, I think you know what we are. We're sort of south end of Lake Winnipeg, south of Winnipeg Beach.

When I was a graduate student, I had a classmate who was a young man, intense young man from Japan. I think he was about 90 per cent brain, and he got a telegram one day from his father announcing that a bride had been selected and she was on flight so-and-so, and he was to meet her and marry her tout de suite. And he did that. But it didn't work out. They were as different as black and white.

* (21:50)

And I think that's a lot of the point tonight. When you force a marriage on two things that are very different, expect sparks. And I think that's what we're going to get if we force Dunnottar, or Dunnottar, into St. Andrews. The character of those municipalities is totally different. One is a beach community centred on recreation; the other is a farming community centred on agriculture and business. And they just are too different to be forced into the same municipality, the same I heard from Victoria Beach.

If we are merged into St. Andrews, we'll have one councillor out of a whole bunch. Now we have a whole bunch of our own councillors, and they've been good. We—the community has won a number of awards for its environmental leadership, particularly its new passive filtration sewage treatment system. We have the piers. And Marj Birley, one of the other speakers, is forever winning prizes for her photos of Lake Winnipeg. Well, I challenge her to come up with a good photo of our piers. They're wonderful things. Dunnottar was the founding place where the Lake Winnipeg Foundation was started. A lot of the leadership now that has shifted over to Victoria Beach, but they're going to be merged into something else and we'll get it back.

We were encouraged at the meeting last Saturday to let our MLAs know, and so the submission that was copied, and I guess you'll eventually receive copies of, is an email I sent to my MLA, Sharon Blady, late this afternoon. It's pretty brief. I won't read it. I don't think there's much of anything there that you haven't heard several times tonight, so I won't take up more of your time. I just hope that you will not be too fixated on the 1,000 number. Maybe 963 would be better, or a 1,011 would be better. Why 1,000? And, if we solve our problem by making an exemption for Victoria Beach and for Dunnottar, what happens to the other communities that don't qualify for that exemption, but still have this high seasonal input?

So you need a more general solution than just, well, we'll make an exception for those two. Maybe there's some more that need to be considered. So you need some kind of objective way, and many people have suggested that a way to do that is recognize the seasonal voters and ratepayers and then apply whatever criterion you adopt. But what you've got now, I don't think is quite the way to go, certainly not for us. My dad used to say, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. So let's not fix it. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Lockhart.

Honourable Minister.

Mr. Lemieux: Just thank you very much for your presentation and for staying with us. You're the last speaker and presenter. As you're aware, and maybe not, that this is unique situation in Canada where we allow people to come and present and have 10 minutes to speak and five minutes for questions on legislation we're bringing forward. We're proud to have such a—'shuch' a process and system in place. Yes, it makes for long nights, but, you know, we learn—all—we all learn a lot from it, and we appreciate meeting you and many of the others that have presented before you and all the very good points of view.

So, with that, I just want to say on behalf of my team, my caucus and our government, thank you so much for taking the time.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you very much, Mr. Lockhart, for your presentation, and we certainly appreciate your effort. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Just wait, Mr. Lockhart.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, Lyle, for your presentation and for all the work that you've done on the Lake Winnipeg Foundation and in other areas as well.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

That concludes the list of presenters I have before me. Are there any other persons in attendance who wish to make a presentation?

Seeing none, that concludes public presentations. We now proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of these bills.

Bill 33—The Municipal Modernization Act (Municipal Amalgamations)

Mr. Chairperson: During the consideration of a bill, the table of contents, preamble and the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Also, if there is an agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose. Is that agreed?

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*] Thank you.

We will now proceed to clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 33 have an opening statement?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): The only—thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you. I'll just be very brief by just saying thank you to all the presenters. We've heard quite a few people present with regard to the benefits and some of the challenge that amalgamations may cause and have. We appreciate that. We appreciate the presentations. It is our democratic system and our process in Manitoba to allow people to have 10 minutes for each individual to speak to a—to the bill, and we as a government appreciate that very much. We've heard some great suggestions. And, as we proceed through the bill, you'll hear amendments that we're going to propose, and we feel that this is going to make this bill a lot better.

So, with that, I just want to say thank you to all the presenters, and certainly everyone on the committee that were here yesterday and today to hear them. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition—*[interjection]*

The committee—we have a person who's just been come in, and we're asking for leave for this person. *[Agreed]*

Okay, sir. We need the name.

Your name, sir?

Mr. Robert Lawler (Private Citizen): My name is Robert Lawler, and I'm sorry I'm late. I was—I have a class of—that I teach 'til 9:30, and I let them out 10 minutes early and got here as quickly as I can. I'm sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Begin.

Mr. Lawler: Okay, my name is Robert Lawler. *[interjection]* Lawler, L-a-w-l-e-r. And I won't take up much of your time. Just a couple of points.

I've been going to Victoria Beach for over 60 years. My grandfather was a cottage owner. My parents were cottage owners. I am—my wife and I are cottage owners. Three of my kids share a cottage. My wife and I now spend over six months of the year at the beach. So we have a lot invested in Victoria Beach.

And so as far as Bill 33 is concerned, there's just two points I'd like to raise. One is I just heard you say that this is a democracy. We have a party here that actually uses the democratic term in their name, and democracy is supposed to give the people some say in how they are governed. And, as far as Victoria Beach is concerned, the vast majority of people have no interest at all in the amalgamation. So I have a problem with this idea of democracy and a democratic government.

The other thing I have a problem with is we've just gone through this antibullying bill. To me, bullying is sort of someone in power imposing themselves on someone who can't do anything about it, and, to me, Bill 33 is certainly—has that side to it. It's being imposed upon us and it doesn't seem that there can be anything we can do about it.

So that's really all I have to say. Thank you for letting me come and speak at such a late time. Thank you.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much. We do appreciate it, and we appreciate you made the effort to get here, and I'm sure your students probably appreciated it too, maybe. But, with that, I just want to say thanks. Thank you very much for coming.

Mr. Chairperson: Just wait, Mr. Lawler.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Again, also thank you for making the effort to come. It's important that you be able to present here. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I just say thank you as well.

Mr. Chairperson: We will now go back to—does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Pedersen: I understand we're going to see some amendments. I hope that the minister takes to heart some of the real concerns that many municipalities expressed, and, not only in this committee, but he's heard them across the province over the last 10 months, and I hope that his amendments begin to address some of those concerns. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass.

Shall clause 3 pass? Clause 3 is accordingly—

Some Honourable Members: No.

An Honourable Member: No, we have an amendment.

Mr. Chairperson: I'd like to recognize the honourable minister.

* (22:00)

Mr. Lemieux: We have an amendment to put forward and the current bill really provides the minister that may extend the deadline for submitting amalgamations past that December 1st, 2013. This would enable amalgamations to be in effect no later than January 1st, 2019. This bill also recognizes that there are circumstances where an amalgamation has significant 'compless'—complexities and the deadline for submitting an amalgamation plan can't be met. And the proposed amendment is really intended to provide greater clarity about when extensions will be considered. And I know that, for example, in particular, the MLA for the Interlake, Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, has really worked hard to take a look at the different scenarios and situations that may arise with regard to amalgamations that may, indeed, impact on the ability of a municipality not to be able to address amalgamations in a 'patern'—particular timeline.

Okay, I move

THAT Clause 3(5) of the Bill be replaced with the following:

Extension of deadline for plan

3(5) The minister may, by written order, extend the deadline under subsection (4) in respect of a municipality if he or she is satisfied of the following:

(a) the municipality's amalgamation presents significant complexities which cannot be adequately considered and addressed by the deadline;

(b) the municipality's ability to participate in preparing an amalgamation plan has been negatively affected as a result of a recent natural or other disaster, such as flooding.

An extension may be made subject to the terms and conditions specified by the minister.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable Mr. Lemieux

THAT Clause 3(5) of the Bill be replaced with—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Chairperson: Dispense.

Mr. Pedersen: Just a question, then. An extension may be made subject to the terms and conditions

specified by the minister. Are these going to be in regulations, what the terms or conditions, or what exactly is meant by terms and conditions? Is this—like, if I could have some clarity on what terms and conditions specified by the minister means?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, thank you. Just wanting to address this particular question, the—when we're talking about a significant complexity, it could be a variety of reasons why amalgamation may be complex for a particular municipality. And so the extension is really to be made, subject to terms and conditions really relevant to those complexities.

What I'm saying is that there are different issues and they come up, and what I feel and what the government feels is that this amendment is really to address some of the situations that municipalities have raised, quite frankly, over the last nine months, eight months, that I've been consulting with them. And they're saying that they really feel that an extension of a deadline for the plan really may be necessary. And we mentioned, for example, it could be a recent natural or other disaster such as flooding, specifically of flooding, and we've heard this often raised to me in many of the meetings I've gone around the province. And all I'm saying is, and the legislation is saying, is that that extension of a deadline for the plan, there may be significant complexities related to it. And then we have to work through it with those municipalities or municipality to ensure that this extension is really there for that purpose. So we're really confident that this addresses the ask and the need and the request from municipalities about a possible extension to the deadline for a plan.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): I would like to just make a few brief remarks in regard to this amendment. First of all, I want to thank Minister Lemieux for bringing it forward in response to some lobbying on my part in my endeavours to represent the people that I was elected to represent in the Interlake. Lake Manitoba, as we all know, experienced a catastrophic flood, the effects of which are still being felt in certain areas of our province. I represent roughly—I was looking at the map, here, it looks like almost two-thirds of the shoreline of Lake Manitoba. Of the eight municipalities that I represent in my constituency, six of them have been impacted by this flow—flood. Of the nine First Nations that I represent, again, six of them have been impacted by this flood as well as people in Northern Affairs communities of Homebrook and Peonan

Point, as well. So a large percentage of the people that I represent were affected and are still being affected by this flood. This was the flood of the millennium. And it is without a doubt a multi-year event that we're still experiencing.

And I look to the various different groups, for example, cottagers right up the shore of Lake Manitoba from St. Laurent, all the way up to the Gypsumville area and into that Eddystone area, down to Ebb and Flow. A number of people impacted, as I said, First Nations—there are still close to 2,000 people who are evacuated from their homes as a result of this flood. This is a monumental challenge for both levels of government, national and provincial, as well as municipal, to all work together to see that these people are repatriated. And until such time that they are, and their recovery is complete, then this flood is not over in my mind.

As well, ranching communities, ranching families—again, up and down the lake land has been impacted. And it will take some time for it to recover. I look to the RM of Siglunes as a good case in point. And there's a lot of infrastructure work that is required, as this government well knows, given that, you know, we've made the difficult decision of raising the PST to 8 per cent to fund infrastructure improvements. A lot of the dikes that were put up during the flood were put up under emergency measures and they were required—it was required to remove these dikes in order to qualify for full payment under the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements with the federal government. But a lot of those dikes should be rebuilt following due process, and I think that's something that our government is aware of and is committed to, and this has to be facilitated. This is a lot of work. This is not easy. This is complicated. It's expensive. There are property issues and so forth. So we have to see that that is done. Cottaging communities in the RM of Coldwell, for instance, Lundar Beach, Sugar Point, were in the process of doing what I just described.

* (22:10)

So, you know, I look to the one municipality that I represent that is facing amalgamation, which is the RM of Eriksdale, and it does have significant shoreline on Lake Manitoba, and the neighbours that it could conceivably amalgamate with, Coldwell being one of them, as I just said, profoundly impacted by the flood, and to the north, Grahamdale, potentially, and Siglunes, as well. These are all municipalities; even though they're above the

threshold of a thousand, you know, those are the potential partners, and those partners are in the midst of rebuilding. And, you know, we have a written submission from Reeve Arne Lindell from the RM of Eriksdale articulating precisely that, and I might also recognize that we had a presenter here today, Tom Teichroeb, from the west side of Lake Manitoba, from the RM of Lakeview, I believe it was, who expressed similar sentiments that they were also struggling to recover from this event.

So, in conclusion, Mr. Chair, again, I thank the minister for listening in this regard, and I hope that all members of the community will vote in support of this amendment. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): The way the amendment is worded, the term "recent natural or other disaster," such as flooding, as we know the member for Interlake was referring to the flood of 2011. This past summer we've seen a number of municipalities in the western part of the province that's been impacted by flooding. Would the minister define recent for us, that he's going to be using in determination of what municipalities can expect for this determination to be made, and will it be go—will it go past 2011, as indicated by the terms of reference from the member from Interlake?

Mr. Lemieux: The key word in the language in the amendment is "has been negatively affected." There's no year to say, year 2011 or 2013 or whatever; it just says, you have to be negatively affected by this—result of a natural disaster, and so if people are still going through this natural disaster, such as flooding, for example, and they're still being impacted by it and they're being negatively affected by it and it has some ramifications with regard to submitting a plan, for example. I mean that's the key. I mean, you know, we've talked about amalgamation for a while now. It's not—it hasn't just started today, so many, many municipalities are already—have their plans in the works, and there are no natural disasters that have negatively impacted them and they are putting their plans together with their neighbours.

But, you know, when two or three municipalities come together, that just in itself can create some complexities that could result in an extension. So what I'm putting forward here is to address—all the meetings I've attended with rural municipal leaders to say that: You know, please listen to us. Not only hear us, but listen to us when we're saying there could be circumstances where we need some extra time. And examples that have been raised to me

specifically are, you know, if people are hit with a tornado or natural disasters prior to the deadline, for example, of December the 1st, whether—doesn't matter the date, but if they're still being negatively impacted or something has happened to really detract them in many ways away from putting their plan together.

I mean, we're trying to be open and flexible to municipalities, and this is something that we've heard from many municipalities. So that's what this—the intent of this is to try to address that and specifically flooding, as the MLA for the Interlake has pointed out, I mean, they—that was a catastrophic flood and some are still fighting their way through that and trying to bounce back, and so it's something that, certainly, whatever is put forward by a municipality asking for an extension for their plan, this will have to be looked at very, very closely and not in a frivolous way as to determine, do they really need an extension. I think that's the key; that's even from AMM. The president has even said that, that, you know, if you extend something, you allow someone the extension, it's not just a blank cheque, it's a—there's really an onus to show how exactly has this stopped you from working with your neighbours to put together a plan because it hasn't just—it's not just starting today. And I thank you for the question, though. It's important.

Mr. Eichler: Just one more clarification. Just two weeks ago, I asked questions in the House in regards to the flood of 2009. Will this be a consideration as well?

Mr. Lemieux: Again, it's the municipal—we haven't asked municipalities just to start doing their plan today. And, you know, whatever the ramifications, I mean, have the ramifications to these municipalities, have they been 'negatively'—negatively affected in a way that they are not able to work with their neighbours to put together an amalgamation plan and try to work with each other. I mean, we just announced in our Throne Speech about amalgamations and municipal governments coming together. And so, again, we're trying to be as flexible as possible, but it may be a stretch to go back to 2009. But there—as you noticed, there are no dates here saying a tornado of, you know, 2010 or whatever, but it's—there is an onus, though, on those local governments to show how are you negatively affected and how has this negatively affected you in a way that you can't put together and you're not working—not able to work with your neighbours because it's so catastrophic that you can't work with

your neighbours. Your—all your energies have been dedicated to something that has negatively affected you so much that over the past—the nine months or so, you have not been able to work with your neighbours, consult with your neighbours and put a plan together.

That—but we're trying to be flexible because we've heard from the municipalities, saying, can you allow us the flexibility, through legislation. And that's really why the amendment's here today.

Mr. Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Amendment—pass.

Clause 3 as amended—pass; clauses 4 and 6—pass; clauses 7 and 8—pass.

Shall clauses 9 and 10 pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you.

I have an amendment at this time. I'll just wait until the document is passed out—passed around. Sorry.

I have an amendment for the committee, and I'll read the amendment and then I'll make a couple of comments.

I move

THAT Clause 9 of the Bill be replaced with the following:

Exclusion – non-contiguous municipalities

9(1) A municipality that is surrounded by land that is not part of an area of any municipality that is not subject to this Act.

Exclusion – resort communities

9(2) A municipality that is subject to subsection 86(3) of *The Municipal Act* is not subject to this Act.

Just wanting to make a 'coup'—sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by Minister Lemieux, Honourable Mr. Lemieux—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Chairperson: Dispense? Dispense.

The amendment is in order. The floor's open for questions.

* (22:20)

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, just to make a few comments about this amendment. Municipalities with fewer than a thousand residents that are not contiguous to any other municipality, for example, northern communities and northern municipalities such as Churchill or Leaf Rapids, are already excluded from the requirements under this bill. However, this amendment will now also exclude the resort municipalities designated in The Municipal Act, including Victoria Beach, Dunnottar. And I have to mention that the MLA for Selkirk, Greg Dewar, and also the MLA for Gimli, Peter Bjornson, have been a—very active—working with their constituents and working in their particular municipalities and talking to local governments in their area about taking a look at how you can be flexible to address the uniqueness of these communities who are already designated in a special way in The Municipal Act.

The amendment recognizes the uniqueness of these designated resort municipalities. Thank you.

Mr. Eichler: We heard presentations from other resort communities. Could the minister define resort communities for us?

Mr. Lemieux: What I can define is the fact that the municipalities that are being excluded, the resort municipalities designated in The Municipal Act, currently have that designation. I believe one of the presenters tonight said that it's 80 years ago today that they were allowed to look at The Highway Traffic Act to designate traffic not going through their communities. It shows you that the special designation within The Municipal Act of these particular communities—like Victoria Beach and Dunnottar and, indeed, Winnipeg Beach as well.

And so, when looking at resort communities, you take a look at the tax base of—and I have to thank, quite frankly, the MLA for River Heights. When I asked members opposite for amendments to take a look at unique situations, quite frankly, the MLA for River Heights raised some issues, taking a look at a tax base, not just population, which I really appreciated very much; caused me to take a second look and also talk to my MLAs who represent this area. We took a look at these particular communities, and you take a look, for example at Victoria Beach. They have an excess, or close to 5,000 people, that—as a population, and they also have a tax base that's over the \$130-million tax base that the Brandon—or the development institute in Brandon addressed through their study. And they took a look at that.

So, in my humble opinion, this is showing a great deal of flexibility, not only listening to the MLA for River Heights and some great suggestions he had, but also, quite frankly, to the MLA for Selkirk and the MLA for Gimli for working closely with these municipal governments, local governments, to come forward to raise this issue to show that we are listening, we hear them and we're being flexible.

So, to answer directly, these are already local governments that are recognized in The Municipal Act right now for the uniqueness. And that's partially why this amendment is being put forward.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Unfortunately, I'm not sure what subsection 83(3) is. Can the minister explain that to me?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, I don't have—I certainly don't have that section—it's 86(3)—at my fingertips. I can ask staff to look for it and—but it really recognizes Dunnottar, it recognizes Victoria Beach, it recognizes Winnipeg Beach as special, unique entities in The Municipal Act, going back many, many, many years.

And so, to quote out of The Municipal Act, it's—for example, the general election in Dunnottar, Victoria Beach and Winnipeg Beach, section 86(3) says, despite section (1)—it says—the following municipalities must hold a general election on the fourth day of July in the year 2006 and each fourth year after that: the Village of Dunnottar, the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach, and the Town of Winnipeg Beach.

So it makes reference to their summer elections. So, really, what we're talking about here is not just designating them and exempting them as communities from amalgamation and this process, but also we are saying that they will again retain their ability to have their elections in the summer so they can capture as much vote as they want.

And I'm sure members opposite would agree—you want as many people voting as possible to choose our elected representatives.

And taking a look at Victoria Beach, for example, I can tell you, the turnout—it's about roughly 76 per cent, or approximately. I stand to be corrected, but, you know, 76 per cent turnout of those people that are non-residents vote in their elections. It's a huge interest shown by people who are non-residents, and that's truly important and that's what this particular amendment is trying to address.

It's to ensure that you've got good participation in this resort community and it recognizes their uniqueness.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Question is—before the committee is as follows:

Amendment—pass; clause 9 as amended—pass; clause 10—pass; clause 11—pass.

Shall clause 12 pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, the honourable minister will read it out.

Mr. Lemieux: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

I move

THAT Clause 12 of the Bill is amended by striking out Clauses 12(3) and (4).

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable minister

THAT—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, dispense. The amendment is in order. The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Lemieux: Really, what this amendment is doing is requiring—required to keep July elections for the resort municipalities designated in The Municipal Act, including Victoria Beach, Dunnottar and Winnipeg Beach, which I commented on just earlier about the uniqueness of these communities. And the amendment will also keep the campaign finance period for candidates running for election in resort municipalities. The campaign period is aligned with the July municipal elections; it really is going back or going to what all those municipalities have currently known.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Pedersen: So, just for clarification, then, you're striking out 12(3) and 12(4) because it relates to those beach community elections and this takes out that—it allows that exemption to come in. Is that—am I correct in that?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes. It's putting it back. If we were to go ahead with this, it would mean that they would be having elections in the fall, like all other municipalities. All it is, is striking it out to go back to their current status quo that they currently have. And that's what striking out these sections do and, in fact, when we get to section 14, it'll be the—we will not accept that as well, but—

Mr. Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: Amendment—pass; clause 12 as amended—pass; clause 13—pass.

Shall clause 14 through 16 pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall clause 14 pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: The clause is accordingly defeated.

Mr. Pedersen: Just a question, as—what happened there?

* (22:30)

Mr. Lemieux: What it is is that this clause is really redundant, because what we did previously is we moved that—we moved this document to the status quo of the elections remaining in July, and this section really is—well, redundant is the word that comes to mind. You don't need it, because what we're doing, the section 14, is section 14 is not needed, because it addresses the, you know, the election in the fall, which we're not going ahead with. The amendments are allowing Dunnottar, Victoria Beach and Winnipeg Beach to retain their—to have their elections in the summertime, to—*[interjection]* Yes, 14 is really being pulled out. It's—by defeating it.

Mr. Chairperson: Clauses 15 and 16—pass; table of contents—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill as amended be reported.

The hour being 10:32, what is the wish of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Another hour?

An Honourable Member: No, no. Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, the committee rises.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 10:32 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

My name is Ken Capelle and my wife (Shelley Saunders) and I have owned a cottage at 461 Sunset Blvd, Victoria Beach since 1988. In addition, my wife's grandfather built one of the first cottages at Victoria Beach in 1919 which has been in her family until 2 years ago when her mother and father sold it.

Someone recently remarked that "common sense" is not so common anymore. Bill 33 certainly exemplifies that statement. Specifically Bill 33 shows a complete lack of common sense on the part of Ron Lemieux and his provincial government. 1000 permanent residents is the yardstick to determine whether municipalities must amalgamate. This benchmark is irrational, without merit and indefensible. Specifically it does not take into account whether the municipality has a large Summer resident base. Further it doesn't address whether the municipality is financially self sufficient. Finally it doesn't look at when the municipality was established and the success of the municipality over that timeframe. The RM of Victoria Beach was incorporated in 1919. Although it has less than 1000 permanent residents, the population swells to 16,000 residents in the Summer. 87% of the residents are Summer residents. Victoria Beach is financially self sufficient and is not a financial burden on the Province of Manitoba or any other municipality.

Victoria Beach is very unique! Car restrictions prevent cars from driving in the restricted cottage area in the Summer time due to the narrow winding roads. You walk, bike or take a taxi in. Victoria Beach residents pay high property taxes in order to receive a high level of services. We have our own police department which patrols our small community. We have a fire department and first responders. In the Summer, we have door to door garbage pickup in the restricted area. The green (meeting) area is home to a store, bakery and restaurant which are owned by the municipality but leased out to proprietors who run these businesses

throughout the Summer. In the green area we also have 6 tennis courts and a playground. Whose decision is it; to have a choice to live in a unique pristine community and pay high taxes in order to have a high level of service? Mr Lemieux believes that it is the provincial government's decision. Democracy would indicate that it is the people's decision.

We just received our 2013 RM Victoria Beach tax statement. Our municipal taxes are \$2976.16 and my Lord Selkirk school division taxes are \$4141.49. As non permanent residents Mr Lemieux doesn't think that we count. On the basis of the taxes we pay especially to Lord Selkirk school division; Mr Lemieux – here is a wake up call – we damn well do count! You can thank Summer residents like us who pay a large portion of the school taxes to support education in the Lord Selkirk school division which means that your government doesn't have to.

You want us to amalgamate with the RM of Alexander. What would happen to us if that happened? First of all we would have a minor voice on council (1 councillor out of 4) and likely no reeve. Essentially we lose our voice and lose control of our municipality. RCMP patrols RM Alexander whereas the VB police force patrols the RMVB. There can only be one police force in a municipality and so we would likely lose our police force and be patrolled by the RCMP. Due to the limited resources of the RCMP, our community would receive a significant erosion of police service. One of the major roles of our police force is to enforce the Summer car restrictions. Without that enforcement residents would be more likely to drive in the restricted area in the Summer which would lead to accidents and an unsafe situation for children and adults walking, biking and playing in the avenues. What happens if the new municipality ends our door to door garbage pickup? Garbage could end up littered around the beach. We could lose our fire department and first responders. If the new municipality doesn't want to maintain the municipality owned store, bakery and restaurant and the associated work involved in hiring Summer proprietors, these services could also disappear.

The bottom line of amalgamation is that our taxes would go down but so would our services. However the residents of Victoria Beach chose to buy here because of the unique pristine community and the high level of services in spite of the high taxes. Mr Lemieux and his government are wrong to dictate the type of community that we live in.

I am extremely upset at Mr Lemieux's recent statements concerning forced amalgamation. Specifically you said, "There are no exceptions. There are none. Zero. Nada. Squat. Nothing." How could you state that there would be no exceptions when you hadn't listened to the people's presentations at these committee meetings? Exceptions to rules require the use of common sense – something that as previously mentioned seems to be lacking by yourself and your government. Have you ever been to Victoria Beach in the Summer during vehicle restrictions to get an understanding and appreciation of our unique community?

I understand that our provincial government is against bullying and in fact is funding anti bullying programs. However it doesn't seem that Mr Lemieux is aware of this as evidenced by his recent statement to municipalities. The June 4th edition of the Winnipeg Free Press states, "Instead Lemieux said hold-out communities should stop behaving like insolent children."

Mr Lemieux, this statement is derogatory, demeaning, unprofessional and reeks of bullying! It seems to me that you're the biggest bully in the province and the one in most need of anti bullying training. With respect to bullying I find it ironic that on one hand our provincial government condemns bullying and on the other it acts as a bully. Mr. Lemieux and his government need to not only talk the talk but they need to walk the walk. Put bill 33 in the garbage can where it belongs and let the people decide what type of community they want to live in.

* * *

Dear Sirs/Madams

I am writing this letter to oppose the forced amalgamation of the R.M. of Shellmouth/Boulton as laid out by Bill 33 and ask that the R.M. be granted an exemption for the following reasons:

- 1) Population - The criteria used was 1,000 permanent residents, as per census Shellmouth/Boulton has a population of 930 residents. This does not take into account the five Resort Developments on Lake of the Prairies and the development at Aesessippi Ski Hill. The seasonal population using their residences through out the winter and summer far exceeds the criteria of 1,000 as people are out using their residences for vacations, recreation & R&R, etc.year around.
- 2) Amalgamations do not come cheap and the savings will be hard to find as it will end up in bureaucratic inefficiency with more administration than is now presently in place, new R.M. offices etc. Reducing the number of Councilors and Reeves only taxes the councilors and Reeve left with more work and having to spend more time looking after a bigger area. This is not the only job most of these people have as most either farm or have jobs.
- 3) As the R.M.'s increase in size the local voice is diluted and becomes less important. Under the present system concerns are easily addressed and actions taken.
- 4) Higher Taxes - The R.M. of Shellmouth/Boulton has been run efficiently maintaining and doing future planning for the R.M. at a reasonable mill rate, amalgamating with any other R.M. will only increase the tax burden on the residence of Shellmouth/Boulton as no other R.M. in the area is in the same financial shape.

Thank you for time and I again ask that you reconsider the amalgamation of the R.M. of Shellmouth/Boulton and grant an exemption.

Sincerely,

Al & Susan Kotzer

* * *

To the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee:

RE: Bill 33 – the Municipal Modernization Act

As one of the 98 rural municipalities that is affected by this bill, the Rural Municipality of Silver Creek and its ratepayers feel that Bill 33 should be reconsidered.

The Council is not against amalgamation when requested by its ratepayers but the Rural Municipality of Silver Creek is intensely opposed to forced amalgamation by the Provincial Government with no solid reasoning as to why this needs to be done. Rural Municipal councils are an active part of their communities and like elected officials everywhere, the amount of pay rarely rewards the dedicated. With the requirement of a much larger population, municipalities are being forced into amalgamations that may or may not serve the best interests of the ratepayers. But with the larger area an elected official must represent, standing councils are

seeing a withdrawal of willingness to serve these massive land bases. In a level of government where an elected official has consistent contact with the ratepayer, a larger base is not a plus. Most elected officials in Rural Municipalities do have a 'hands on' approach and may be involved more than required on certain cases, but that is what makes the Rural Councils so effective – when a ratepayer contacts them, the buck doesn't get passed...the job gets done. By making the elected official position more policy related, certain members of the public may not feel they have enough time or background to be an effective member of council. Instead of a varied council with a good quality of representation for all ratepayers, councils may see a shift to one demographic portion only.

Contrary to Minister Lemieux's statement in November that amalgamations would also receive economies of scale savings, the preparation and process of amalgamation is hardly inexpensive. With mounting costs of multiple meetings, official information packages, change over of road signs & identity signs, corporate seals, purchasing of different accounting systems, consultations with lawyers, government officials and accountants and other items that have yet to be addressed, Councils cannot see the cost savings and nor can they explain them to the ratepayer.

Many Rural Municipalities have recently celebrated centennials or 125th anniversaries – how sad that now that Rural Municipality may not exist. The RM of Silver Creek stands on that cusp – with no town called Silver Creek, in the amalgamation process, the proud name will be delegated to the small creek that it was named after and shown nowhere else. In an area that has supported itself through feast and famine, war and peace time, booms and busts – the ultimate indignity of being forced to disappear is a hard and bitter pill to swallow.

The Rural Municipalities understand that it may be difficult for people living farther away to be concerned with the amalgamation process but it falls to this – in a democratic world, this is being forced on a population of people strongly opposed to this without meaningful consultation or preplanning. If it can happen to a level of government, what is to say that the next thing that may “Be for the Greater Good” might not be something equally offensive to people living in urban centres? Rural Municipalities understand the ability to adapt – that is why our Rural Municipality has opted to partner with others in the region to provide services. This ability to

partner allows the Rural Municipality to provide its ratepayers with cost effective and needed services that the ratepayers ask for. Ratepayers aren't forced to pay for projects that have little benefit for them or accept large debt payments for these items. Aggressive councils are often needed to move a community forward but common sense is what keeps the community healthy. With an elected council with a much larger scale of area to represent, we may be facing the same type of 'stalemates' that plague large governments – which help no one and waste huge amounts of money.

If there is a justifiable reason or reasons to aim Rural Municipalities this way, why not approach these municipalities? Most elected officials are concerned about the best for the ratepayer and could have reviewed the information to make the appropriate choice for their own municipality. By forcing this process on municipalities, the Provincial government has chosen to disregard common courtesy to another government level and bully its agenda forward. We hope that this doesn't set precedent for governments with majority – in that case, we may be seeing the amalgamation of Manitoba and Saskatchewan as Manitoba's population isn't really large enough to support the Provincial Government's level of spending and policy.

For the Rural Municipality of Silver Creek,
Councilor Barry Wowk

* * *

Dear Standing Committee,

We are writing to submit our opposition of Bill 33 – Amalgamation of "smaller" communities with larger communities. We have owned our summer cottage in Pomenah for 6 wonderful years. We pay our property taxes and our school taxes on time, we vote when elections have been called, we maintain our property with pride, we participate with community events, and we boast about how lucky we are. So we take great offense that we "do not count". We strongly believe that anyone who owns a property, pays their taxes, and is on the community voters list should count as part of the population! With that said, the Village of Dunnottar has well over the population of 1,000 needed to avoid amalgamation. Bill 33 needs to be revised to reflect true residential and recreational populations. Because we do count!! That's called taxation with representation.

Sincerely,

Irene and Blair Waldvogel
Seasonal Residents

* * *

Richard Funk, Reeve

Tracey Winthrop-Meyers, CAO

Purpose:

Written committee submission opposing forced amalgamations Bill 33 - The Municipal Amalgamations Act

Introduction:

The Rural Municipality of Lansdowne, located in central Manitoba is one of many Rural Municipalities affected by the proposed Bill 33.

Each municipality has unique population, economic and demographic features which create a wide array of operational needs. We support those municipalities who have identified benefits in amalgamating, but find little benefit for our municipality and ratepayers.

Concerns:

Amalgamation discussions and analysis raise these concerns:

- How current assessment values and mill rate adjustments will positively impact affected rate payers tax levies;
- How reduced council representation positively affects our ratepayers;
- No foreseeable reduction in administration, public works or council-related costs;
- Increased costs incurred to manage, administer and coordinate maintenance and development activities within multiple townships ranging in size from 1,300 to 2,600 kilometers pending the amalgamating partner;
- Loss of support to local volunteer, community and fundraising organizations and rural job loss;

Conclusion:

Amalgamation decisions have financial and intrinsic impacts on the citizenry. Citizenry should have opportunity to make an informed decision via a referendum which would be logically conducted in conjunction with the 2014 Municipal Election. Councils may then contemplate an amalgamation decision and as applicable, appropriate amalgamation partners.

Recommendation:

Council recommends that the province amend The Municipal Act to reduce the proposed minimum population requirement.

* * *

Dear Members of the Standing Committee:

I am heartened to learn that the government is considering an amendment to Bill 33 to recognize summer residents as citizens. I am a summer resident and a taxpayer in the Village of Dunnottar. We provide the bulk of the tax base in the community, and the majority of the democratic vote.

To deny this reality demonstrates a profound lack of understanding of the nature of this community. Summer residents need to be counted.

Together, year-round and summer residents constitute a socially engaged community with a shared and deep commitment to its welfare. The VOD has many issues particular to its unique status as a summer lakeside community. Voters are currently well represented by a number of councillors who understand the history and dynamics of the region. A drop to one councillor in an amalgamated larger municipality would constitute a profound reduction in the effectiveness of representation and a concomitant reduction in service.

The Village of Dunnottar was recognized by the Brandon University Rural Development study as the healthiest municipality in Manitoba. I implore this government to respect the Village of Dunnottar's much proven ability to govern itself.

Sincerely,

Laurel Howard

* * *

Dear Sir/Madame:

Re: Bill 33 - The Municipal Modernization Act (Forced Amalgamations)

As a ratepayer in the Rural Municipality of Blanshard and a ratepayer in the Province of Manitoba, please be advised that I am very opposed to the Province of Manitoba forcing amalgamation on small municipalities with populations under one thousand people in time for the 2014 municipal elections. The Premier of Manitoba has indicated that amalgamations into larger units will help promote economic development in rural areas,

how will this occur? Amalgamations between municipalities, if appropriate, should be driven by Council members or the ratepayers in the respective municipalities not dictated by the Province of Manitoba. Some concerns have been raised in regards to the time restrictions that the Premier referred to in his speech as well as the lack of resources that are available to municipalities in regard to amalgamation. Many items should be considered when Councils consider amalgamation and the short time frame to have 92 municipalities amalgamate by the 2014 election year is unrealistic. If ratepayers believe that municipalities are not being economically responsible, they will let Council members know during their next regular election. Democracy will only prevail if the electors have a say. The Province has not provided any concrete proof indicating why amalgamations are beneficial to all municipalities with populations under 1000 people. Should not assessment of municipalities be taken into consideration? Municipalities are already working together in planning districts, conservation districts, vet boards, recreation boards, etc. without amalgamating municipalities and losing our "grass roots" representation.

The Rural Municipality of Blanshard incorporated in 1884 and celebrated their 125th in 2009. The population of our rural municipality has been declining but the Council of the R. M. of Blanshard has been pro-active in trying to keep our small communities growing. The Rural Municipality of Blanshard's assessment for 2013 is \$54,313,710. and the population was 526 in the last census. The Rural Municipality of Blanshard includes the Village of Oak River and the hamlet of Cardale and I have been the Chief Administrative Officer of the Rural Municipality of Blanshard since 1986. I was disappointed when the Premier announced that amalgamation of smaller municipalities would have to be completed by the 2014 election year. A lot of work has been done by Council, municipal staff, and community members to maintain and grow our communities and forced amalgamation with neighbouring municipalities will not be beneficial for our communities at this time. The R.M. of Blanshard has a housing shortage so a new residential subdivision was completed this summer to bring new people and new homes into our community. In February of this year, a daycare facility was opened up in our school to keep the school open and to provide a need for child care services; a new credit union opened up in November 2012 in Oak River;

both communities have rinks that are run by community volunteers.

A new municipal office was built in 2001 and serves our community well. Forced amalgamation could kill our small communities. Forced amalgamation could mean we lose our municipal office; our post office; lose local businesses which in turn lose jobs and more people in our rural communities. How will this improve opportunities for rural economic development? Ratepayers in the rural municipality of Blanshard have expressed opposition to forced amalgamation and if and when it is deemed feasible, it should be done because it is a win/win situation for everyone involved. Ratepayers should have a voice in the decision making as they will be the one paying the bill. The government has taken this right away from the ratepayers. Forcing smaller municipalities to amalgamate in the short time frame allowed is unreasonable!

I would like to strongly urge the Province of Manitoba to not force smaller municipalities to amalgamate but continue to encourage municipalities that do not have an adequate tax base to look at options that may be available to the individual municipalities. Adequate resources should be given to these municipalities to assist them in this endeavor.

Please reconsider the province's position in this matter. Municipalities should not be forced to amalgamate by the Province of Manitoba. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Diane Kuculym, C.M.M.A.
C.A.O.

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We the R.M. of Strathclair would like to formally object to the passing of Bill 33, the Municipal Modernization Act. Council and ratepayers have grave concerns on your recent announcement of amalgamation for municipalities with population of less than 1000.

The Province of Manitoba has forced many amalgamations in the past years including the school divisions, and health districts. We have spoken to many of these groups and they make it very clear that there have not been cost savings and in fact many are experiencing higher costs or being forced to reduce services due to amalgamation.

We do not see the benefits to our community due to amalgamation. As a community of 744 during the last census, we are strongly opposed to forced amalgamation. We have recently developed a new residential subdivision that has attracted several new families to our municipality. We have created a commercial sub-division that is expanding. We work tirelessly in promoting our community.

The government has cited numerous reasons such as PSAB requirements, budgets not balancing, audits not being completed, and accessibility to grants as some of your reasons for amalgamation. The blame for these problems should be that of the province and not that of our small municipalities. Numerous large municipalities have uncompleted audits. The province did not do their part in addressing the PSAB changes and training required to provide CAOs, financial officers and auditor's better training to complete these audits.

Grants were brought up as reason small communities should amalgamate. An example I would like to give is the community places grant that we have benefited from as well as the surrounding communities. Should you force amalgamation upon us only one of our communities can benefit from this grant as a municipality may only apply once every 18 months. This grant alone offers up to \$50,000 to a municipality. This is a huge missed opportunity if we amalgamate and this is only one example.

Our community does whatever it takes to make sure the tax dollars of our residents are used wisely and in doing so do whatever it takes to save costs. The issue here should not be amalgamation but why our provincial government is not helping communities with infrastructure and leaving the cost to all municipalities small or large.

We feel the negative aspects of amalgamation have not been considered and they need to be as this will be a monumental change to our Province of Manitoba. The potential loss of local identity, the loss of community spirit, volunteerism, and that small town feeling will be gone. Our residents choose to live in a small community. They want that personalization. With amalgamation they will feel the loss of representation.

This is not a democratic way to run our province.

Our residents have spoken to us regarding this amalgamation and are very concerned that the R.M. of Strathclair will not be in existence.

This Municipality was incorporated 1884; we have been here for 129 years and want to remain as a municipality. We do not want to see our provincial government take away our identity.

Amalgamations are time and resource consuming, there are significant costs that occur can be to all communities and provincial government's involved such as town planning schemes and human resource management requirements.

We do not feel amalgamation is the best thing for our municipality. This should be our choice, our resident's choice, and not forced on us. We haven't heard one good reason to consider amalgamation and we have not had enough time to discuss it thoroughly with our neighbours and give it the attention it needs. Bill 33 has created ill feelings and anxiety among councillors, Reeve's, staff and the community at large. We do not believe that a population of 1,000 should be the magic number and we certainly believe that January 1, 2015 is an unreasonable timeline.

Respectfully Submitted on behalf of

The Council of the R.M. of Strathclair

Shelley Glenn, CAO

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I am unable to attend the hearing and make my personal presentation tonight due to the fact that this is the busiest time of year in agricultural Manitoba. In fact the timing of this hearing is at best suspect. I wish to have it registered that I am adamantly opposed to forced amalgamation as it has been put upon the municipal corporations of Manitoba.

Thomas Mowbray

* * *

Good Evening Members of the Standing Committee,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Stan Herechuk, and I am a Councillor for the Rural Municipality of Shellmouth-Boulton. Thank you for allowing me to speak on Bill 33 (The Municipal Modernization Act) on behalf of the ratepayers in our municipality. I have been involved in municipal government for 18 years. I have always considered our relationship with the Province of Manitoba respectful and amicable. The taxpayers were always treated fairly and both levels of government worked hand in hand to allow municipalities and therefore in turn the province to grow and prosper. This was proven when a portion of Provincial Trunk Highway

#83 collapsed in 2012. Our municipality allowed our municipal roads to be utilized as a detour for provincial traffic and again in 2013 we once again cooperated with the province by allowing a municipal road to be utilized as a detour for traffic accessing the Asessippi Provincial Park campground due to another road collapse. Our municipality absorbed tremendous maintenance costs and safety issues due to the amount of provincial traffic on our municipal roads without compensation from the province. Will our working relationship with the province be in danger of collapsing as well?

Over the years, the province has encouraged working as a region. We belong to a Conservation District and Planning District. Will passing this Bill 33 jeopardize those partnerships? I have no doubt that this will only make enemies of neighbors and any progress to date will deteriorate.

I am also an agricultural producer as well as a councillor. I have learned to represent both the rural voice and the cottage voice in my Ward. I care about this municipality and I have seen how it has grown from agriculture into one of the most visited and sought tourist destinations. I have to ask, why was the threshold of 1,000 population stipulation was the factor given in the decision to force municipalities to amalgamate? This number does not describe the financial viability of a municipality. Our financial plans are submitted to the province annually and audited financial statements are also readily available to you. The Rural Municipality of Shellmouth-Boulton is comprised of 930 permanent residents, just under that threshold, but that does not include the large seasonal residential population who also contribute financially to this municipality and allowed it to grow into a strong tourism destination. Forcing amalgamation by passing Bill 33 without further consideration will most certainly be detrimental to everyone in our municipality and the whole of the province whether they are permanent or seasonal residents.

I have been told that the Village of Dunnottar and the RM of Victoria Beach will be exempt from the proposed legislation because they are healthy resort communities, as are we. At this time, I ask that the RM of Shellmouth-Boulton be included in that exemption.

Thank you, Stan Herechuk, Councillor and Ratepayer of The RM of Shellmouth-Boulton

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Good Evening Members of the Standing Committee,

My name is Roy Ziprick. I am a Councillor, business owner and ratepayer in the Rural Municipality of Shellmouth-Boulton. Thank you for allowing me to speak on Bill 33 (The Municipal Modernization Act).

When I ran for Council in the 2010 election, I knew that my heart told me to represent the ratepayers in the municipality that I was born and raised in. I also knew that this municipality was exploding into a tourist destination for visitors and part time residents. We possess some of the most beautiful attractions that this province has to offer. I quickly learned that the municipality that once only existed as a farming community had now grown into a different direction, tourism. I have to say that it has been a learning curve because our growth has occurred over such a short period of time and show no sign of slowing down any time soon. We currently have 8 cottage developments with over 600 developed lots and the request to build 3 additional developments. The Rural Municipality of Shellmouth-Boulton is comprised of the LUD of Inglis which holds the Inglis Elevators National Historic Site, Asessippi Ski Area and Resort, Asessippi Provincial Park, The Lake of the Prairies and borders the Riding Mountain National Park. As you can see tourism can account for our increased year round recreational population which is not included in our census population of 2011.

I have read the article in the Winnipeg Free Press where it stated that Minister Lemieux "has drafted amendments to Bill 33 that would allow resort communities such as Victoria Beach and Dunnottar to stay as they are." I have also read that other recreational municipalities will be included in that exemption.

Although I feel that amalgamation should only be considered by two agreeing municipalities because we know what is best for our ratepayers, if Bill 33 is passed, I ask that the Province of Manitoba include the RM of Shellmouth-Boulton along with the Village of Dunnottar and the RM of Victoria Beach in that amendment, as we are most definitely comparable not equal to those communities.

Sincerely,

Roy Ziprick, Councillor, Ratepayer and Business Owner RM of Shellmouth-Boulton

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I would like to express my opinions of the forced amalgamation Bill. I feel the Government has done a very poor job with regards to this legislation. The forced amalgamation will have harmful effects on many communities including the RM of Blanshard. As we have no natural municipality to combine with, we will be forced to make a decision which is very much against the wishes of our ratepayers. Local people will be further away from the decision makers and this bill shows what happens when the decision makers quit listening to the electorate. There are no financial savings to be made by this amalgamation, none occurred in Ontario and there was really no benefit to the forced amalgamation of school divisions.

There will be a net loss to smaller communities as more development is diverted to larger centers. In a small community even the loss of one or two jobs when the municipal office is closed has a large effect. The work that has been ongoing for years, the development of recreation districts, weed districts, regional libraries, and many other joint ventures developed to share resources among municipalities will be endangered by the forced reshuffling of municipalities. Volunteer work and work for little pay which has been done for the last hundred and thirty years by councilors will have to be taken over by paid employees. Councilors will require more remuneration as the workload will be greatly increased. This change will further prevent young people especially women from running as the amount of time demanded will be prohibitive.

It would appear that very little thought has gone into this on the part of the NDP as even the Minister of Local Government could not explain the benefits or why the government itself was doing things which would penalize municipalities which amalgamate. One example is the number of summer student grants being limited so that three municipalities which amalgamate only being allowed one third of the grants. I asked the Minister of Local Government to explain the benefit, when his own government offered matching road improvement grants to small municipalities of \$25000, before amalgamation three small municipalities would be able to apply for three grants for a total of \$75000, after amalgamation only one grant could be applied for. The Minister's reply was gee no municipalities should go back because of amalgamation, that's not right. I agree it is not right.

This bill has only helped to convince Manitobans that there is no sense caring about the political system because no one listens and most politicians are basically liars and crooks.

Show us that you listen and cancel this Bill before it is too late.

Jim Brown
Deputy Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Blanshard

I still don't believe that democracy starts at 1000.

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>